This is What I Wanna See!: Notes on Vogue Fem as a Way Forward

UArts
SCHOOL
OF DANCE

THE TELLING OF US

Uwazi Zamani

The Telling of Us/This is What I Wanna See! : Notes on Vogue Fem as a Way Forward

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Thinking Partners: Thomas DeFrantz and Niall Jones

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts, Dance 2022
The University of the Arts

I would first like to thank my family. To my parents, Arthur and Eva Campbell for supporting my career in dance since the day I said I wanted to. Thank you for your undying love, financial commitments, gas, and the wear and tear on your cars from picking me up from classes and gigs. I cannot thank you enough and will never stop thanking you. To my brother and sister, Calvin Martin and Rici Muckleroy for your tough love, words of wisdom and care over the years.

To my my wonderful friends, mentors and thinking partners. BLACK QUEER MEN who have pertpetually moved me to keep seeing humanity in the world and to move and gravitate towards my excesses rather than shy away from them. I thank Harrison Guy for your visions of a better world and seeing me beyond a company dancer. To Elijah Gibson for being a rock and a listening ear. To quail Shaheed for your fire and getting me on my leg. To Tommie Waheed-Evans for your honesty, embrace and making Philly feel like I never left home. To Niall Jones for helping restore my sense of wonderment in the work . I thank you all for your love, care, insight, feedback, and criticism.

Extra special thanks to Donna Faye Burchfield for your imagination, your gentle and caring nudges of encouragement, for opening your office as a workspace, for the food and for your fierce and unrelenting care. To Thomas DeFrantz, thank you for the hard questions, the intentional dialogue, patience and guidance.

Extra special thanks to Esther Siddiquie, James McGinn, Cameron Childs, Emily Wexler and the rest of the UArts Administrative team for your tireless work across the school year and during the Summer study cycles.

I thank my wonderful teachers across all grade levels. From elementary to undergrad, you have inspired me, believed in me and empowered me to never stop dreamng and to keep imagining. Special thanks to: Ruth Criner, Laura Pike, Tara Bone, Margaret Waldon, Raquanda Epps, Lila Joseph, Akbar Harrison, Eric Carr, Natalie Alexandre, Terrick Brown, Kai Coggin, Xan McMutry, Chandra Donald, Kathy Swchartz, and David Cho.

To my amazing dance teachers: Kenneth Epting, Anna Ashy, Alicia Diaz, Eddie Stockton, Sharon Wong, Stephanie Martinez, Rachel Meadow, Dorothy Overbey O'shay, and Gesel Mason.

I extend extra special thanks to the Black Studies Department at the University of Texas Austin for your refuge and extra special care. Special thanks to the Black Student Organizations for making UT home, thanks for the laughs, the food, the parties and commitments to the Black student population.

Special thanks to Dr. Anthony L. Brown for opening your office door to my many concerns. Thank you for embracing me and pushing me to be a better scholar.

To my students, both current and former, you are loved and thank you for holding me in uncertainty. Thank you for your patience, love and hard work.

Lastly, to my INSANELY BRILLIANT COHORT!!! Thank you for holding space, for taking risks, for collective study, and for your ever varying and many urgencies to change the world.

We must, we can, and we will continue to gather so that we will...

Dedicated to Black boys,
those here, those not here and those not yet here.
To the artistic geniuses
unbound by structured education
To the Black and Brown Pier Kids
To the Icons and Legends who paved the way
To Melvin, Marlon , Essex, and Joseph
To Huey, Bobby, Eldridge, and H. Rap Brown

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

The Telling of Us

Mantra
p. 8-9

Also and Perhaps: Black Queer and Black Male
p. 10-11

Framework: Context, Legitimacy,
Repetition and Racial Realism
p. 12-13

Tropes and Black Masculinity
p. 14-19

Lynching and Racial Depictions
p. 20-25

Notes on Black Militancy
p. 26-27

In the Wake, Fugitivity & Blackness against Statehood
p. 28-29

Black Gay and Black Militant Roundtable
p.30-31

Pop Culture and Academic Atrocities
p. 32-33

Sylvia Wynter on Feminism
p. 34-35

Southern Invocations
p. 36-37

Takeaways from Appealing Because He is Appaling
p. 38-39

Conclusion: Blackness and Ontological Contigencies
p. 40-45

TABLES OF CONTENTS (cont.)

