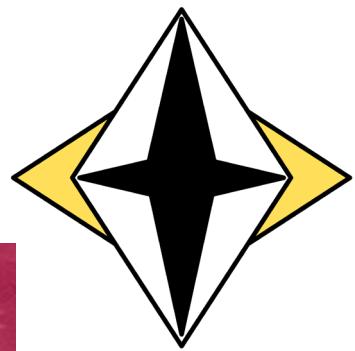


# The Black Star



# Journal

The Revisionist Issue

Issue #03

November 04, 2022

## From Us To You

As you read The Revisionist Issue, consider what it means to revise your conceptions about the world we live in. We challenge you to think about the society we create – either through disruption or reinforcement – as we make everyday decisions. We dare you to imagine a harmonious Black future through the art, poetry, prose, and journalism in this paper.

We'd like to dedicate the space of the typical "From Us to You" section to center and applaud all of the staff on The Black Star Journal. The writers, editors, content creators, and E-board members bring this paper to life. Their truths flow through the historical legacy of Black arts and culture at Brown.

We intentionally leave the rest of this space open to allow you time to reflect on the role you play in advancing Black futures.

From Us to You,

Enjoy

Two handwritten signatures in cursive ink: one above the other, both reading "Keiley Thompson".

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The first hand chides you  
It can't help but laugh a little  
When you suggest something is wrong  
Wagging its finger knowingly like it's scolding a child  
You can see the smirk in the crease of its palm as it sends  
you away  
Thinking to itself "how ridiculous"

The second hand listens patiently  
It rests supportively on your back  
Or maybe a leg  
As it takes in all you have to say,  
Reaching for a tissue at the moment you need it  
Practiced empathy done in a perfect little dance  
Until finally it's holding your hand in it,  
Telling you not to worry

# HANDS

Words by Abani Neferkara  
Art by Praises Amponsah

The third hand curls up tight in anger  
It shakes at the thought of you thinking this way  
Clutches all it's worked so hard to give you  
And shoves it across the table to silence your sorrows  
After its skin has wrinkled in the sun  
Its nails chipped in hours of labor  
The audacity you have  
To say that  
It's infuriating

The fourth hand refuses to touch you  
It has chosen to make itself blind to your presence  
Etching a blissful memory long gone under its nails  
So it can wipe away the present in one motion of the wrist  
It won't let go of the bottle of nostalgia that sits by its nightstand  
The only way it knows  
To numb the pain of what you became

Now you're left with two hands,  
The ones attached to the rest of you  
Tired and heavy, squeezing tight  
Not to let is slip through the cracks like water from the bathtub  
But those childhood days are gone  
And what's expected of you is nails cut and filled down  
Holding responsibility like a briefcase  
That feeling, still etched in the creases of your palm

# The Black Star Journal

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# *Though my flowers are past due*

Words by Millicent Stiger

My flowers are past due.

Four score and seven years ago my orchids should have come

I wanted them left on my doorstep

I tried to be ... patient.

the constant urge to peek from behind my curtain overwhelms me

Full throttle.

Anytime now.

Anytime

.....

My flowers are past due.

A dove was supposed to deliver me iris – freshly plucked, vibrant, and lush  
[my dove didn't come]

My flowers are past due.

a sparrow .

Mouth agape with a single seed in tow  
an unremarkable sparrow .  
with- a-sense-of-urgency-in each.riveting hop

came with a single seed .

Not by the angelic decree of a dove did I become a maiden.

Not by the deliverance of morning glory was I deemed worth a moment's dote.

Held in fluttering leaps  
a S

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swiftness in every  
k / brea

from  
gravity's  
p \_\_\_\_ u\_\_u\_\_u ..u. u.u.\_\_\_\_|...|.....| |

From a .single. seed

I was made a florist.

Although my flowers are past due

Words by Kevin Carter

# What is nature

What is nature to a negro?

As disgustingly dirty as they are, how could they enjoy something so pristine

As resoundingly rambunctious as they are, how could they enjoy something so serene

They reside in the very antithesis of nature, where you won't catch a hint of green

They do not visit the parks, hike, or camp, so how could they care for the oceans, mountains and trees

They are scared of it, ignorant of it, far from interested or intrigued

What is nature to a negro?

But the very earth from which they were conceived

But the stars, tunnels, and forests that navigated them to be free

But the ways in which they have suffered concurrently

Overtcultivation, the degradation of black soils and black bodies via slavery

Toxins and Africans alike dumped into the sea

The simultaneous suffocation of the atmosphere and the people who needed it to breathe

Deforestation and transatlantic slave transportation

Pulled from roots and snatched from nations

Lucrative exploitation with no form of reparation

Both scarred by white subjugation

Maybe they do have a relation

Nature is the negro

Nearly five years after Hurricane Maria made landfall on Puerto Rico, Hurricane Fiona has dealt a disastrous blow to the island, reminding us all of an insidious cycle of insufficient support for Puerto Ricans. Hurricane Maria not only weakened the island's already unsteady infrastructure and debilitated the healthcare system, but left an open wound that Hurricane Fiona has only exacerbated. So why haven't we been hearing of the disastrous effects delivered by this most recent hurricane? The lack of media coverage about the devastating impacts of Hurricane Fiona in Puerto Rico displays a pattern of lessons unlearned, and it reflects a trend of general apathy towards these increasingly severe natural disasters. There was an opportunity for Washington D.C. to act with speed and intention to help relieve and rebuild the island – instead, Puerto Ricans were mocked with President Trump's belittling stunts. Such blatant disregard for the severity of the situation in Puerto Rico set a dangerous precedent that has persisted to the present day.

In stark contrast with Florida's immense amount of media attention and relief funds, Puerto Rico's lack of political representation has unfortunately created barriers towards aid; Puerto Rico is only just beginning to see the billions of federal dollars promised to them after Hurricane Maria's destruction. Media silence has intensified both the inequality Puerto Ricans face and the disastrous health impacts of hurricane wreckage.

Hurricanes affect human health through a range of temporal mechanisms. With an active hurricane, factors such as flooding, flying debris, and other damage can contribute to the immediate outcomes of drowning and traumatic injuries such as lacerations and fractures. Later, more medium and long term dangers may manifest, including communicable diseases stemming from flood water and unsafe temporary housing conditions. Hurricanes can have a lasting impact on underlying health issues and disrupt health infrastructure, weakening current health systems in a way that could impact the health of the population as a whole.

For example, even a year after Hurricane Maria struck the island, 83 percent of the 1,500 individuals interviewed in a survey conducted by the Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation reported lasting impacts from the disaster, including major damage to homes, extended periods of power loss, employment setbacks, worsening overall health problems, and a lack of mental health resources. Despite weak efforts from FEMA and Luma energy– a U.S-Canadian private consortium–to remake the island's power grid and modernize the electricity system, Puerto Ricans have been living with routine blackouts. Under Luma energy's privatization of Puerto

# Why have we forgotten about Puerto Rico?

Words by Helena Bates

Rico's public grid, energy prices have skyrocketed and some families and elderly residents have been forced to make the choice between essential necessities of survival: medicine, food, or their electricity bill.

With only affluent households being able to afford private generators, health disparities continue to widen; many health necessities—such as adequate heating and cooling systems, internet, and essential appliances—require access to electricity. Furthermore, the lack of electricity poses a great threat to those with chronic health conditions who rely on electric powered machines such as oxygen concentrators, ventilators, CPAPs and mobility devices. As a result, Puerto Rico's health system received a significant blow in the aftermath of the storm: a large number of its hospitals struggled to remain in operation under the strain of patient demand, which increased during the power outages in the days following Hurricane Fiona.

Furthermore, the cycle of destruction and the lack of support for Puerto Ricans has ushered in a mental health crisis on the island. The same survey mentioned above conducted by the Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation found that more than one-fifth of the island's residents reported needing or receiving mental health services a year after the disaster. In the wake of yet another hurricane, psychologists are in triage mode, taking on the nearly impossible task of trying to sift through the needs of their community on a priority based system. This cascading trauma inflicted on the vast majority of Puerto Rico will continue to exacerbate the mental health crisis on the island.

There must be a much wider recognition of the compounding forces that stifle the access to adequate healthcare in Puerto Rico. We must recognize that the long history of colonization of Puerto Rico and its lack of political representation contribute to the increasingly devastating impacts of hurricanes on the island. As climate change continues to intensify the devastating impacts of hurricanes, the intersection of physical, mental, and structural health inequities will continue to escalate. In order to help heal the wounds that these disasters inflict, we must stop turning a blind eye to the immense impacts on the short and long term health of Puerto Rico's residents and start pointing fingers to the corrupt forces of power that enable these atrocious inequities.

# I. Am. Not. Chocolate.

## The Fetishization of Black Women

Words by Ayoola Fadahunsi

As I shuffled my tiny, wobbly seven-year-old legs onto the yellow school bus, the last thing I expected was to be compared to a well-beloved candy. "Your skin is like chocolate," the girl I sat across from quickly informed me. She stared intently at my hand, pulling my tiny brown wrist towards her own pale, whitish-pink skin. I reflexively pulled my hand away and told her not to compare me to candy that people eat.

"I am not chocolate!" I yelled.

"But I like chocolate," she pleaded. Silence.

*I am not chocolate or caramel or coffee or dirt or shit. My skin will not be subjected to your abhorrent comparisons. I boldly reassure myself today, as I shudder from the shocking memory, reconciling that child-like curiosity is the least of the battles I will face as a Black Woman.*

\*\*\*

The fetishization of Black Women and their bodies can date back to the colonization of Africa - Caren M Holmes in her research study addresses the hyper-sexualization of African women by White colonizers. Holmes sheds light on the story of Sara Baartman, a South African woman who was put on exhibit in the 19th century. Sara Baartman was coerced into a 3ft tall glass box, and forced to strip from the waist down to be the object of White fascination. Sara was put on display in Piccadilly, the London center for "oddities" and "deformities." Sara was placed there because of her large bottom and "peculiar" Black skin. From London, she was sold and traded into a zoo in France, housed in the same cage as a baby rhinoceros. Sara Baartman was violated to the greatest degree, and in writing about the continual injustices faced by Black women, I hope to make her heard and validated.

