Black Girl, Black Girl, What is Your Song?: And Other Confessions from Centering Blackness at a PWI

Whalen Symposium Keynote
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Outline

● Introduction
● Literature Review
● Methods
● Confessions
● Where do we go from here?
● Questions
Introduction

What is our project?

“Black Girl, Black Girl What is Your Song: And Other Confessions from Bleeding Women”

A Play by April Carroll
CONFESSION #1

Centering Blackness Is Exhausting
April’s Experience:

● Freshman Year - Tom Rochen  
  #NoConfidence

“When I was choosing colleges to apply to last year, my mother kept reminding me to check the statistics of African-American bodies on campus. But when I decided on attending Ithaca College for its film program, the number of people of color on campus was the last thing on my mind. Now, it is hard not to think about the lack of diversity here.”

- ‘I joined student protests to fight racism – and learned how deeply prejudice runs’
  April Carroll
April’s Experience

- Sophomore Year - White Male Mediocrity
April’s Experience

● Junior Year - Diversity Advocates at Park

- Film school is saying you’re going to use a real gun in your film because you can “never be arrested” because you’re white.
- Film school is having men write about sexual harassment and assault in a way that demonizes women and victimizes men.
- Film school is having a mental breakdown in class over.
- Film school is “important” films by men accused of rape.
- Film school is studying blackface in them but not studying films by black filmmakers.
- Film school is being told to do the dishes on a set because I’m the only woman.
- Film school is not looking at films by women for inspiration.
- Film school is calling your character Eric Gardner without knowing who Eric Gardner is in real life.
- Film school is saying you’re going to use a real gun in your film because you can “never be arrested” because you’re white.
- Film school is...
CONFESSION #2

Centering Blackness Means Always Having to Say You’re Sorry
Literature Review

- Racial Microaggressions (Pierce 1969; Solorzano et al., 2000).
- Development of counter-spaces (Robertson, Bravo and Chaney 2016)
- Hidden curriculum (Giroux & Penna 1983)
- The gaze (Esposito 2011)
- Diversity and Inclusion (Davis 2019)
- Double Consciousness (DuBois 1897)
DuBois Double Consciousness

“Double consciousness is a term describing the internal conflict experienced by subordinated groups in an oppressive society. It was coined by W. E. B. Du Bois with reference to African American "double consciousness," including his own, and published in the autoethnographic work, *The Souls of Black Folk*. The term originally referred to the psychological challenge of "always looking at one's self through the eyes" of a racist white society, and "measuring oneself by the means of a nation that looked back in contempt". The term also referred to Du Bois' experiences of reconciling his African heritage with an upbringing in a European-dominated society.”
Methods

● Qualitative
● Data Collection
  ○ Interviews - individual and group
● Transcription
● Analysis:
  ○ Coding
  ○ Themes: Hair, dating, identity, finding support
● *Read drafts
● *Attended 2 thesis critiques
CONFESSION #3

Centering Blackness Means
You’re On Your Own
Black Girl, Black Girl, What is Your Song?: And Other Confessions From Bleeding Women

THE PLAY: Entirely taking place in a freshman year black girl’s dorm room, four women bond over the fact that they keep getting confused for one another even though they look nothing alike.

MY AUDIENCE: Started out geared toward POC and creating a space for them to feel their emotions but turned into a play for white people because of the environment that we’re in today.

THE REVIEW/CRITIQUE: No one responded.

SETTING:
A dorm room that takes up the entire stage. The central point is a rug laying on the ground with "SISTER OUTSIDER" by Audre Lorde, a PACK OF CIGARETTES, an ASHTRAY, a FAN, and a RECORD PLAYER with RECORDS resting next to it. Outside of the rug are things such as a DRESSER with a MIRROR, an UNKEMPT BED, a LARGE ARMCHAIR, POSTERS that scatter the walls, and a tall LAMP glowing red in the corner.

CHARACTERS:
AUGGI
Freshman, from Maine, been around white people all her life, came to college and got loud/pride, white mom, black dad, STRAIGHTENED HAIR

MILL
Senior, black black, non binary, AFRO

FLIP
Senior, afro latina, came from the DR, lives in NYC, spanish speaker, first gen student, LARGE CURLS

BIRCH
Junior, from the deep South, soft, quiet, doesn’t understand everything, gay, black mother, Puerto Rican father, CURLS
Being On Your Own

- Professionals in Residence -- one of the first lectures with black filmmakers/actors that I had seen in the Park school
  - They told me that to make it in this industry I have to be on my own and set my own path
  - Finally being able to see someone that looked like me in Park, I was so heartbroken that they couldn’t see how badly I was struggling in that environment on my own

● Race as a variable
● Race as a dynamic factor
● The critique
● Silence
To The EDU That Burned Us, Then Pulled Us From The Fire

“Dear Ithaca College, we have a problem. We are trapped in a fire with no way out. We are gasping for air. We are screaming your name. All we need is a little water.”

- Hugely influenced off of Du Bois’s idea of the double consciousness
- A love/hate relationship with Ithaca College as a whole
- Awful experiences but amazing people
- Focusing on the inequalities within predominantly white institutions when it comes to the growth of women of color that attend them, this exhibition serves to create an interactive/immersive space to show off the feelings and constant balancing act of being not only a woman, but a woman of color with all eyes on them as they try not to burn (out).
CONFESSION #4

Just Because We Center Blackness Doesn’t Mean That We Have All The Answers!
Thank you!

Questions?

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