This is What I Wanna See! : Notes on Vogue Fem as a Way Forward

Precis
p. 48-49

We Need New Songs to Sing:
An Optimistic Premise
p. 50-51

Notes on Old Way (Pop, Dip and Spin) and New Way
p. 54-55

Strategic Embodied Improvisations: Notes on Vogue Fem
p. 56-57

Jim Crow: Black Queer Anatomy
p. 58-59

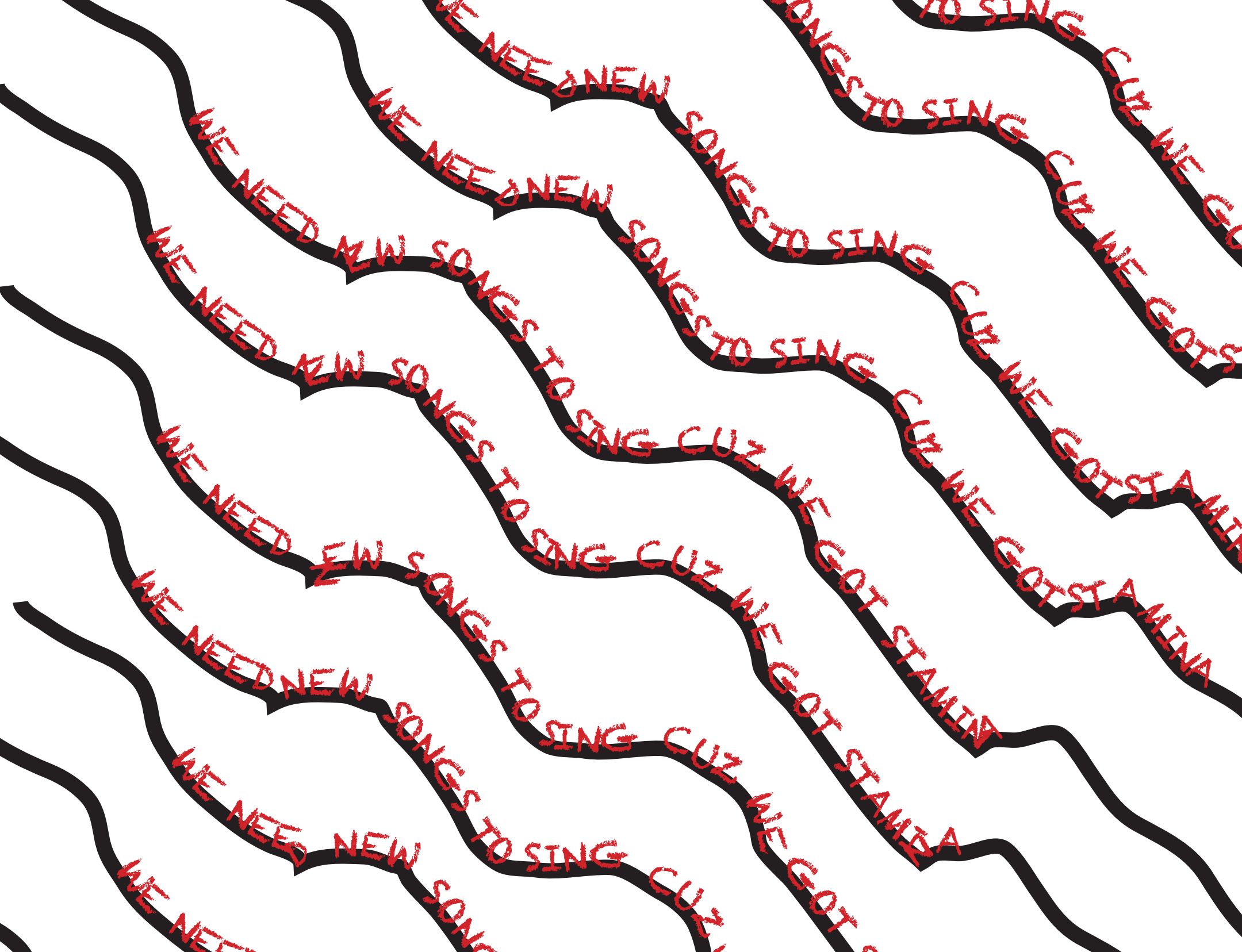
Intentional Authorities: Body, Space, Identity, and Sound
p. 60-67

Black Queer Archives: Unexamined Bodies of Work
p. 68-71

Reimagining HOME- Both a Social Home and
Corporeal Home:
On Cultural Memory and Black Futurity
p. 72-73

Research Archives- Unexamined Bodies and
The Telling of Us (Re-membered)
p. 74-77

Illustrations and BibliograpWhy
p. 78-81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WE NEED NEW SONGS TO SING CUZ WE GOT STAMINA

Also Black, Also Male, Also Queer, Also Man, Also Femme, Also Masculine

"Society responds to him as a thing, a beast, a non-entity, something to be ignored or stepped on. He is asked to respect laws that do not respect him. He is asked to digest a code of ethics that act upon him, but not for him. He is confused and in a constant state of rage, of shame, of doubt.

This psychological state permeates all his interpersonal relationships. It determines his view of the social system. His psychological development has been prematurely arrested. This doubt begins at a very early age and continues throughout his life. The parents pass it on to the child and the social system reinforces the fear, the shame, and the doubt."
— Huey P. Newton

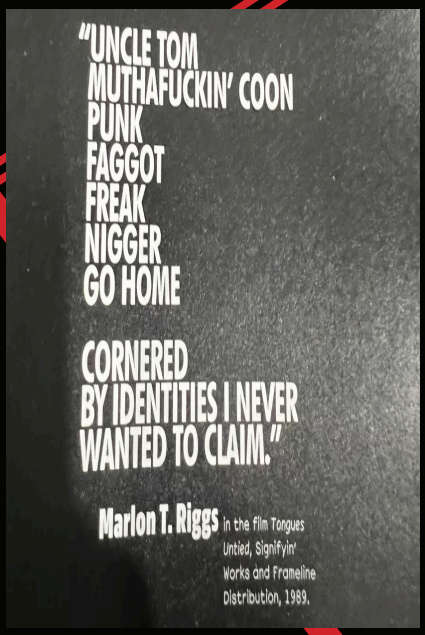
I found myself in this intermediary space as a Black man and a Black man who is also queer. I found that my world's were colliding. I found that my advocation for Black nationalist pedagogy was shrouded with homophobic sentiments. I found that my identifying as a Black man had been reduced to a type of enclosure and hindrance when I entered the academy. Black men and the experiences of Black men are understudied and undertheorized. What I found was that a great deal of assumptions could be made about Black men and it was accepted as truth. However, most of these assumptions stemmed from criminological stereotypes and tropes conjured by white antipathy and psychopathology. No one would dare challenge it because this was the consensus.
Being Black and Queer, I discovered (particularly in white spaces) that there was a level of performance I exhausted in order to not name yourself as "one of those Black men". This fervently echoed "you're not like those Black people" only this was cased in a sort of gender essentialism. To perform, in this context, meant that in order to be considered for small talk and be invited, I should be who they imagine Black, queer identifying men to be. The iterations they see on TV; loud, flamboyant, and overtop. All of this, to possibly escape the stereotypical and historiographic renderings of Black men as "angry", "too serious", "rigid" and "always mad about something". If I adhered to the renderings of every one else's understanding of queerness, I could escape the stereotypes and pathologizations of being Black and male or I could be something "other" than.

My research and degree emphasis in both Dance and Black Queer Performance helped me understand this idea of "overperformance" as a queer mode of defiance. This idea of being FIERCE as madison moore explains "a spectacular way of being in the world—a transgressive over-performance of the self through aesthetics." Or perhaps its Paul B Preciado's theory that "feminity displayed hyperbolically is not the expression of an inner sensitivity, but the staging of a political conflict." Holding both statements in high regard, I still felt that my queerness was not my own. That these renderings were stifling and did not allow multiplicity.

I spent more time defending my right to interiorty from those that felt a performance was neccessary to lay claim to both a brand of queerness and masculinity that had been ingested, not through politics but through just aesthetics and that's where it stopped. Yet, it wasn' aesthetics grew out of resistance and that it wasn't just dress up. The decision to and the decision to do so were both form of resistance

It shunned possibility.
It marked. It assigned.
You are this way and
not this way.

I want to move away from that.