Sara is not the first, nor the last Black woman to be fetishized by the public. The fetishization of Black skin persists today and continues to evolve. From cultural appropriation to falsifying identity, Black skin and features are always placed on a pedestal for mockery. I was aware of this harsh reality, but it took firsthand experience for me to understand the vulnerability of being the object of another's unwanted fascination.

I am not chocolate  
or caramel or coffee  
or dirt or shit

For two years, I saved money stringently to travel to Europe for the first time. And when it became my reality, my sister and I were eager to soak in Spain and France. Excitement to see landmarks, eat delicacies, practice our rusty French, meet friends, and document our adventures were met with the unexpected, as we became a public spectacle. From security to boarding, to take off, White Europeans gawked at my sister and me as we carried on with our business. At first, we thought it was a coincidence, but when we arrived at the German airport, we noticed the malice behind the attentive perusal of our persons. A particular young couple entered a

hostile staring contest with my sister as if intimidating us with their eyes would make us vanish back to where we came from.

On the opposite side of the glares filled with contempt, were the stares of Europeans entranced by the rarity of our dark skin. Children and adults alike would miss their steps as their gaze lingered as they walked past. Children ran up to us, with smiles on their faces, and reached out to touch our skin. It was hard for me to rationalize that the two types of inspection of our skin could co-exist. The question of how I would discern friend from foe burdened my thoughts. But, the latter took shape in my mind and often left me melancholy. I felt as though I had intruded into a place that was not meant or designed for me. I was an oddity.

My skin will not be  
subjected to your  
abhorrent comparisons.

Modern fetishization and dehumanization of Black women as objects persist in society and many of us have become desensitized to its harmful effects. Black women are sexualized for their natural curves, thick lips, and glowing skin. Fetishization is evident in the common White practice of tanning to attain darker skin and cosmetic surgery for a certain figure. Black features are yearned for but scorned and ridiculed when it belongs to Black women. The appeal of these features are not rooted in respect or appreciation but in a misogynistic wonder. Black women deserve better. Sara Bartmaan deserved better.

While researching the story of Sara Baartman, I found it hard to reconcile my voluntary exploration of Europe with her forced journey to a foreign land. After a few days into my trip in Europe, my feelings of insecurity nearly dissipated. I reminded myself that there is nowhere on Earth that truly belongs to any one individual, government, or society. I also acknowledged that there was no inherent harm in looking. And although I used this to calm my anxieties, there is no excuse for the unwanted and twisted attention that is placed on Black skin. Where I was able to look past the enmity, Sara Baartman, trapped in a cage, was not able to do the same. She could not simply walk away from a crowd of "admirers," and I am grateful for having that liberty.

And for this reason, I reiterate. I am not chocolate or an exhibit on display for someone else's pleasure. And to my seven-year-old self, who stood up for herself against unwanted examination, I admire your child-like stubbornness. I commend your abnegation for something you knew was inherently wrong. I hope to draw from that spirit, as the weight of objectification presses on and makes me feel less than. It is time for me to reclaim my skin, my body, and fight to define my features on my own terms. My sister and I did this. We held our heads up high and walked the streets of Europe with pride in the Black skin that belongs solely to us. My time in Europe has not tainted my self-worth, but reignited the fight to full self-acceptance.

# Read Her Next: Jasmine Guillory

Words by Natalie Payne

Looking for a Black author in the romance and romantic fiction section, well look no further. Jasmine Guillory is a New York Times bestselling author, most known for her work *The Wedding Date*. She is a contemporary romantic fiction author, who depicts Black characters and their stories, something not often done in the genre.

I stumbled upon Jasmine Guillory's work during my intense phase with the romantic fiction genre right at the height of the pandemic. I have always been a book lover and an avid reader, and I found the dreamy nature of romance novels to be a good distraction from the chaos of those rough times. I often enjoyed reading the cliché novels. I sped through all the ones with an adorable meet-cute, a problem that keeps the two lovebirds apart, and then finding their way back together with a dramatic reunion in the end. After reading millions of those, however, I began to crave romance novels that infused something a bit deeper into them. I longed for romance novels with more complex plots and characters I could relate to. Of all the romance novels I'd finished, none of the protagonists looked like me. It was then that I found Jasmine Guillory and stumbled upon her collection of books, all with Black leads I could see myself in.

It is no surprise that her novels were met with overwhelming praise. Her most famous novel *The Wedding Date* released in 2018 centers on a chance encounter between Alexa Monroe and Drew Nichols, who find themselves stranded in an elevator. Drew asks Alexa to be his last-minute date to his best friend's wedding, and Alexa eventually agrees. It sounds like your typical rom-com read, right? But no, Guillory produces something far deeper and complicated than the status quo. Not with the standard mark of predictable

plot twists, but by tackling the issues many tend to stray away from in the world of romantic fiction, especially on the topic of race.

One major focus of the novel is the reality of interracial relationships, as showcased by Alexa and Drew's relationship. Guillory touches on the reality of being the only Black person in the room, how white privilege is often overlooked by those who possess it, and being comfortable in your own skin despite your surroundings. Throughout the novel, Guillory portrays Alexa as she has to maintain her "professional" demeanor as the only Black woman in the room, sustain racist questioning, or explain white privilege not being available to those who looked like her. In this way, her experience navigating an interracial relationship with Drew is told in a very realistic way without the usual overglamification. We are made aware of the common insecurities and fears that arise with wrestling with appreciating who you are and what you bring to the table. This is not to say that Guillory's novel perfectly captures every experience, but it does produce a work that does a good job of capturing each experience as a whole.

Additionally, *The Wedding Date*, like many of Guillory's novels, stars a powerful black female lead. As chief of staff for the mayor's office in Berkeley, California, Alexa Monroe serves as one of the many powerhouse protagonists Guillory portrays. While sticking to the romantic plot of the novel, Guillory weaves in Alexa's fervent efforts for Berkeley's at-risk teenagers. Her personal history with the program and the painstakingly long journey for its implementation serve as part of the backdrop to the beautiful love story crafted by Guillory.

*The Wedding Date* is the first installment of *The Wedding Date* series, but each of the six books in the series can be read as a standalone. Other books in the series include *Party of Two*, *While We Were Dating*, and *The Proposal*. As I make my way through the rest of her novels, I am excited to see how she continues to represent strong black protagonists as well as explore deeper ideas on identity, all while sprinkling in just enough of that good old rom-com cliché.

## What is Global Music, Actually?

Words by Charlinda Banks

In the wake of longstanding criticism of the Grammy's essentializing "best world music," the awards ceremony has opted for Best Global Music while Spotify (sorry Apple Music users, I will not be acclimating to you today!) sports Global Groove. The move from "world" to "global" has done little to restructure the genre beyond emulating the globalized and liberal language of Brown's IAPA concentration. Even indie kids' favorite love-to-hate music platform, Pitchfork, categorizes bands like Amadou & Mariam—a canonical Malian duo—as 'global.' In a positive album review of Amadou & Mariam's 2017 release, Pitchfork goes as far as to question, "but just what does Africa mean to the outside world in 2017" before listing a slew of UK & US figures' relations, appropriations, and appreciations of the continent. Although the 'global' genre also references musicians that exist at the intersections of globalization, the category remains littered with systematic othering of non-western music. In fact, from the Pitchfork review alone, it is clear that these 'global' musicians must constantly exist in regards to the white 'west' and, unlike Taylor Swift or Sufjan Stevens, these musicians are not given the space to stand on their own within their genre or body of work.

Recently I was listening to the Turkish band "Derya Yıldırım & Grup Şimşek." They describe themselves as a modern Turkish group that combines "Anatolian folk and



Mdou Moctar, Rafael Ojea Perez (CC BY-SA 2.0)

contemporary grooves [...] contaminated with Psychedelia and progressive rock flavors." In 2021, they released a number of singles including Haydar Haydar, an innovative take on a traditional Turkish folk lyric of the same name. Nonetheless, prior to their recent inclusion in Spotify's Neo-Psychedelic rock and Psych Turk playlists, their music was found exclusively under the uniquely titled Folk Fabrique—a collection of songs that the streaming platform deems "nomadic"—a poetic, round-about way of simply saying global. So, what does this mean? An idealist might argue that 'global' simply implies western influence in non-western music, but still there remains an undeniable othering of those beyond the global North. The voices dominating the music industry and ascribing legitimacy to musicians place themselves at the center, like a 20th century map with a tiny Africa and gigantic Europe.

The solution, for me, begins by ending the grouping together of so-called world music. Amadou & Mariam combine blues, folk, and rock, not 'worldbeat,' and Los Bitchos perform Colombian cumbia with surf-rock influences, not "groovy global sounds." Instead, if categorizing at the hands of institutions (and Apple Music) is a must, the industry should move towards designating musicians within their self-identified genres, not perceived 'otherness.'

If there's too many white people, I get nervous. Perhaps that explains my lexapro prescription and my therapist and sometimes the inability to leave my room. When there's too many blonde people, I get restless. Maybe that's why I'm always sweating, why my clothes suddenly don't fit right, and why I'm on my 12th cup of coffee. I could blame a lot of things, a lot of places, a lot of people, a lot of intangibles for my afflictions – but it wouldn't do me any good. It is my privilege that has allowed me access to institutions like Brown, but it is my decisions that got me here.

There are no plaques or buildings with my last name. My father's fraternity picture doesn't hang above our mantel, nor are there any photos of my mother as the only black person amongst too many white people to count. My family doesn't have a home in some tiny east coast town. Our generational wealth is nothing but the gravestones of formerly enslaved peoples. Our legacy is in the dirt, in the ground, and in the soil beneath my friends' homes.

I've been going on weekend trips for years. It's sort of what happens when you go to boarding school across the country at the age of 14. You end up in a town called Farmington and you will never not be nervous again. You will meet your white friends' families and you will stay with them and it will be the weirdest thing ever because you know these people, you love these people, but you are itchy and you are alone.

When Get Out was released in 2017, everything made a lot more sense.

My mother has always hated the outdoors, and not in a "I hate nature way," but in a "I don't belong here, I am too far removed, there is no one else that looks like me" way. It's different in California. It's whiteness in a different way. I was recently asked how I felt about an unnamed, yet tiny east coast town. I told them it was beautiful but far too white. There was a moment of nothing, the kind of silence that breathes against your skin and is too loud and clamps itself against the back of your head. Then, they replied, "but we're so open here, it's very liberal – the people are so kind and inviting." Inviting indeed. It was defense without an attack. I hadn't said the words racist or conservative, I hadn't even alluded to them, yet the phrase "too white," seemed to call for immediate rebuttal. I wonder how they would feel if they were the minority. I still don't know what they thought of me.

It doesn't matter that they know you're black. And look at me – really look at me – I am such a comfortable, palatable version of blackness

I'm not sure what to expect. I'm not sure why I'm even here. I should just leave. I said yes. Why did I say yes? Well, it's pretty hard to say no when my other option is getting committed. I don't know when they'll call my name. I could leave. I'm gonna do it. Right now. I don't.

Every time the doors open, I feel my heart stop, my chest tighten, and the tears I only let fall in the darkness of my bed come to the surface. Then the doors close, and my lungs fill with air a little too quickly, and once again, I'm in this cycle of panic and fighting not to sink into the darkest points of my mind. It's been almost 15 minutes, yet I'm still here while others have walked past those locked double doors and...I'm not sure what.

Finally, a woman comes out. With glasses, of course, maybe that's a prerequisite to becoming a therapist. Down the rabbit hole of small offices we go. I sit on a semi-comfortable chair with a nice pillow and abstract paintings around the room. I'm not a fan. Nor does this make me feel any more comfortable.

She asks me for my name. I say it. She asks for my birthday. I tell her.

*I woke up from one nightmare to enter another. I thought they figured me out. I thought I had lost everything I had worked so hard to gain. It was a lie. I contemplate whether I should still be, still try and be me. Meanwhile, plates are breaking downstairs; the house shakes, and I know she's back.*

"What brings you in today?"

Your colleague forced me to be here. "I want help."

"Well, you came to the right place!"

I'd rather be anywhere else! "Yeah, I guess."

What does this lady want... ask me about my day, then unpack it? I have a lot of baggage, but it's

# Get Out, Go Home (i thought i was?)

Words by Olivia Bendich

with my light skin and my pretty (touchable) curls and my California voice. If I am threatening, it is not because of my obvious blackness.

I recently found myself somewhere reminiscent of what could be the set for a Get Out sequel. It had far less to do with the fact that I was with my white friend and their white family - and everything to do with the environment. We were entirely welcome, and the lack of aggression in these efforts helped to abate any fear, but we were still isolated. We were still remote. I would never find myself hours away from any sort of real city, or civilization, with my black family or black friends. It is also a different type of discomfort - that almost becomes comforting - when everyone around you feels out of place.

This was the first time I had ever gone on any sort of trip like this with another black friend. They had a nightmare the first night. I slept like a baby, but I had driven the entire three hour trip, and so my breathing didn't stutter when they entered my room once, twice, three, four times. I told them of course they could get in bed with me. They were afraid.

I wish I could love the fresh mountain air, crisp and delectable and so light upon my lungs. I wish I could love it virginally, purely, wholly – but I am incapable and that is not my fault. It is not necessarily my white friend's fault, nor their families, nor their ancestors. In fact, their fragile uncomfortability was affirming. American flag staircase. 15, 16 bedrooms? I forgot. Photographs and paintings that could, or should, belong in a museum.

Will it ever feel normal, natural, right?

Will I ever enjoy a weekend getaway - in a small town probably named after some long dead white man - with no service and the heaviest, loveliest type of inhalations? I feel so full of questions; I'm sorry. There's nothing for me to really apologize for - but I am still sorry.

I think I'm mostly sorry for myself because it's either anger or pain. They are the same, yes, but it is so much easier to be furious or confused than to be hurt. I think I will always be a little bit nervous. I think I will always feel a little bit restless. I want there to be a happy, positive ending so intensely but I don't know if that's the reality. I just don't know.

## (Un)packed

Words by Kendall Williams

mine, and it will stay mine. She keeps trying to make eye contact. I'm very uncomfortable.

"I'm gonna ask a few questions to get to know you a little better."

Why? There's nothing to share. I'm me, and that's all she's gonna get.

"Where did you put it?" "I had it right here." "Are you behind this? Do you want me to get caught?"

Mom, please, you need to calm down.

*There was a crash. I closed my eyes and started to shake. My heart was pounding so fast that it practically played "Flight of the Bumblebee." The ceramic pieces of the plate littered the carpet. This was the last day I looked her in the eyes.*

"Can you tell me what happened this past week?"

As if you don't know. As if everyone didn't see. I've been trending. I hate myself. I hate this woman. I want to go home and sleep.

"I know I did a lot. A lot of things that I shouldn't have, and now they, everyone, saw me acting like a fool. I feel like an idiot and crazy."

"Why do you say that?"

I felt the tears coming up, but I've learned from high school pinching my fingers stops them from falling. "What kind of person acts like this? What kind of person feels like getting out of bed could end in death or feels so difficult I just lay there and stare at my fridge, hoping somehow the food will get to my mouth. Then other days, I feel so happy, but then I do...I do what I did last week."

"Well, first off, you're not crazy, and there is nothing wrong with you."

"I don't know about that."

"Well, I may not know you well. But I have known people who have felt some similar ways to you. I want to ask before we continue if you have a family history of mental illness. Maybe your mother, father, aunt."

*I know it was you. I hate you. You always screw things up. I was doing this for you, but you're never grateful. Now they'll find me, and it's all your fault.*

"I don't know. We don't talk about that." I felt so stupid. I didn't look her in the eye. I know she was judging me, probably thinking I was an idiot. How do you not know anything about your family? How do you know about your family, about an illness that can't be seen, that doesn't exist, not to them?

"It's normal. When I told my parents I was going to be a therapist, they thought I was studying some pseudo-science and nonsense disorders people make up. But I want to tell you what you have is real and treatable. There is nothing wrong with you. You think differently, and even saying that is wrong. You think like you, and maybe this ends in a couple of embarrassing moments or low moments or even feeling like you're dying. But I want to help. I want to hear from you. I want you to realize that you are perfect just as you are; you don't need to change; there is nothing that needs to be changed about you."

"There's nothing wrong with me?"

"There's nothing wrong with you, and being here is not meant to be a punishment. It's meant for you to have someone to listen to you. I'm here for you. Whatever you need."

# B L



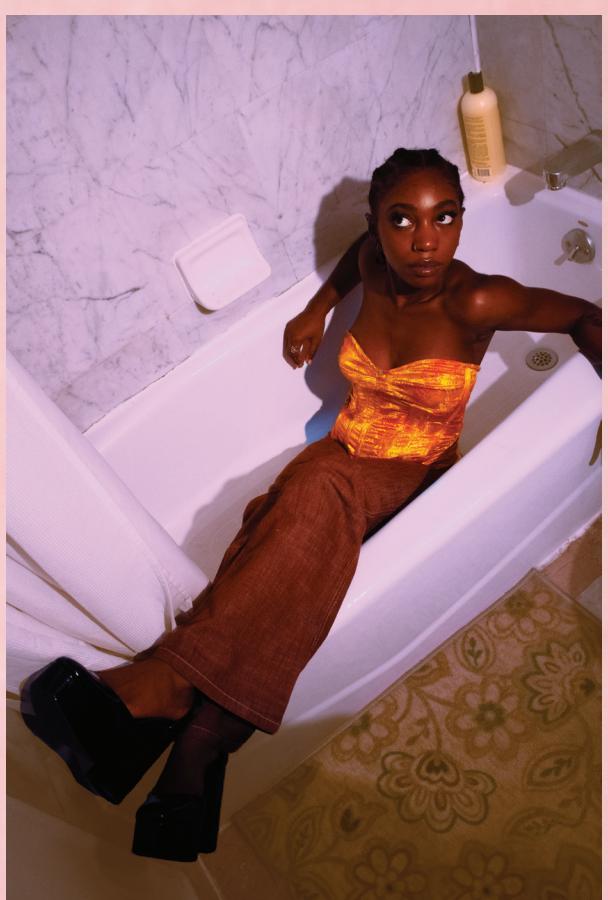
# U E



Photography by Lyric Johnson

Photography by Dori Walker

# Leah Has



# Twiggy's Eyes

# (You Won't) Break My Soul: Embodying Black, Queer Joy in Beyoncé's "Renaissance"

Words by Samantha Buyungo

Art by Praises Amponsah



On July 29th, 2022, I stayed up until midnight, eagerly awaiting the release of Beyoncé's most recent creation, *RENAISSANCE*. After assuring myself that I would only listen to the first two or three songs, I proceeded to listen to the entire album in one sitting. It's been some time since Beyoncé has released a fully-fledged work, not in conjunction with a cinematic production (such as for *The Lion King* and *Black is King*), and I, like much of the world, was curious as to what direction her newest album would take. Would it be a commentary on the historical impact of slavery and its effect on Black love, as touched upon in "*Lemonade*"? Or perhaps something subtly hinting at the aggression and power of her alter ego, *Sasha Fierce*? Perhaps both? Neither? While taking elements from both of these, *Renaissance* establishes itself as something new entirely. It simultaneously acts as a powerful symbol of Black love and authenticity as well as a safe space for the rebirth of centuries of Black music that spans the African diaspora.

I was not prepared for such a captivating time-traveling experience: The house music of Chicago's underground clubs, ballroom music that Harlem drag kings and queens vogued to, bounce music from New Orleans' city housing projects, afrobeats and dancehall hailing from Nigeria and Jamaica, 80s funk merging with disco, London garage from the 90s rave culture, and millennial-era Internet hyperpop all within the span of 62 minutes. In a little less than an hour, Beyoncé sonically transports the listener across space and time to link Black communal spaces of joy and fulfillment, serving as a powerful reminder that her music does not (and cannot) exist in a vacuum.

Her seventh studio album dropped in an era still reeling from the stress caused by a global pandemic, an impending recession, the devastating impact of climate change, political unrest, and threats to the rights of the POC and LGBTQ+ communities. Regardless of where we are in history, the well-being of black and queer folk has always been threatened. However, time and time again, these communities have resisted the violence, prejudice, and discrimination built into this society through music and dance. By taking musical inspiration from Black/POC and queer creators across time who crafted spaces of celebration in spite of the chaos and oppression of their worlds, Beyoncé is able to use her album as a way of uniting these spaces of celebration to act as a reprieve from the chaos occurring in our world.