Black Queer Theory next to and alongside Black Male Studies

Dr. Tommy Curry, hailed as the "Father of Black Male Studies" unpacks the enduring legacy of misreading Black menand boys in academic literature. He argues that Black men are described inmost social science research through the lens of "lack, hyper-masculinity, and sexism" (p. 11), and he shatters the age-old tropes of Black men as "violent sexual predators who take pleasure in the murder and rape of others" (p. 12). According to Curry, this was at the core of the 1960s and 1970s "sub-culture of violence" theories produced by White feminists and criminologists, which still lingers today. He speaks to how negative stereotypes and tropes allow for the genocide of Black men. Curry suggests, that we "reconfigure the boundaries of gender theory and thought itself, which remains deeply ingrained in various feminist-inspired accounts of a racist and anti-Black male imagery"
(Kitossa, p. 11-12).

The boundaries of Gender Studies often negate the experiences of Black men. This is usually done through the framework of intersectionality. The minute you qualify marginalization with (most) that means you want to make oppression quantifiable in some degree. It shouldn't matter what Black men think. The fact of the matter is Black men are at the bottom of many (not all) socioeconomic and ecological categories. This alongside Black Queer theory helps us to understand certain historical markings and positions fastened my white supremacist impositions

As I imagine a community-pending, I imagine a roundtable between Black menof all walks of life. I imagine Eldridge Cleaver sitting next to Marlon Riggs, Essex Hemphill next to H. Rap Brown, and Joseph Beam next to Bobby Seal. Figures of the Black Gay Cultural Rennaissance and Black Radical Movements finally getting a chance to ask what else can there be? A space to move forward. To imagine things beyond circumstance but still undertand that the world is real and certain forces have formed jagged misshapen ideas about Black Men of all walks of life.

I offer broad strokes, not to generalize but to enact a deliberate reach. I seek to be alongside many Black men at the same time. Through this act of fantasizing, imagining and creating, I am able to think towards what these conversations might sound like, how I can foster new avenues of intentional dialogue; A Wealth of Black Masculine Possibilities. I wish to unbound from tropes and prsent in Black and then Queer spaces. Perhaps ushering in the idea that the nuance of both lived experiences do not constitute a denial of the other.

Patricia Hill Collins- Black Feminist Theory (p.74)

Rather than emphasizing how a Black women's standpoint and its accompanying epistemology differ from those of White women, Black men, and other collectivities, Black women's experiences serve as one specific social location for examining points of connection among multiple epistemologies. Viewing Black feminist epistemology in this way challenges additive analyses of oppression claiming that Black women have a more accurate view of oppression than do other groups. Such approaches suggest that oppression can be quantified and compared and that adding layers of oppression produces a potentially clearer standpoint (Spelman 1988). One implication of some uses of standpoint theory is that the more subordinated the group, the purer the vision available to them. This is an outcome of the origins of standpoint approaches in Marxist social theory itself reflecting the binary thinking of its Western origins. Ironically, by quantifying and ranking human oppressions, standpoint theorists invoke criteria for methodological adequacy that resemble those of positivism. Although it is tempting to claim that Black women are more oppressed than everyone else and therefore have the best standpoint from which to understand the mechanisms, processes, and effects of oppression, this is not the case.

FRAMEWORK

CONTEXT:

When you think about the idea of context, we're talking about a time period. We're talking about a location. We're talking about economic structures, legal structures. All of the societal forces that made it possible for something to exist in that time.

Example: Speaking to the African-Americans in Chicago. we cannot remove the Great Migration from that. but at the same time, we cannot remove Jim Crow politics that had a role in pushing African-Americans out of the South, but pulling them into the North based on the economic conditions of growth in places like Chicago and Houston, there was also growth

LEGITIMACY:

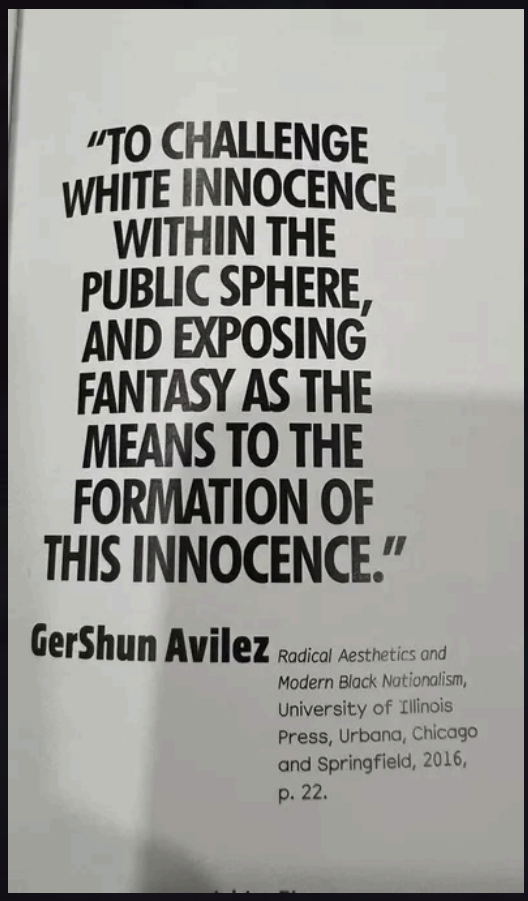
Examining people, forces, and sociological structures that had the power to dictate. This draws from the work of Sylvia Wynter, who calls them 'legitimizing discourses'. Legitimacy is epistemic orders, a power, the theologian, scientist, social scientist. In some cases, it's the actuary. Those that have the power to write about black people and what is our capacity, what we can and cannot do.

REPETITION:

Repetition over time where there is the long duration of ideas that reproduce themselves over and over again with a different medium or maybe a different mechanism, but always trying to constitute Black male in a particular light, but engaging in fundamentally the same kind of marking, marking black men in a particular way.

Derrick Bell on Racial Realism:

Bell argues if you take a racial realist perspective, you recognize the world is going to remain durably racialized and isn't necessarily safe for black men. But he's saying, just as a totalizing framework, that race will play a fundamental role in society.



In Response to Racial Realism

I would argue that there's a kind of black male racial realism and I would argue and think at times it is debilitating. I can go to the store , go for a jog and just be free to do whatever I want to do.

However, there are limitations on that. I have an opposite perspective about that because I think if you go towards a racial realist perspective, it suggests that you go in already acknowledging that this racial space is there.

So you're a bit sovereign in how you get to engage in that pain. But I think if you go in without a racial realist perspective, really subjective, you go in with an assumption that you can engage however I want and then you get you get a rude and sometimes volatile awakening about that.