The album itself contains 16 songs, with the most popular ones being *BREAK MY SOUL*, which was released as a single a week before the album's release,

*ALIEN SUPERSTAR*, *COZY*, and *VIRGO'S GROOVE*. Since its release, *BREAK MY SOUL* has been lauded as a queer anthem, and rightfully so. It's a high-energy tune that is steeped in the club and house music traditions of Chicago and encourages the listener to "release ya anger, release ya mind [...] release ya trade, release the stress." It's a perfect dance floor anthem that fortifies the notion that no one and nothing has the power to "break [your] soul."

*COZY* (which mixes R&B, dance-pop, and house) is notable not only because it highlights the importance of one being "cozy" in their skin and identity, but for the spoken clips it includes. The song makes use of excerpts of a monologue from trans icon, host, and reality television personality Ts Madison. The monologue, sampled from a 2020 YouTube Video titled *B\*tch, I'm Black* details Madison's declaration of pride and acceptance of her trans and Black identity in the face of the discrimination and transphobia that she has endured. In this way, Beyoncé is able to reinforce the importance of radical self-acceptance in the face of adversity.

While *BREAK MY SOUL* and *COZY* touch upon themes of self-confidence and pride, songs like *CHURCH GIRL* and *VIRGO'S GROOVE* are more explicitly sexual in subject matter. Throughout history, the bodies of black femmes have been hypersexualized, objectified, and vilified—an unfortunate byproduct of living in a patriarchal, racist society. Black women and femmes who attempt to reclaim their sexuality from men (as well as the historically stigmatized nature of female sexuality) are constantly shamed for their "vulgarity". It is this reclamation of sexuality as a way to fight against the patriarchal gaze that Beyoncé emphasizes in these particular songs. She even says "nobody can judge me but me. I was born free", in *CHURCH GIRL* which establishes a sense that her Black identity is one rooted not in marginalization, but in bodily autonomy.

Listening to this album in the quiet of my room on that stuffy summer night, made me feel like I was in a kind of sonic "ancestral plane" – not unlike the one shown in Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther*. Similarly to how T'Challa utilizes the heart-shaped herb, so did I feel like listening to the album was a means to exist in a sacred space, a form of intergenerational inheritance, where I could revel in a distinctly Black sonic art form. As someone who is black, but who has recently come into acceptance of my own queer identity, listening to *RENAISSANCE* felt like I was being reassured of my sense of belonging and place amongst past black and queer individuals.

Words by Maya Avelino

As we pass into the second half of our fall semester, I had the opportunity to speak with two visual artists on campus about what is next for them after returning with fresh ideas and new lenses.

I met with Lanie Cherry '24 outside of Alumnae Hall, where she asked me to pose for a painting. Her current project is a reinterpretation of an early 19th century oil painting from the RISD Museum, Portrait of Lady Sarah Ingestre by Thomas Lawrence. While posing me for a reference photo, she explained, "I chose this white woman who is supposed to be the epitome of femininity and virtue, but I wanted to challenge that by portraying a Black woman who is empowered by both feminine and masculine expressions, and who rejects traditional Eurocentric beauty standards."

Much of Lanie's work is characterized by challenging Eurocentric beauty standards and uplifting Black women. "It is really therapeutic for me to make something that I consider beautiful that has the same skin tone as me". Lanie's paintings are a love letter to a group of women that have long been overlooked by our notions of beauty and purity, and I was grateful for the opportunity to help. Lady Sarah Ingestre was now a girl standing on the staircase in Alumnae Hall, just as proudly as the original, in her sneakers and name plate hoops.

I asked Lanie about recent inspirations for her work, and she directed me to Kehinde Wiley, an artist based in New York known for his use of vibrant colors (as well as his drawing of inspiration from older works of art).

# A Conversation with Two Artists:

Onaje Grant-Simmonds '24 and his work "A Full Moon in the Ghetto"



Lanie Cherry '24 and her work "Humanity is Dead"

This emphasis on vibrancy also came up during a conversation with Onaje Grant-Simmonds '24. Much like Lanie, Onaje is interested in high chroma, striking colors that impart a sense of surrealism or awe. He spoke to me about how he uses neon-vibrancy to create the otherworldliness present in his paintings. His use of this ethereal style's visual cues have developed since last semester, when Onaje took a religious studies class on biblical and quranic depictions of the end of days. He blends this with a deeply intimate framing: "What it would look like if you stepped inside my mind". He gives us a portrayal of a different world, one that is uniquely his own.

I had the chance to hear about a piece he was working on, titled, "A Full Moon in the Ghetto". He set the scene for me: "Walking home in Brooklyn at 2 AM and looking up to see the moon so full in the sky it felt close enough to touch". Onaje told me the first thought he had was that, "it was so beautiful, I didn't deserve to see it". In this painting he invites us in on that feeling of awe, but also the accompanying guilt that drifted over him like fog, standing in the dark.

As I made my way home from my interviews with the artists, I felt a sense of melancholy from the yellowing and falling of leaves. Fall had arrived quickly, but was making its way out just as fast. I sometimes feel a striking anxiety about the constant change we experience; I am a different person since the last changing of the leaves, complete with different motivations and ways of seeing the world. But, I am learning from Onaje and Lanie how to lean into what we continue to discover about ourselves. These two artists have created vibrant work that puts permanence to what is so ephemeral, embracing the fresh lenses time has granted them.

# Fresh Ideas and New Lenses

# The Commodification of Blackness

Blackness sells.

Blackness has been collected, packaged, signed, and sealed all due to the very fact that profits can and have been made from exploiting Black people for hundreds of years. Whether the profits come from enslaving Black people or from minstrel performances centered around mocking African Americans in blackface, it is clear that Blackness has always been the most valued as a profitable commodity.

The full spectrum of Black emotions/experiences has been exploited and dramatized in some form in the media for profit, including Black anger, sadness, and trauma.

When Black storytelling opportunities are only given to white and nonblack folks, it is very easy to be left with Blackness as a spectacle instead of Blackness as an aspect of humanity.

Particularly, the true crime genre has notoriously exploited trauma, especially harming low-income communities of color. Though some true crime media has educated the public on the many flaws embedded in the American criminal justice system, this, in many cases, comes to the detriment of the victims and families of victims being put on display.

I want to preface my argument by admitting that I am one of the almost 50% of Americans who enjoy consuming some form of true crime. Thus, I wholeheartedly believe the issue of today's "true crime obsession" is much more nuanced than simply banning all forms of true crime media creation and consumption. In some cases, current true crime media on platforms like TikTok have even led to social media users providing the FBI with information that could help them find a missing person (in the case of Gabrielle Petito).

However, despite some of the perks that may come from true crime media consumption on a massive scale, the harm that it brings must not be understated. Along with issues that arise from the sheer volume of true crime media that is consumed, like the spreading of misinformation and the desensitization of consumers, true crime breeds another crop of issues related to the disproportionate way it idolizes white murderers and serial killers while misrepresenting or straight-up not representing Black victims. Simultaneously, cases that go viral and have thousands of people sharing important information to potentially help find victims seem to mainly be cases in which a victim is a white person (particularly a white woman). On the other hand, Black and Native American women, who go missing at substantially higher rates, rarely receive coverage.

When Black victims are represented in true crime media, it is done so in a way that either makes a spectacle of Black emotion and trauma or puts the focus on the "fascinating/interesting" white serial killer being idolized for committing heinous crimes.

The new ten-episode series on Netflix titled *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* has sparked controversy for doing both of these things. Co-created by two white men, Ryan Murphy and Ian Brennan, the series follows the notorious serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer and depicts some of his brutal murders, and his multiple altercations with the American criminal justice system before his arrest and ultimate demise.

Words by Aicha Sama  
Art by Praises Amponsah



Though Netflix and the creators of the show attempted to brand the series as something that "will give notorious serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer's victims a voice," it is largely exploitative and even makes some attempts to humanize the serial killer by giving extensive background into Dahmer's childhood and family life. The series depicts Dahmer being raised by neglectful parents and being harassed by bullies, thus pushing viewers to empathize with Dahmer instead of his victims.

This has not only reignited people's obsession with idolizing and "stanning" serial killers but has even led to some extremely concerning sentiments being shared and reshared by millions of social media users, including people expressing disappointment in the series not being gruesome enough, with some even stating that they felt more empathy for Dahmer after watching the series.

One social media user even shared a new tattoo they got showing a photo of Dahmer along with a quote stating "If you can't beat 'em, eat 'em."

The most glaring issue with Dahmer is the fact that the families of victims have explicitly stated that they did not approve of the series.

Eric Perry, the cousin of one of Jeffrey Dahmer's victims, tweeted "I'm not telling anyone what to watch, I know true crime media is huge rn, but if you're actually curious about the victims, my family (the Isbell's) are pissed about this show."

Perry went on to express that the show was simply retraumatizing his family for no reason, especially because there are already so many movies and shows about Dahmer. The series has commodified and capitalized on Black trauma without the consent of those depicted, and without any compensation for the families and friends impacted.

This is a clear case of Netflix taking advantage of Black trauma for monetary gain because guess what? Blackness sells.

Blackness has always been sold in this country, in one form or another.

Now Jeffrey Dahmer is in the news again, receiving yet another chance to be idolized and cemented into history as a complex character while his victims are just that, victims. While the gruesome nature of their murders has been memorialized in the media, their legacies have been reduced to nameless bodies that Dahmer violated in incomprehensible ways.

It is unrealistic to get rid of true crime media as a whole, but we must ask ourselves if true crime can ever be deemed ethical. There are obvious things that should not be done in the production of true crime media, like ignoring the wishes of the families and friends of victims, and idolizing serial killers and mass murderers, but what can we do to make true crime more educational than it is harmful?

Some important steps include consulting those impacted by the crime that has taken place and putting the focus on the lives of those lost. To minimize the idolization and obsession of criminals like Dahmer, there should be more of a focus on the hard facts of these cases and the people ultimately affected.