So there's a certain safety and protection I personally will see when I'm already wired to know where danger is, recognizing that the world is dangerous in many different ways. But I have already tacitly understood that the world is going to read me in this situation in a particular way.

MR T. RICE

AS

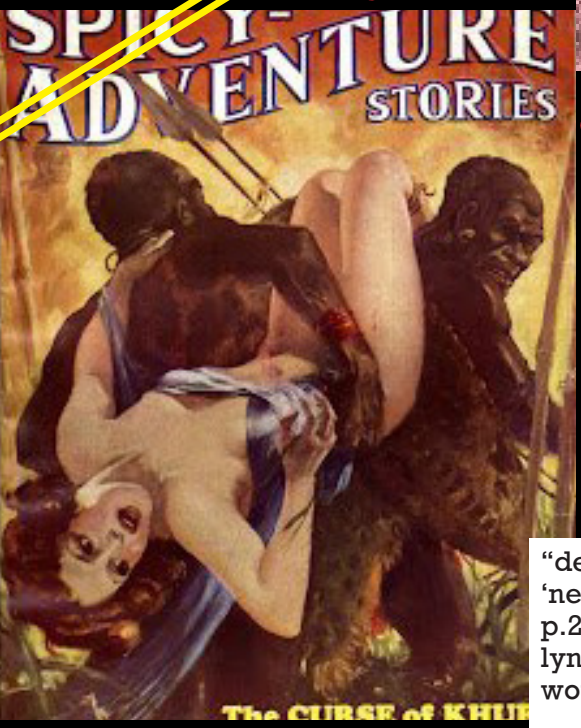
THE ORIGINAL JIM CROW

New York Pub.d by E. RILEY N.o 29 Chatham St

TROPE

a figurative or
metaphorical use of a
word or expression.
a significant or recurrent theme;
a motif.

Ex:
Nigger, Jiggaboo, Mandingo, Sambo,
Zip Coon, Brute, Savage, Uncle Tom,
Faggot, Pansy



"defensive Southern reaction based on the characterization of 'new issue' Negro as a brute and savage" (Fredrickson, 1972, p.274) Consequently, black men were the primary targets of lynching. This portrayal of the Negro as "beastial" or "brutish" would remain the bulk of white suspicion.

Jordan further explains that "…they resorted to a powerful metaphor with which to express their own sense of difference from him…they frequently described the Africans as 'brutish' or 'bestial' or 'beastly'.

Notes on the Zip Coon and Dandyism

The Zip Coon cariacture was portrayed as a well-dressed dandy who "put on airs" and pretended to be above his station. White audiences, confident in their social (and racial) superiority, were entertained by Zip Coon's misplaced attempts to seem clever, educated, and sophisticated. (James E Walker Library)

An interesting thing I've noticed from inside Black masculinity is that, because we're constructed as hyper-masculine, there's actually a lot more room for expressions of gender that would otherwise be coded as feminine as compared to white masculinity.

Black dandyism has a long history. Black men, when compared to white men, are more likely to have an intimate relationship with the person who does their hair, more likely to wear cologne, more likely to get manicures, more likely to have multiple pairs of $200 or more shoes.

While dancing is frequently seen as feminine when white men do it, it is seen as an indispensable aspect of Black masculinity. And it's socially acceptable because Black men are seen as hyper-masculine.

So many things that would be taken in a white man as being feminizing are seen in Black men as civilizing by bringing us closer to the white norm of masculinity and out of the hyper-masculinity of Blackness.

White men seem to have a culture of "I don't dance," but what I think it is: they push the narrative that real men don't dance when it suits them. Mainly, when the subject is "colored" music like disco, rnb, soul, salsa, hip hop, etc. suddenly those men become hyper-homosexual.

white people think that white men dancing is white men dancing unless it involves "colored" music, in which case it is considered "feminine/gay." But colored men dancing are viewed as "sodomites" anyway.

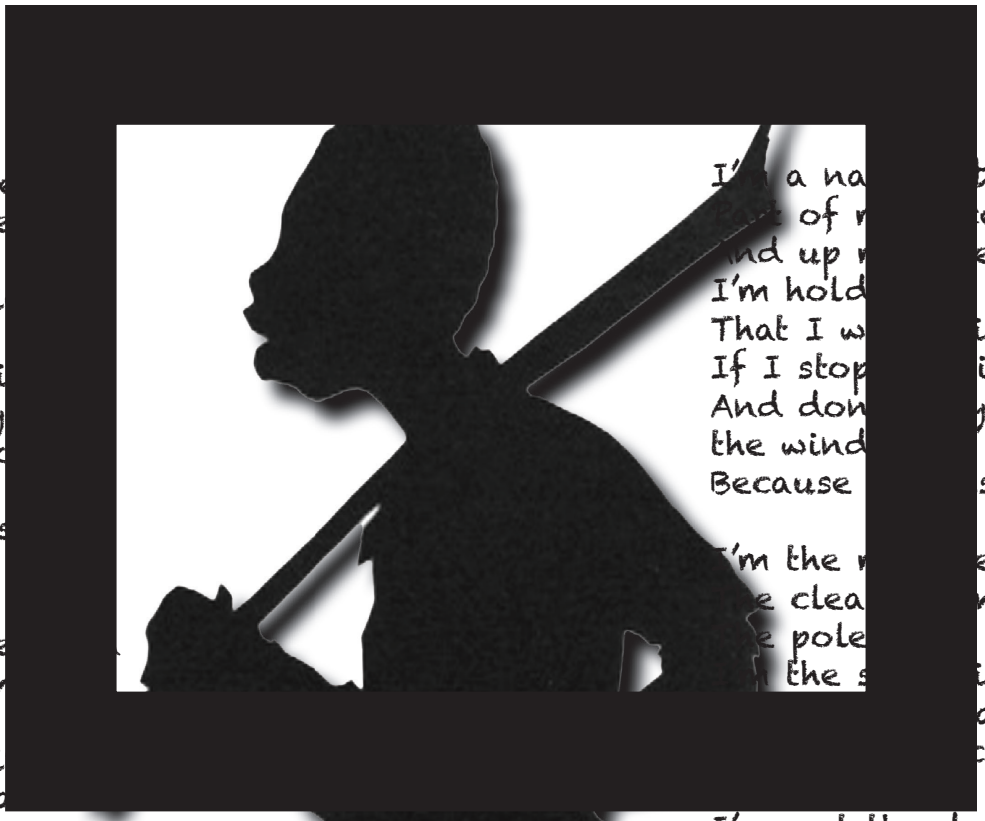
Henry Ford forcibly injecting square dancing into schools and getting state legislatures to declare it the state dance in order to fight the negro scourge of jazz dancing.

Photo credit: Library of Congress

"Black masculinity is hyper surveilled and incapable of just being "masculinity"...that there is a normative masculinity and Black masculinity that either exceeds or is deficient of that. A norm or balance is never named nor is it ever given any thought as to how it was formed, but Black men are always either hypo- or hyper-masculine. That's where it stops, so I find it interesting that even when we give into using the penis as a means of evaluating Black men, "Well-endowed"... "Blessed"..."Gifted"... can be damning in a culture that formulates knowledge in oppositional binaries and through negation."

-Preston Anderson

photo credit: Anthropology News Organization



I'm a natural blackface
Part of my race
And up my sleeve
I'm holdin' an ace
That I won't die in disgrace
If I stop dancin'
And don't let you blow me anymore in the wind
Because I refuse to come

I'm the minstrel man
The cleaning man
The pole man
I'm the shoeshine man
I'm a nigga man
Watch me dance

I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
I say, walk on niggers, walk on
Walk on niggers, walk on

I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
I say, walk on niggers, walk on
Walk on niggers, walk on

I'm a natural blackface
Part of my race
And up my sleeve
I'm holdin' an ace
That I won't die in disgrace
If I stop dancin'
And don't let you blow me
anymore in the wind
Because I refuse to come

I'm the minstrel man
The cleaning man
The pole man
I'm the shoeshine man
I'm a nigga man
Watch me dance

I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
I say, walk on niggers, walk on
Walk on niggers, walk on

Walk on niggers, walk on
Walk on niggers, walk on

I say, walk on niggers, walk on
Yeah, walk on niggers, walk on

I'm a natural blackface
Part of my race
And up my sleeve
I'm holdin' an ace
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It's the man you see
I say, walk on niggers, walk on
Yeah, walk on niggers, walk on

Walk on niggers, walk on
Walk on niggers, walk on

I say, walk on niggers, walk on
Yeah, walk on niggers, walk on

Lynching and Racial Depictions of African-Americans
by Uwazi Zamani

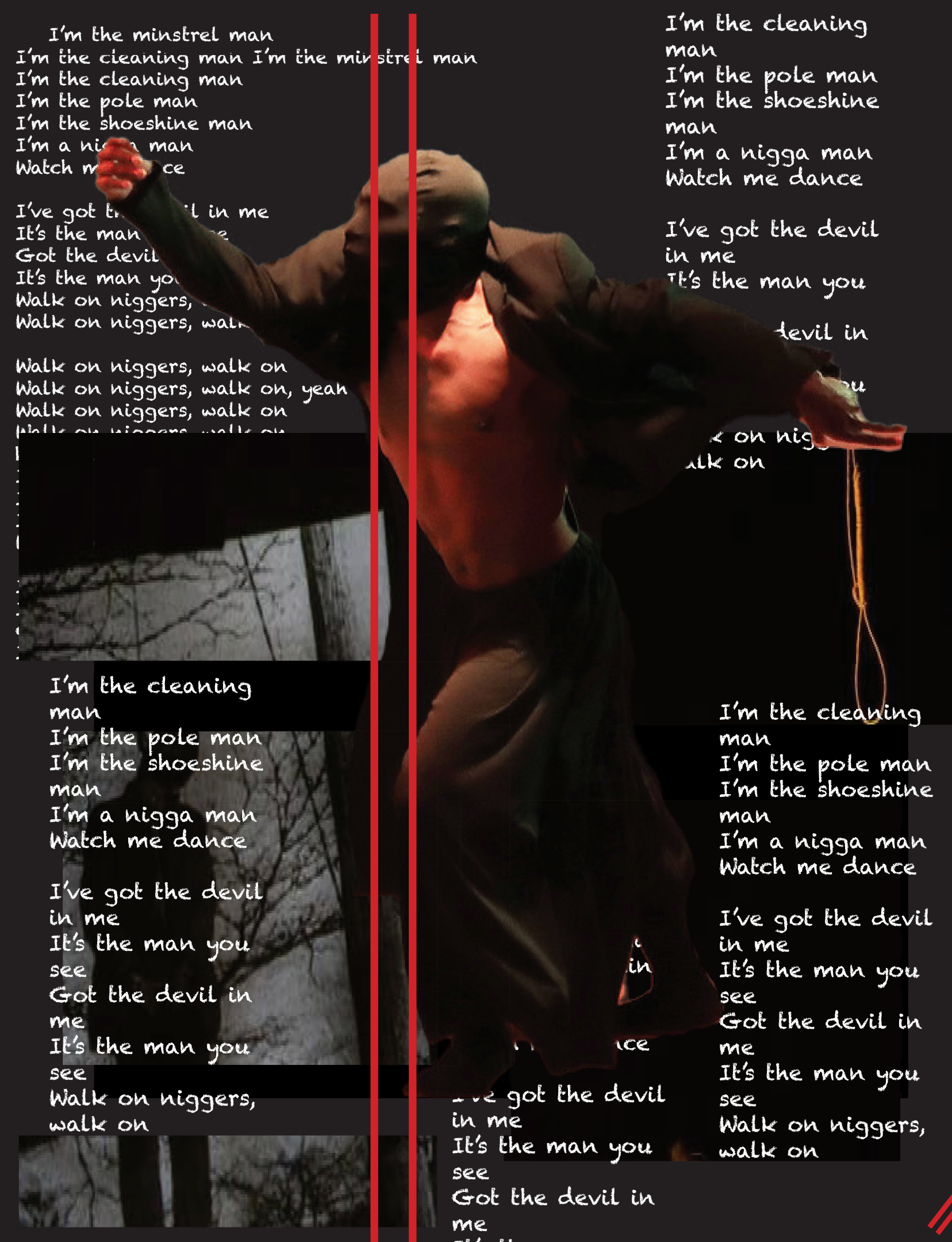
Lynching served as a broad social purpose of maintaining white supremacy in the economic, social, and political spheres. The material interest and institutionalization of white supremacy purported the idea that Black men were a danger to white society after Emancipation. The need for control and the maintenance of societal welfare prompted the contingency of lynching in the South. Marable asserts that "Political institutions, one form that such structures can take, can thus reflect the racial basis of social distinctions in the society's power structure. The state, in short, may stand on a racial foundation." (Marable, 2002, p.29) Navigating through the photo gallery Without Sanctuary, a collection of postcards and memorabilia had brought to life the horrific actions of Negrophobes in the South. A photograph of Charles Mitchell being hung in front of a courthouse in 1897 is a grotesque illustration of how deep-seated the disdain for Black bodies existed within law and other political structures of American life.