It seems that true crime has already become yet another pathway for humans to lose their compassion, and we need to be doing everything we can to mitigate this. Every day, there seem to be new ways to commodify Blackness, which perpetuates the fight Black people go through to be seen as humans deserving of respect.

How do we grapple with the humanity of Black folks when we are viewed as objects that can take damage as long as it benefits others? When will the world cease to have a parasitic relationship with Blackness?

Blackness sells, which means we as Black people have to continue managing this world as living, breathing commodities.

OP-ED:

# Brown in Black and White: Looking behind the scenes of Brown's film culture

Words by Kara McAndrew

Why does Brown have an obsession with filming white magnetism? Performance spaces such as Brown Motion Pictures (BMP) reveal the poorly disguised obsession we have for "the elite, for the white, for the millionaires; people with glassy features, people who snort Adderall and smoke cigarettes inside," as put by Erin,\* a member of BMP. BMP is a club on Brown's campus that produces short films every semester; every element of the production is done by students, from the writing of the screenplays to the acting to the editing.

Considering the demographics of the film industry—only 3 out of every 10 actors in lead roles were people of color in 2020—it isn't a far stretch that a microcosm of that environment would be an equal celebration of white liberalism. However, these are student films; these films are meant to be experimental, different, able to take risks that Hollywood cannot. But we don't see that: the leads of the three most recent movies listed on their website were all white.

"BMP's attitude towards diversity is an outdated one," said Stella,\* a member of BMP. "It often feels like films are scrambling to fill a quota of actors of color, directors are rarely ever not white (except for this semester), and crews of films are never briefed on DEI. There isn't even a DEI e-board team and I think with an organization that large, it's pretty crazy that that doesn't exist."

According to Dane,\* a member of BMP, the scripts selected often feel as though they're "written by white people for white people." Adding three people of color just this year to the screenplay committee, the majority of scripts selected in previous years have centered white lives while relegating people of color to side roles, if they are included at all.

Once the auditions start (which are advertised only to people who are on the mailing list or see the social media announcements), not many people of color show up to audition, immediately causing the few that do to stand out. "From first hand exposure to the casting and the filming processes, I think it's undeniable that actors of color are tokenized," said Stella. "I've definitely felt notably different than most of the others who participate in BMP on the basis of my race, especially on the e-board which is largely white."

"BMP and theater at Brown have issues with bias in casting which perpetuates this cycle, as directors cast their friends who come from the same (typically white and 'elite') circles that they do," said Joan. In this way, casting becomes an especially racialized space, whether that is due to the selection of mainly white actors or the tokenization of the very few actors of color.

All of these issues are exacerbated by the fact that no one talks about race. "I have no idea what BMP's policies are around DEI, which I think speaks for itself," said Joan. "In every theater space I've been in on campus, I've been involved in lengthy discussions about racism in theater and how to actively combat that in rehearsals and when performing, but had no such experience when working with BMP."

According to a statement by BMP, "the current 'unspoken' policy is that no cast or crew should be all white," which has positive intentions, but can often manifest in the selection of an actor of color solely for the color of their skin to avoid an all-white cast.

Using people of color to check a box rather than including us as genuine members of the cast perpetuates a cycle of exclusivity that not only

limits POC who do want to get involved but also alienates a whole group of people who will never see themselves reflected on the screen.

"I think that they don't have a big enough approach towards DEI, but I do know that they this year are making every crew do male peer counseling, which is extremely important," said Erin, a member of the organization.

There are, as confirmed by a statement from BMP's managing directors, far more people of color on the crew than on the screen, which begs a different issue: is BMP comfortable having minorities behind the scenes but not in them?

"I have not felt tokenized or excluded on the basis of race by BMP," said Erin. "I think that BMP specifically is a reflection of the overall horrors of the film industry which perpetuate white male standards."

The mostly white e-board and the all-white heads of production have the final say on scripts, casting, and production, which gives them a lot of power. "E-board has gone largely unchanged for the last few years in terms of the people who make it up, many of whom are white men," said Stella.

Why does BMP warrant being written about, considering that it's a relatively insular club on Brown's campus? There's the obvious point that any form of racism or exclusion is harmful, and the fact that multiple people have approached me of their own accord wanting to write op-eds about the subtle racism within the organization. But

the ultimate issue within BMP and performance spaces at Brown in general is that they play into Brown's image of inclusion. Their hypocrisy reveals the deeper running brand of white liberalism that prioritizes white voices even as they claim to uplift people of color.

"BMP is a microcosmic example of the white, privileged macrocosm that is Brown," said Stella. "White people holding positions of the most power is not specific to BMP, but I do think that this club is one of the more obviously non-diverse. All of the Heads of Production—the people on crew that technically have the most power alongside the director—are white women, for example."

"A lot of these sorts of issues are heightened in performance spaces," said Joan, "because these spaces are typically very white; theater/film has been an overwhelmingly white space for as long as I can remember."

"The fact that members feel that discrimination is taking place means that there is certainly a conversation to be had about improving the culture of BMP," wrote BMP's managing directors in a statement. "We are dedicated to doing whatever work we can to make it an even more inclusive community."

One phenomenon that I consistently encounter at Brown is that white people have the best intentions and want to talk about diversity until it threatens their position or asks something of them. Sure, let's have more Black people in this movie, but not if I can't audition for that role anymore.

"No white person is walking into an audition room thinking and worrying about the color of their skin, or opening a cast list and wondering if they only got cast because of their identity," said Joan. "The culture of these spaces is very much 'white is the default and we need some token POC to make us seem diverse.'"

\*all names were changed.

The “clean girl aesthetic” has recently taken the media by storm, popularized by white creators such as Hailey Bieber and Gigi Hadid. The trend includes white creators uploading videos of them giving tutorials on slicked back buns, putting on lip gloss, and wearing gold jewelry to achieve this “new aesthetic”. The issue is not that white women are doing this look, it is that black and brown women have been wearing it for years, but when they did it, it was “ghetto” and “weird”. In fact, in an episode of *Sex and the City*, Carrie Bradshaw made multiple jokes about gold jewelry being “ghetto”.

It is frustrating that when white women start claiming a trend as their own, they receive popularity and credit for something that they did not create while black and brown women would get ridiculed and judged for it.

White women, now more than ever, have been using Black beauty and culture for their benefit, while harming and disregarding the Black women who pioneer these styles. But this is not a new phenomenon, the Kardashian family is known for profiting off of black culture and styles. The Kardashian family is known for being appropriators of Black culture. For years, they have copied Black women's hair, rocking cornrows and laying down their edges, all while not giving credit to Black culture. At one point, Kim Kardashian wore cornrows, but credited the style to Bo Derek, a white actress, calling them “Bo Derek braids”. They are all white women who, for years, have been able to profit

# I'll take the culture - keep the struggle

Words by Madelyn Amoo-Otoo

off of Black style, hair, and bodies by appropriating them. They have drastically changed their bodies to look like those of Black women, getting extra-dark spray tans and augmenting their lips and butts to make them fuller.

In the song “Uber Everywhere,” artist MadeinTYO raps, “Shawty bad as hell yeah with them Kylie Jenner lips,” essentially idolizing Kylie Jenner for her big lips. Some may say it’s not that deep, but it is that deep. Today, white women are often seen using Black beauty and style as an aesthetic, all while never having to go through the experience of being a Black person in a prejudiced, cruel, and racist world. I, along with many of my Black female friends, recall being ridiculed and mocked in elementary and middle school for having fuller lips, which can take a toll on a young, developing child’s self-esteem. It is ironic that many years later full lips are what is “in”.

Now, inherently there is nothing wrong with changing your body in a way that makes you more comfortable, but the Kardashian family is idolized for copying the bodies and styles of Black women, all while never giving them credit. Black women are generally known for rocking curvy, hourglass-shaped figures. Young Black women with bodies such as these are sexualized and adulterated, robbing them of their childhood. They are called “fast” for having “grown-up” bodies; they are dress-coded in school for wearing the same things as their white counterparts. Now that the Kardashians have popularized having large butts and lips, it has become trendy to have these facets of appearance.

The Kardashians are not the only people who have been appropriating Black culture and beauty. Brazilian butt lifts, a procedure in which fat from one area of the body is injected into the buttocks, have also become increasingly popular, giving women hourglass bodies and larger buttocks, similar to those of Black women. In the 19th century, Black women's large posteriors were turned into objects of gawking and mockery in freak shows. White people would come to these shows in crowds and make a mockery of Black women's bodies. One such woman was Sarah Baartman who had steatopygia (causing her to have protruding buttocks). Her sexual organs were even put on display in a museum in Paris until 1974 and her body was not laid to rest until 2002. Now that white women are changing their bodies to mimic those of Black women, they receive praise, popularity, and appreciation, even though Black women's bodies have been made commodities of the white gaze for years.

It is very convenient for appropriators to be able to pick and choose the aspects of Black culture they want to steal and mimic, while never having to endure the hardships and obstacles Black people have to go through. It’s interesting how many customs and styles are “ghetto” and “ratchet” when Black women do them, but the second a white woman coins them, it becomes exotic, creative, and trendy. Appropriators can surely try to emulate the Black woman, but they can never be a Black woman. Black women are pioneers in fashion, beauty, and media, despite what popular culture may exhibit. Our shared lived experiences intertwined with our creativity shape us into the incredible individuals we are.

“Sartjee, the Hottentot Venus”, 1811  
George Arents Collection, The New York Public Library.



Sartjee is 22 years old is 5 feet 10 in height, and has (for an Hottentot) a good figure. She lives in the occupation of a Cook at the Cape of Good Hope. — Her Country extends not less than 600 Miles from Cape Town. The Inhabitants of which are rich in cattle and less than her Master for a mere trifl; a Bottle of Brandy, or small roll of Tobacco will purchase several sheep. — Their principal Trade are cattle Skins & Dellow. — Beyond this, is an other, of small stature, very subtle & fierce; the Dutch could not bring them under subjection; and shot them whenever they found them. — 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 1811.