Lynching was committed out of suspicion in the white imagination and dehumanizing prejudices carried by whites after Emancipation. Whites had a fixed image of Blacks as "brutes". This imagining was used to rationalize disdain for freed blacks.

The image of the happy slave who was content with life on the plantation had now been portrayed as a ruffian who could not integrate into society because he was a threat to whites. Fredrickson notes the "defensive Southern reaction based on the characterization of 'new issue' Negro as a brute and savage." (Fredrickson, 1972, p.274) Consequently, Black men were the primary targets of lynching. This portrayal of the Negro as "beastial" or "brutish" would remain the bulk of white suspicion. Jordan further explains that "… they resorted to a powerful metaphor with which to express their own sense of difference from him…they frequently described the Africans as "brutish" or "bestial" or "beastly." (Jordan, 1968, p.28) This type of imagery associated with the Black body was used to justify the murders of Black men and further disassociate from the racist propensity associated with lynching. Fredrickson further contextualizes this by stating that "For Southern Negrophobes the prospect of Black extinction was at most a comforting thought." (Fredrickson, 1972, p.258) Viewed as a danger to society, Black men would become the victims of a white state's institutional capacity to sanction lynching as a type of punishment; one without consequence. This proved that racist ideas could be converted from imagination to actuality.

The lynching of 17-year-old Jesse Washington (also featured in the gallery Without Sanctuary) shows Washington's body dismembered and severely burned with a crowd of 10,000-15,000 white men, women and children there to witness the execution. Washington had been accused of the murder and rape of a white woman. Following his legal proceedings that concluded with a guilty verdict, a crowd of white men rushed to Washington, beat him unconscious and placed a chain around his neck, poured oil on him and hung him up by his neck. As a bonfire was being prepared, white men dismembered his fingers, toes, and genitalia. Washington, semiconscious was then lowered into the bonfire and spectators watched in admiration as his body was charred by the flames. It is through this public practice that white antipathy became closely related to lynching; for it remained at the forefront of capital punishment in the late 1800s to early 1900s. In the short film that accompanies the photo gallery Without Sanctuary, it is explained that technological developments in press and printing made it possible for lynching to be this widely accepted and celebrated spectacle. Postcards and full-scale portraits of Black bodies, mutilated, dismembered, bloodied, battered and bruised became the hallmark of the deep South. Given white's proximity to lynching, the idea of preserving whiteness served as the basis for a way to relegate Black people to inferior status. As much as the Black body was associated with lynching, it was also associated with the inferior ranking of Black people by whites. Brown explains that black skin was used as a phenotypic marker to indicate blacks as subhuman and less-than. This phenotype was also used to rationalize the fear that whites had created as a result of their own hatred. (Brown, 1995) Fredrickson cites this as "racists undoubtedly conjured monster that was capable of frightening its creator and driving them to new frenzies of hatred." (Fredrickson, 1972, p.272) This trope had been replicated through the publication of lynching.

More and more, photographs of lynching were meant to sensationalize the prejudices and racism that had already been harnessed by many states in the South. These prejudices had been institutionalized and furthered lynching into common practice. In addition to the collection of images in Without Sanctuary being made possible through advancements in printing, they were also made possible by the institutionalization of lynching and a need to repudiate the presence of the Black body in white socialized spaces. Without Sanctuary is a testament to how the dominant ideas are reflected in society through a means of normalization. This can be seen in the repetitive characterization and portrayal of Black men who were lynched or believed to have "gotten what they deserved". This had also been evident in the mass production of lynching on postcards and how often lynching occurred.



I'm the minstrel man
I'm the cleaning man I'm the minstrel man
I'm the cleaning man
I'm the pole man
I'm the shoeshine man
I'm a nigga man
Watch me dance

I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
Got the devil in me
It's the man you see
Walk on niggers, walk on
Walk on niggers, walk on

Walk on niggers, walk on
Walk on niggers, walk on, yeah
Walk on niggers, walk on

I'm the cleaning man
I'm the pole man
I'm the shoeshine man
I'm a nigga man
Watch me dance

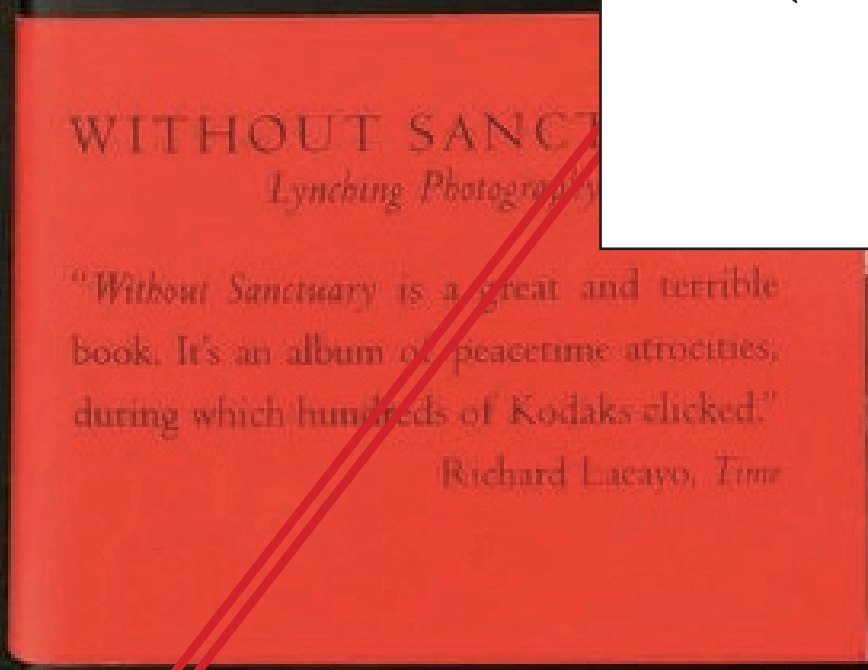
I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
Got the devil in me
It's the man you see
Walk on niggers, walk on