# *AFRICOM and its Disastrous Reasonsances:*

## The Libya Crisis a Decade On

Words by Mehdi Epee-Bounya

Home to the Mercedes-Benz and Porsche headquarters, Stuttgart, Germany is also the home of the United States Africa Command, also known as AFRICOM. The military operation is one of 46 U.S. bases, operating in 53 of 54 African countries. At the time of its inception in 2007, African leaders fervently opposed the establishment of a US military base on the continent. For example, the twenty-five members that make up the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (Cen-Sad) "flatly refuse[d] the installation of any military command or any foreign armed presence of whatever country on any part of Africa, whatever the reasons and justifications."

I recently interviewed a Teaching Assistant for one of my classes this semester and asked him a number of questions about his perception of AFRICOM. Malcolm Thompson, a PhD student focusing on global Black radicalism and political violence, shed light on the highly destabilizing effects the military operation has on Africa: "AFRICOM obviously does not promote the security of the various peoples throughout Africa."

AFRICOM maintains, however, that their mission is to "advance U.S. national interests and promote regional security, stability, and prosperity." In other words, AFRICOM's supposed mission is to advance U.S. security while simultaneously promoting stability on the African continent. Sounds nice, right? The pertinent question then becomes: were they able to reconcile these two aims during the 2011 Libya crisis?

"I was just seeing something that was completely jarring and I remember how violent the overthrow seemed", Thompson stated as he reflected on the Libya crisis of 2011 and the violence that defined it. As only a 16 or 17 year old kid, he was struck by the regime change spearheaded by the AFRICOM and NATO. The Libya crisis was sparked by the arrest of a human rights activist in Benghazi in February of 2011. In response, the Qaddafi regime deployed violent large-scale repression, killing many protesters. Rebel forces subsequently took up arms to resist this state-sanctioned violence, expelling pro-Qaddafi forces in eastern Libya. This raised the attention of the

international community. Indeed, in March of 2011, the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and AFRICOM decided to intervene in the conflict. This triad imposed a no-fly zone and a sea embargo in the country to stop the attack of the Qaddafi regime on defenseless citizens.

As many scholars have maintained though, the AFRICOM and NATO-led no-fly zone impeded African Union (AU) negotiations for a political settlement to the conflict. Furthermore, in April of that same year, the AU presented a plan for a cease-fire to Qaddafi. Rebel forces, however, rejected this measure because it would not remove Qaddafi from power. NATO and AFRICOM likewise rejected the AU cease-fire when it was brought up again in March. These two international institutions thus played a paramount role in the continuation of the conflict. Ebrahim Shabbir Deen, a researcher at the Afro-Middle East Center, sheds light on this phenomenon:

The AU's call for negotiations and a political solution were flatly rejected and undermined by the AFRICOM-coordinated NATO force (with the collusion of some AU member states), which overstepped its UN mandate and orchestrated regime change.

As fighting between the rebel forces and the Qaddafi regime raged on in the northern African nation, AFRICOM and NATO's rejection of negotiations led to deaths of thousands. To be sure, the refusal of these two international institutions to find a political solution to the civil war eliminated the Qaddafi regime and instituted new leadership in its place.

The question now is, how responsible is AFRICOM for the lives lost and the disastrous consequences of the 2011 Libya crisis. This question cannot be instantly dismissed. But the AU cease-fire or other diplomatic solutions could have induced greater "stability" in the region. This points to the balancing act of AFRICOM: although U.S. security interests may overlap with those of another nation, the tenets of U.S. foreign policy hinge on its own interests. Thompson likewise noted the imperialist ambitions of U.S. foreign policy: "America is an imperial power. Their military apparatus, their foreign operations, foreign business, NGOs, are all set up to stabilize their place as an imperial power." No longer a 16 year old kid struck by the violent overthrow of Qaddafi but now as a PhD student, Thompson urges us to approach any kind of U.S. foreign intervention with some skepticism based on America's legacy of imperialism.

[tw: mentions of suicide]

## Rikers Island: A Flawed Case Study in Decarceration

Words by Sarah Ogundare

This year alone, 17 people have died or committed suicide while in custody at the Rikers Island jail complex; their names and stories are listed by the Vera Institute of Justice. Following the most recent death of Erick Tavira on October 22, many are calling again for its closure – a plan the city is behind in implementing.

Mayor Adams is now carrying out a plan which Former Mayor De Blasio initially proposed after calls to close Rikers began over 40 years ago. This plan includes a timeline to replace Rikers Island with smaller, "borough-based jails" and to create an accompanying ward in Bellevue hospital which would ensure incarcerated people do not have to travel up to nine hours to receive medical attention. Not only did plans to maintain a reduced population in Rikers Island fail, but proposed changes to Bellevue hospital are also delayed due to requests made by the Department of Correction after construction began. But, even if these new changes are enacted in a timely manner, it's worth questioning whether these new plans are the complete solution.

Rikers Island has overwhelmingly gained attention because of the harm people experience in its custody. Since its opening in 1932, hundreds of parents and children have been caged in overpopulated spaces, deprived of necessary medical attention, and experienced poorly ventilated housing. At this stage, all most of them are 'guilty' of being charged.

"You can't understand it unless you've been to Rikers Island," said Kalief Browder before his tragic suicide in June of 2015. "It's not like out here. Out here, you just live life... There, there's no living life, there's no life at all in there. It's just a hell." It's hard to write about Rikers Island without remembering Kalief – a son and brother many now know after he was detained (without receiving a trial) for three years after being accused of stealing a backpack.

Over half of Kalief's time in Rikers Island was spent in solitary confinement. At one point, after being transported to court and back thirty times, the judge offered him a deal where he could go home immediately without probation, but only if he admitted he was guilty. Refusing to stand down, Kalief said, "if I just say that I did it, nothing's gonna be done about it... Nobody hears nothing [so] I had to fight."

Tragically, the trauma he experienced in Rikers Island was so inescapable that Kalief took his own life two years after being released. It is no surprise that calls – by formerly incarcerated people and advocates alike – to close Rikers Island have only exacerbated since his story became widely known.

While decarceration is a strategy many have advocated for, replacing one large jail complex with multiple local jails (which may still become overcrowded, as Rikers is) is not a solution. It addresses the issue of it taking "two and a half hours on a good day" for Kalief's mother, Venida, to travel and visit him each weekend, but not other fundamental problems with Rikers and complexes like it. At the center of these issues is the powerlessness Kalief and many others experience at Rikers: "I was in my cell and I was starved and I tried to talk to their superiors and they'd just walk away from me... I used to tell my mom the stuff they used to do to me [like I used to in school]... but in jail, my mom can't even help me. Now my mom's just crying on the phone, it's out of her hands."

So, it is perhaps even more important that decision makers also account for the structures and conditions that made Kalief and so many others feel powerless. Decarceration (and the eventual abolition of prisons many of us hope for) should

not just focus on the population and condition of jails, but on making existing prisons (and the dehumanization they perpetuate) – obsolete, to reference Angela Davis. Making the shift to providing communities with resources – for housing, mental health, physical health, de-escalation, and otherwise – instead, is critical to ensuring that they will not just re-emerge as soon as public attention shifts.

Reform, however, still has a place on the road to decarceration. To apply Mariame Kaba's framework of police reform to prison reform, these reforms must not expand the power, funds, or function of prisons. It is necessary for those in position of power to listen to what incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people are asking for, to think on what treating others with dignity looks like, and to act on it as soon as possible.

Venida Browder died of a heart attack only a year after her son's death. As Deion Browder, Kalief's brother, wrote after losing his brother and mother, "closing Rikers is a start," but "the only way we can get my family [and others'] justice is to continue my mother's legacy of fixing our broken schools and justice system." This shouldn't just address cash bail reform, but also the brutality endemic in/to jails, and "dismantl[ing] the school to prison pipeline," Deion said. While closing down Rikers itself is essential, the priority for Rikers, as pointed out in an interview by the Marshall Project, should be real rehabilitation "that bring[s] more immediate benefits to inmates and their families, like services to address the reasons why people end up in jail in the first place."

Kalief Browder would have been 29 today if he was still with us. Instead, changes that have been delayed for decades contributed to his life being cut short at 22. In an interview with the Marshall Project, Kalief's mother, Venida Browder, said "He may have hung himself, but the strings were pulled by the system."

During a game against the Buffalo Bills, Miami Dolphins Quarterback Tua Tagoviloia dropped back to pass before being shoved to the ground. His head violently whipped against the field. Tagoviloia stood up and attempted to walk to the huddle before stumbling twice and falling to his knees. All signs pointed to concussion, or other head related injury which would put him out of play for the remainder of the game. However, the team claimed it was a back injury and cleared him to play later that game. Four days later, Tua cleared concussion protocol again and suited up to play the Buffalo Bills on Thursday night football. However, in the first half he was thrown to the ground once again, his head smashing against the ground. Cameras zoomed in as over 10 million fans watched Tua lay flat on his back, appearing to seize up, fingers locked in unnatural positions. He was carted off the field, this time not to return.

This story is not a unique one. The minds and bodies of NFL athletes are constantly being put on the line with no regard for their health. In a league where 70% of the players are Black, but is almost entirely owned and managed by white people, this can't be ignored. These dynamics, however, are not isolated to the NFL. They're representative of the wider societal propensity for white elites to profit off Black bodies.

Former Dolphins head coach, Brian Flores, brought a class action lawsuit against the NFL for these racialized practices. Filed last spring, the lawsuit was supposed to serve as a landmark case for future change as well as challenge the NFL's apparent structural racism. In addition to the claims of discriminatory hiring practices in the suit, Flores also outlined mismanagement in the Dolphins organization. Flores alleges that ownership attempted to bribe him to intentionally lose games, as well as tamper in free agency. The mishandling of Tagoviloia's injury presents another example of clear violations of protocol from the Dolphins organization.

Since then, despite two additional coaches joining the suit and alleging similar discriminatory practices, nothing consequential has been done. After a series of empty words from the NFL and various legal roadblocks, the case has stalled. Although, the doctor who cleared Tagoviloia to return has since been fired, there has been no systemic change to protocols despite a clear failure in their application. Brian Flores has now joined the coaching staff of Pittsburgh Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin, one of the three remaining Black head coaches in the NFL. It should not go unnoticed that the only organization to give Flores a chance is one headed by another Black man. These developments leave the NFL right where it began: a league where profit is made off the backs of Black men, and power is retained by white owners.