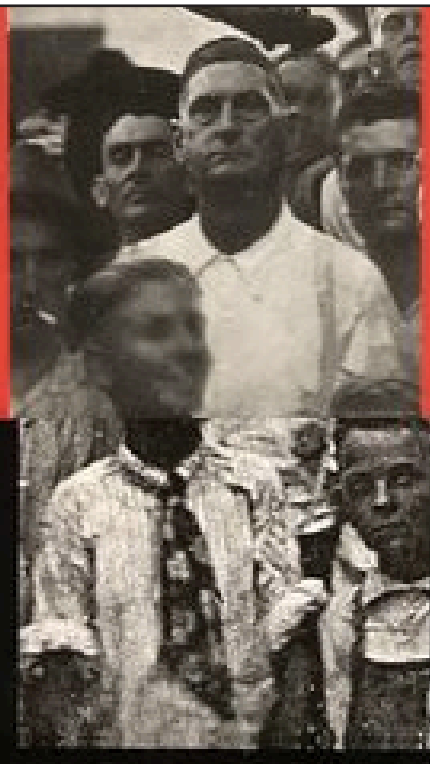
I'm the cleaning man
I'm the pole man
I'm the shoeshine man
I'm a nigga man
Watch me dance

I've got the devil in me
It's the man you see
Got the devil in me
It's the man you see
Walk on niggers, walk on

The Black body as the totemic object has served as the recursive fastening of whites having the right to individuality; that one is not responsible for the crimes of another. However, Blacks are collectively guilty because of the negative connotation of Blackness. As seen in films there is a heightened interest in connecting the portrayal of the Black body as one codified by systematic racism. Racism is not only driven by delusions of superiority, but it is driven by the repetitive use of disparaging images.

Essentially, the cinematic placement of the Black body only reflects an inability to interrogate the ethno-state's white institutionalities and the Black body's positionality within those states. Yancy proposes that "The [white] seeks to constrain the oppressed [Blacks] to certain approved modes of visibility (those set in the template of stereotype) and then gazes obsessively on the spectacle he has created." (Yancy, 2005, p.217)





"The assumption is that the Civil Rights Movement and its nonviolent approach has southern roots that Black Power radicals naively overlooked.

But it doesn't and that's why it didn't last past five years. Armed self-defense was the dominant tradition among Blacks since the end of reconstruction." - Javionne Gilmore

On Black Militancy:

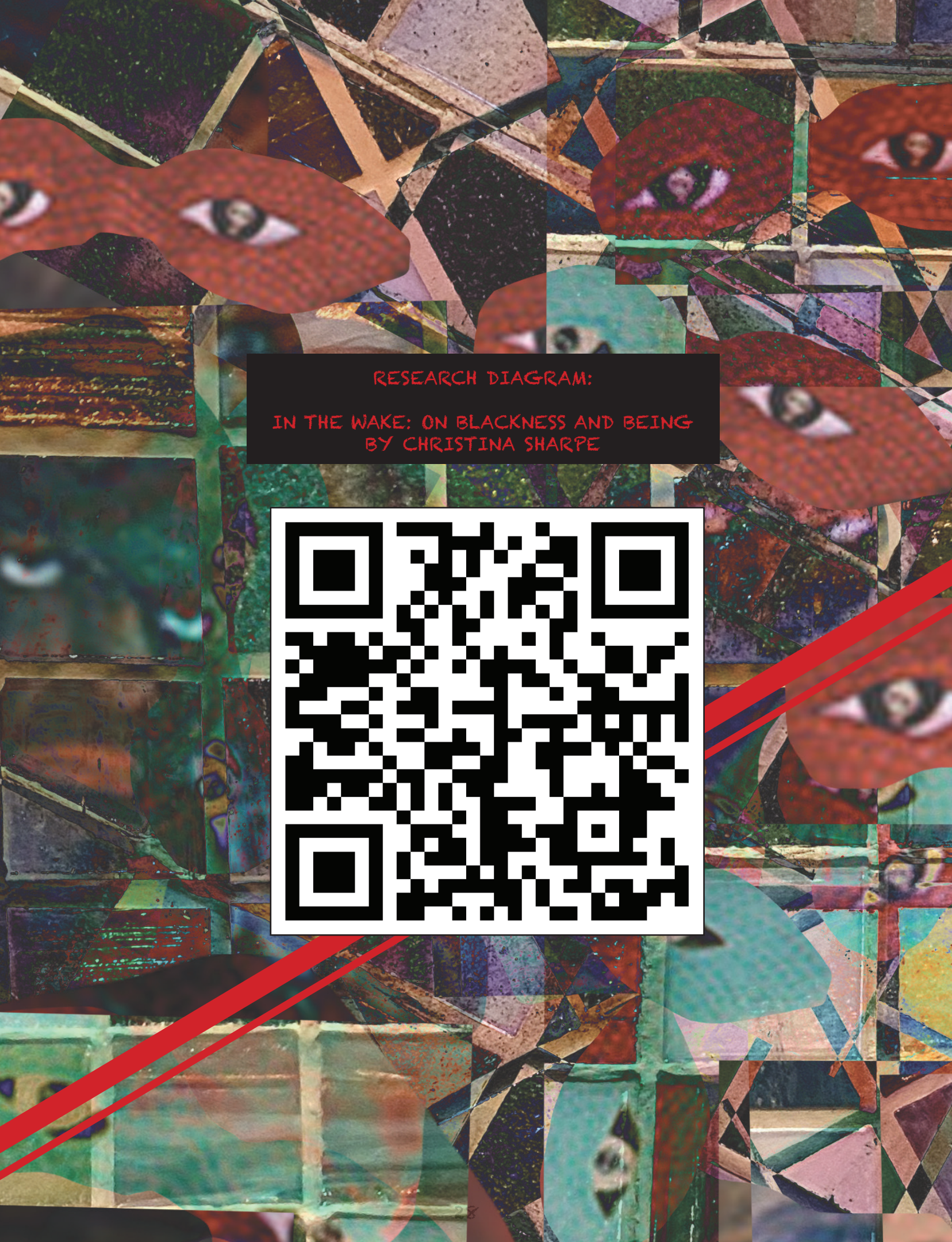
Black men of the Black Power Movements were pathologized as raging misogynists, homophobic and often effeminized for what was believed to be a committment to white patriarchy. Black Feminist like bell hooks, Pat Parker, Audre Lorde, and Alice Walker have used their platforms to substantiate irreconciliable claims about Black men and at the same time have been redeemed for harmful rhetoric that has powered many texts used in gender studies courses.