In 2003, the NFL took its first substantial steps towards racial equality in hiring practices with the addition of

the "Rooney Rule". This rule requires teams to interview ethnic-minority candidates for head coaching positions. However, its efficacy has long been questioned, as there is a widespread alleged norm for teams to give sham interviews to meet these quotas without giving these candidates a fair shot at the position. These practices are the basis of Flores's suit. Messages have been released that indicate that the head coaching position Flores was applying for, had been decided before he had conducted his interview, implying Flores's interview was just to comply with the Rooney Rule. The racial demographics of leadership in the NFL also coincide with allegations of discriminatory practices. With three Black head coaches out of thirty-two teams, and no Black owners, the league has taken steps backwards from where it was when action was first taken in 2003.

These hiring practices stem from underlying perceptions and stereotypes of Black men. At the heart of this perception is the desire for white control and commodification of Black bodies. The idea of Black men as physical specimens without intellect or moral character is apparent in the NFL. The character, leadership, and work ethic of Black draft prospects are constantly under question. Meanwhile, their

white counterparts are typically described as "high-IQ" players or are "great locker-room guys." Black quarterbacks, such as former MVP Lamar Jackson are labeled as pure runners or athletes and are forced to prove their leadership, arm talent and intellect. A

few months ago, a TikTok trend went viral where people imitated the way NFL commentators spoke about white players: using words like "hard workers", "cerebral", "crafty" or students of the game. Black athletes, however, were primarily described as simply "raw athletes". While lighthearted, this trend is insightful. The perception of Black athletes lacking leadership, intelligence or a deep understanding of the game, directly translates to their lack of coaching opportunities after their careers. The false perception of lacking the very skills necessary for coaching, directly contributes to the discriminatory hiring practices present in the NFL.

Tagoviloia and Flores's stories exemplify the societal perceptions and sentiments that seep into the NFL. While the commodification and use of black men for profit is not unique to the NFL, stories like Tagoviloia's reveal the depth of this control that is expressed by almost entirely white owners over primarily Black men. Furthermore, the widespread perceptions regarding the intellect and character of Black athletes also shape or inform the hiring decisions and distribution of power in the NFL. Flores's suit sits at the crux of these two ideas. It reveals the apparent discrimination present in NFL hiring practices, while also shedding light on the mismanagement that led to Tagoviloia's injury. Simply put, the NFL provides a clear case of white owners continuing to express complete control and commodify Black bodies.

OP-ED:

# *The Impact of the Harambee Relocation on the Black Community*

Words by Arrissa Tachie-Menson

Harambee House has been one of the most sacred spaces for Black students at Brown for decades. Its history alone represents a crucial time of racial tension in 1993 when it was founded. It illuminates a sense of Black culture, pride, and achievement for all individuals of African descent. However, this year's relocation of Harambee House from Chapin to 315 Thayer may have caused a disruption to the core values that Harambee has embodied for decades.

Before coming to Brown last year, in 2021, I took some time to understand the Black community I was joining. I was surprised to see that Brown not only had numerous Black organizations but also housing specifically for Black students. After talking to my friends at other PWIs, I realized that this was uncommon. With that in mind, I always had gratitude for the individuals who fought to create Harambee, particularly after my experience as an Andrews Hall resident my freshman year. Andrews had an extremely small population of Black freshmen and I was reminded daily that this space was not for people like me. Many of my friends and I constantly felt dehumanized through stares and looks from non-Black individuals.

Last semester when Harambee announced applications for future members, I was immediately filled with excitement. All I could think about was finally feeling "normal" at this school and living in a space where I don't feel unwanted or feel like an imposter. When applications were finally released, I applied immediately within the first few hours. After I got my suite with my friends, I started planning all through the summer decorations and what my dorm would potentially look like.

However, once the semester began, I had a rude awakening of the reality of living in Harambee on 315 Thayer. First, being so isolated from Brown's campus has discouraged me from leaving the building at times. Additionally, Thayer is always packed with people at all hours of the day which can be overwhelming for an anxious person. Lastly, the overall environment on Thayer feels unsafe at times because of the many encounters I've had with men who catcall when I pass by. Instead of becoming a safe space, Harambee has added more obstacles to my safety and my well-being at Brown.

One of the most noticeable challenges was the sudden disconnect between my Black friends and the entire Black community at Brown. From the beginning of the school year to now, I've stayed in my room. I occasionally visit my friends who either live in suites or singles, but feel isolated most of the time. After discussing Harambee with my neighbor, Dori Walker '24, she pointed out that the overall design of Harambee is aesthetically pleasing but there is a lack of space for community building. She states what motivated and allowed many Black students to grow close to each other was the physical space of the original Harambee. After reflecting on my experiences in Harambee, I greeted people passing through the basement, elevator, or when I'm exiting or entering but I rarely got the opportunity to become acquainted with other Harambee residents. Harambee has now become a place where Black people just live together but do not build community amongst each other.

My discussions about the move with Black upperclassmen who either lived in Harambee last year or were involved in discussions regarding the relocation lead to similar viewpoints

on the move and the unintended divide in the Black community. The original move was due to the desire to have a better living space and an exclusive space for Black students. According to Milicent Stiger '24 the overall process and conversations regarding the relocation ignored the voices of upperclassmen and alumni which was a crucial element. She expresses that without their presence, students were not able to comprehend the full significance of the location of Harambee at Chapin. As stated by Walker '24, Harambee was fought for by multiple African-American students who received death threats and other hardships as a result. This question is whether relocating was the most suitable choice in the history of Harambee. As a consequence of this move, many Black organizations have had to relocate to other spaces in order to meet, which discourages community building. I noticed this as one of the Black Heritage Series Coordinators for the BCSC. Harambee is no longer considered a potential location when planning Black events. For example, the BSU Black Barbeque in September would normally be outside Chapin but instead was outside of the Kasper Multipurpose Room.

I also felt a potential lack of transparency through the lottery process of selecting suites and singles. After applying, students were emailed maps of the building which included the rooms, and also a Google sheet of the room availability. However, there were singles and suites unavailable prior to the lottery for accommodations and other reasons that were not disclosed to anyone. Many students discovered this through word of mouth or by taking the time to look at the sheet. Though I am grateful for being able to live in Harambee and my suitemates, I can't help to forget the frustrations of my friends and myself during the lottery.

Furthermore, there were multiple demands that Harambee residents wanted ResLife to meet by the end of the summer to ensure proper protection and better living standards than Chapin. This included a gate around Harambee and making additional renovations to Harambee. Unfortunately, ResLife was not able to fulfill these demands but renovations to the Wellness Center were made as well as new dorms are currently being built. This raises the question if Black students' safety is being prioritized as they are left vulnerable to the environment of Thayer. This is a very concerning reality considering that members of Harambee were originally approached with the option of moving to 315 Thayer from Brown. Dori disclosed that the entire process of relocating was left to the Black students alone to decide within such a short time frame. This places a significant amount of pressure on individuals who are young adults constantly adjusting to the Brown environment as a racial minority.

I will admit as a freshman I was not properly educated on the history of Harambee, focusing on solely being around my Black friends. But after having conversations with Black students, I can't imagine how this relocation may be perceived by Black alumni and faculty. Our history is sacred and should be educated to all and protected. It is our duty as Black students to ensure that we are consistently building a community for ourselves and passing down our history and legacy. I do believe that there are benefits to living in Harambee and it's not completely dreadful on the individual scale. But the loss of our community and history is not something to be taken lightly or overlooked. We now have to decide how to get the community together, which may include a potential fight to move back to the original space.

# AP African American Studies Course Pilots in U.S. High Schools

Words by Tope Adetunji

If you graduated from a high school in the United States, chances are you're familiar with the College Board through their Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The College Board is a not-for-profit organization that promotes college readiness through various programs and services. Every high school that offers AP courses has the power to decide which and how many AP courses they offer in addition to the placement standards for matriculating students.

My experience with the College Board was marked by the type of high school that I attended. I went to a private high school in Massachusetts that offered regular-level, honors, and AP courses. The number of AP courses was very limited and the process of being placed into one was difficult. Students had to both take a certain number of courses and be approved by the department under which that AP course fell before being able to take an AP course. Waiting until junior year before enrolling in AP courses was typical of most students, especially because they were not offered to freshmen. That was my path. Through my experience taking AP European History, AP English Literature, AP Calculus AB, and AB Biology, I left with quite strong opinions about the inadequacy of the AP curriculum and its ability to cover the breadth of the topic of a given course.

Earlier this school year, the College Board announced that it would be implementing the first AP African American Studies pilot program which is being tested out across 60 high schools in the United States. With a multidisciplinary curriculum, this course is meant to explore topics ranging from African American literature to the arts.

In a statement to CBS News, the Collegeboard said that this course has been in development for over a decade. Trevor Packer, the head of College Board's AP Program, noted the death of George Floyd and the social response as a reason for why the College Board announced the course now. From a business perspective, this course arrives after the national awakening on racial injustice with the events that transpired during the summer of 2020. While activism spirits are still relatively high and people are interested in social justice, one could say this course comes at a great time for the younger generation. On the other hand, the College Board's initiative can be perceived as performative. Moreover, its arrival as a pilot program comes during an

important time when Critical Race Theory (CRT) courses are receiving political pushback across the country. While AP African American Studies is not a designated CRT course, some of its teachings may overlap with CRT.

While some rejoice over the introduction of this new course and others hope it ceases to exist, there is a group of people who are still torn. One of those people is Mehdi Epee-Bounya, a second-year student at Brown University who is familiar with the College Board and is interested in pursuing Africana Studies as a concentration. Epee-Bounya expressed that "overall [he's] happy that [AP African American Studies] may be implemented because it amplifies Black voices and it sheds light on African American history." While this sentiment is shared by many who support the initiative, College Board's intent may not translate to its impact. Epee-Bounya posed the following question: "Why is [African American Studies] separate from regular American history classes?" On the one hand, some could argue that African American history is a major component of U.S. history, and thus should not be treated as "two separate histories." Instead, it should be incorporated equally into U.S. history courses and go beyond the scope of the time period between slavery and the civil rights movement. On the other hand, this implementation could be seen as progress. There is only so much material that the high school history curriculum can cover during a school year. The implementation of this new AP course could mean College Board is doing its due diligence to ensure that the full breadth of African American history and culture is covered in a school year.

If this pilot program succeeds and is available for all U.S. high schools starting in the 2024-2025 school year, it could be historical. Due to the standardized nature of the AP Curriculum, the fear is that the course will offer just a cursory glance into the various unit topics in an effort to cover all the material in time for the AP Exam. This, in turn, could lead to students not getting as much out of the course as they possibly could. College Board must do this course justice, which means a variety of things including not white-washing the curriculum.

As opposition to the teaching of various difficult and polarizing issues continues to be debated, it will be interesting to see where this course falls in its criticism and praise if it is implemented. How state politics and societal opinions will affect where and in how many high schools across the nation this course may be implemented is something to look out for.

AP African American studies could be the much-needed provision of representation that Black high school students need. As explained by Epee-Bounya, "In an ideal world, there is an American history class that includes these histories, but I don't know if that's feasible. I think the next best option is the implementation of this course." Hopefully, in the next year, we will see how this course may elicit positive changes.

# School Choice Won't Save Our Students

Words by Karma Selsey

"As our district continues to struggle to meet the needs of all students, Brett supports families' decisions to choose schools that work for them." Like many, Providence mayor-elect Brett Smiley endorses "freedom to choose," which would allow students to enroll in schools that directly fit their needs. In 2019, the Rhode Island government took over Providence schools due to a Johns Hopkins report on the poor proficiency statistics of Providence students. In response, the state has promised to focus on improving the quality of students' education. The pandemic, however, has halted these efforts, and schools continue to struggle. While Smiley is committed to this change, he is one of many. In fact many parents across the country support school choice. This change, however, has particular effects on the Black community. It prompts a larger conversation about school choice and its effects on the Black community at large.

I spent my entire PreK-12 years in some of the most segregated schools in the United States, New York City Public Schools. While most schools across the country are zoned by district, many New York schools are different. Public school students participate in a robust application process hoping to be accepted into highly selective middle and high schools. Screens for these schools often include state test scores, interviews and essays, attendance, and a student's neighborhood. This has resulted in high concentrations of white affluent students in "good" schools, and poor Black students in "bad" ones. I had the displeasure of experiencing this process firsthand. While I am grateful for the resources of my "good" schools, I was one of the three percent of Black students in my high school. Although New York's heavy use of school choice is unique, school choice exists in cities and states all across the country.

Studies agree that there is a statistically significant correlation between school choice, segregation, and school quality, particularly for Black students. Early notions of school choice in the United States came after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, mandating the desegregation of all schools in the country. In response, we saw some of the nation's first voucher programs—which still exist today—that allowed white parents to avoid sending their children to integrated schools. School vouchers make it possible for students to attend private schools they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. The rush to get white children away from integrated schools, be it through vouchers or completely moving out of their district, is what is known as white flight. White flight certainly has not ceased to exist in recent years, as families still choose neighborhoods based on school reputation. "Freedom to choose," however, differs from white flight in that it also applies to Black families and other families of color who want to send their children to selective schools.

Many Black parents fear for the quality of their children's education. In a 2018 report, the National Department of Education found that Black students had the lowest average reading and math achievement scores of any racial group. My mother and I shared this fear, landing me in predominantly white, wealthy middle and high schools.

While this fear is justified, such heavy pro-school choice rhetoric suggests that education is a means of social mobility rather than a public good. Critics of school choice point out that these selective schools only want to provide these resources to "exceptional" Black kids. Getting into a selective magnet or charter school is challenging with many charter schools having waitlist numbers in

the hundreds or even thousands. Academically prosperous Black children in these schools are commonly used as proof of meritocracy, effectively putting them in competition with Black children who do not meet such standards. The reality, however, is that this is another form of segregation, disguised by meritocracy.

These sentiments are reflected by the New York City Schools Chancellor, David C. Banks: "If you've got a child who works really hard on weekends, and putting in their time and energy and they get a ninety-eight average—they should have a better opportunity to get into a high-choice school, then, you know, the child you have to throw water on their face to get them to go to school every day." In defense of his comments, he explained that he knows plenty of Black kids who fit into that criteria, but the damage has already been done. This statement is echoed by people across the country: if you're not thriving academically, it's your fault. If you just try hard enough, you too can escape the failures of the traditional public school system because you simply deserve it more.

None of this is to say that every proponent of school choice, Brett Smiley included, agrees with Chancellor Banks. People are reasonably concerned with the current quality of schools. The dismissal of everyone who is left out of these conversations (i.e., those who are in underfunded, under-resourced schools) is disappointing, though. Students, regardless of their grades and test scores, and regardless of their parents' social capital, deserve a high quality education. It is difficult to believe that the Providence Public School District can be saved by school choice. If we continue to make these "good" schools inaccessible to so many people, whose lives will be truly transformed?

# WINDSOR HILLS CRASH TAKES 6 VICTIMS

Words by Ryan Jones  
Art by Lyric Johnson

shining on every screen you can't miss them  
they even had the courtesy to list them  
victims include:

a pregnant woman and an infant a month shy of his 1st birthday  
i have no intentions to traumatize per se  
but someone saw new life, take flight, and die that day  
and that's the way I received the story  
on the way to grandma's house, marveling at the blaze of glory  
as removed from filmed tragedy as an episode of Maury

after the 4th rewind it was hard to remember it was a real event  
and not a video game we controlled with curious intent  
sitting backs bent with elbows resting on knees  
the moment passed like a breeze  
as fast but without the chills  
transitioning to holiday plans with few frills

not many eat their vegetables during the apocalypse  
most try to watch from a high point like the Acropolis  
and why should anyone put a stop to this?  
what's the point of higher consciousness if some still adhere to  
what "logic" is?

To naturally prefer the positively monotonous  
and to stay anonymous  
quiet as kept  
vegetative where perception is bottomless  
yet lacking in depth

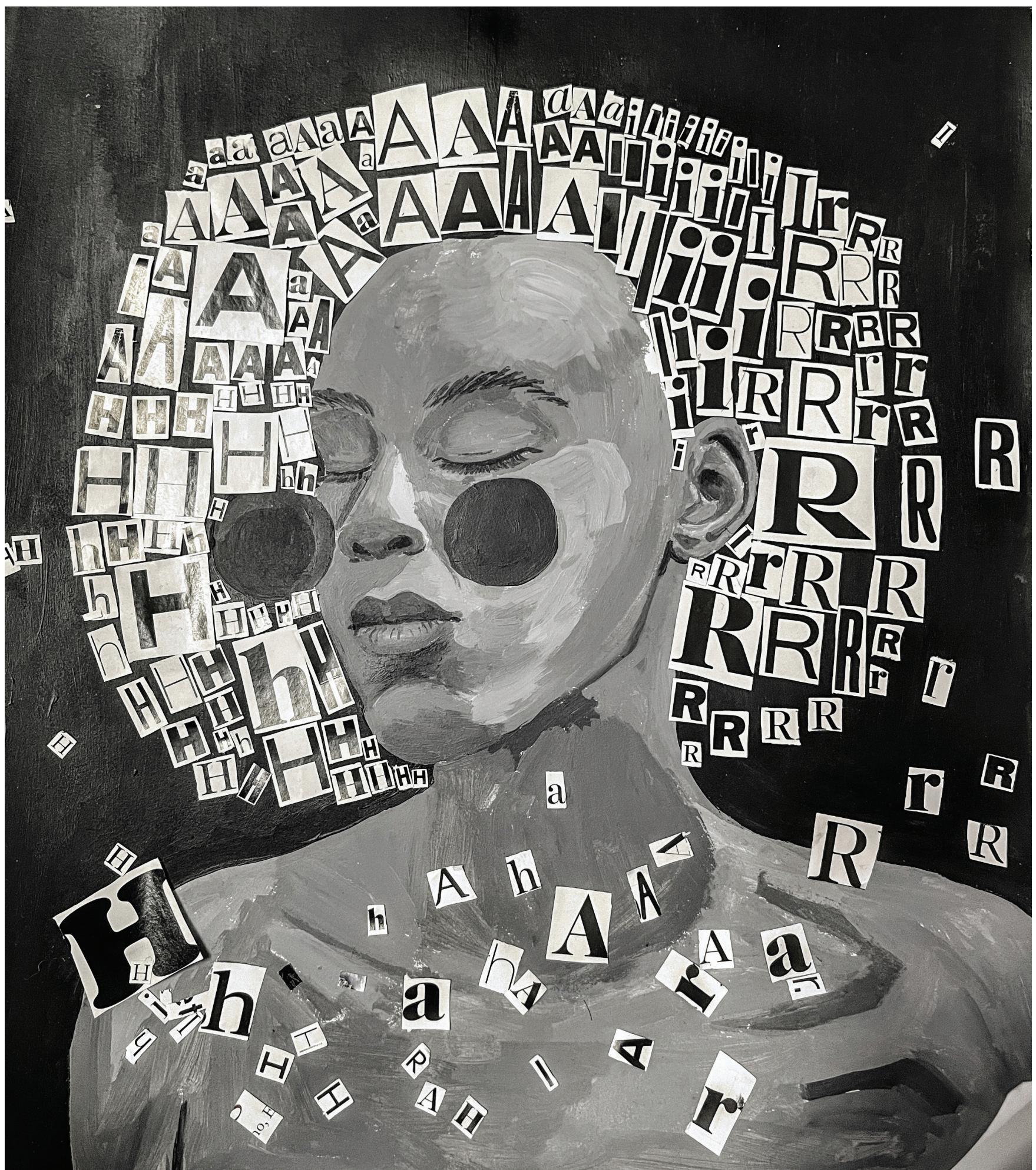
do we concede to Murphy's law  
dissolve to the Tao  
or trust in God's grace?  
maybe add higher vibrations to the space  
as we watch turmoil and wait to see other features  
while claiming "I am not my brother's keeper"  
ceasing to read further to find the driver's condition  
where you'd see her mind's division tampered with her decisions  
but maybe it's not your mission to show grace and love without  
reason

since those people perish as hippie heathens

*Rest In Peace to Asherey Ryan, Reynold Lester, their baby Alonzo, and  
unborn child Armani, as well as Lynette Noble, and Natesha Lewis.*



# The Black Star Journal



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