Black men's adoption of political, armed and revolutionary violence left them open hypersurveillance and as targets of the government. This is not to excuse the abuse perpetrated by some men but in the present any commitment to Black nationalist politics is often deemed unprogressive, unredemptive, and stagnant.

Black America has always had such a negative view of it's men. More than many other ethnic groups, in-fact, even whites. And the refusal to unpack this, and treat our suffering as palpable, is just going to make genocide much more possible. Bourgeois Blacks in academia just stoke the gas-oven flames.

According to James Baldwin:
"The anti-male thing which is now beginning seems to me to be one of the offshoots of the American dream as ingested by blacks.
I hazard that it [the sexual tension] is one of the symptoms of black middle-classdom."

The Fire Next Time

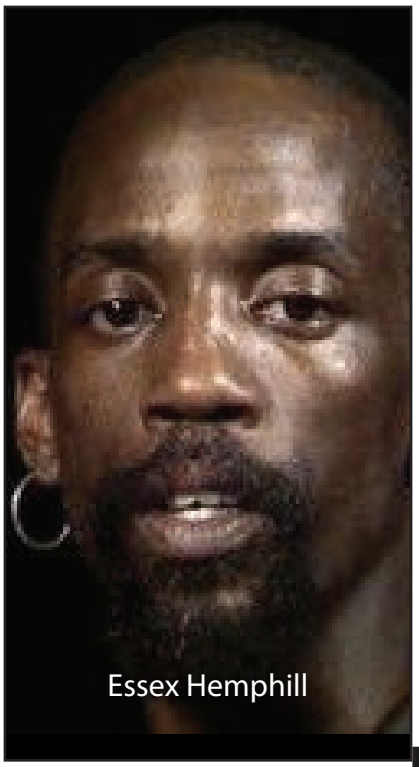

RESEARCH DIAGRAM:
IN THE WAKE: ON BLACKNESS AND BEING
BY CHRISTINA SHARPE

"Consequently, fugitivity refers to a struggle for the transformation from slaveness to freedom"
- Frank B. Wilderson III

Asking how do we conceptualize Black social life that has undoubtedly endured despite social death in such a framework?

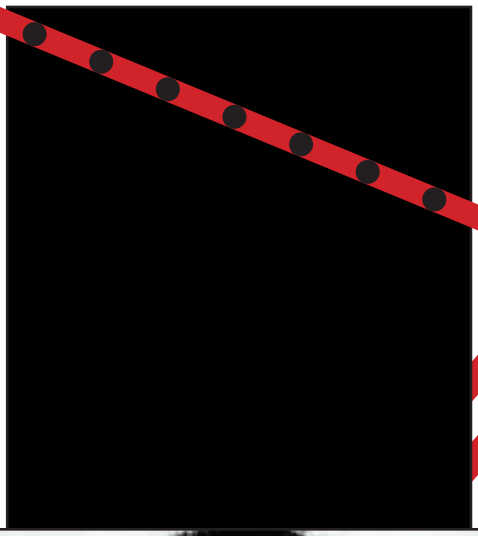
BLACKHOOD AGAINST THE POLICE POWER : PUNISHMENT AND DISAVOWAL IN THE "POST-RACIAL" ERA

As noted earlier in this chapter, the black academy (including black feminism) also conspired in transmuting this critical feature of black power—an essentially critical / critically essential blackness—from asset to fatal flaw. Claiming the progressive mantel of "antiessentialism," this attack on black critique was patently opportunistic, as well. As Spillers explains, by the Black Power era the black movement had yoked blackness "to a symbolic program of philosophical 'disobedience' (a systematic skepticism and refusal)" available to anyone or any position that was willing to pursue creative destruction and invention through thinking.[58] Blackness, as a mode of iconoclastic thought, opened up a strategy for imagination and critique that made it a fertile site for multiculturalism, women of color political formations, and the various identity movements. These late arrivals, however, did not always extend the interests of black people; more to the point, their critical programs rested upon displacing blackness from its essential place in explaining the onto-epistemic structure of the modern world. This state of affairs produces dire consequences for black thought and for black lives.

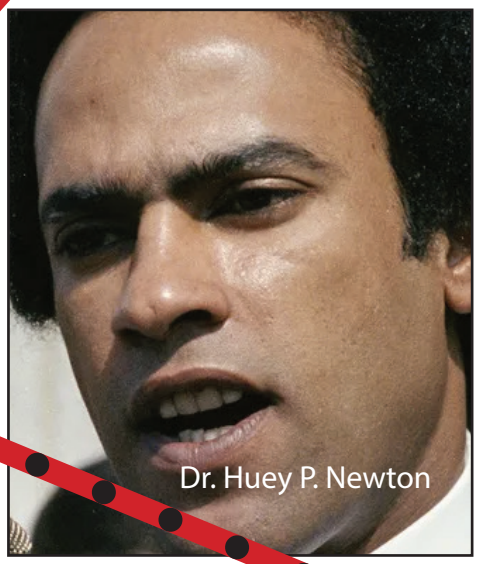

Essex Hemphill

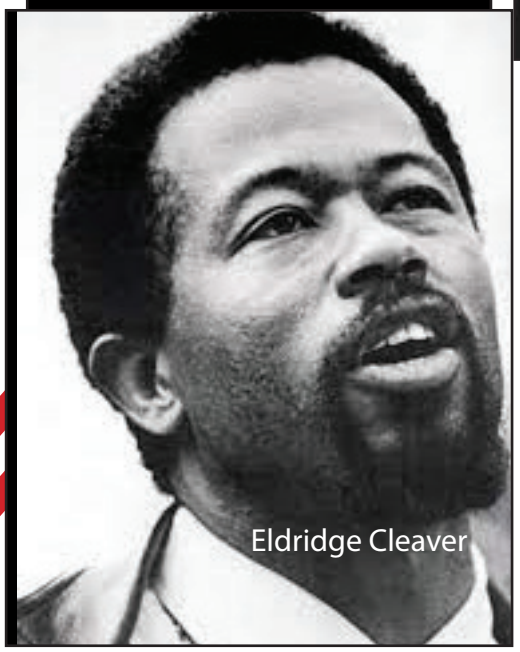
H. Rap Brown

Marlon Riggs



Melvin Dixon


Dr. Huey P. Newton


Eldridge Cleaver

"One problem with the emasculation discourse is it gets people too rigidly fixated on the expression and performance of gender and "masculinity", but what's really being meant by'emasculation'as I see it is the full scale material genocide and subordination of colonized men." - Jamel Love

"Is homophobia a problem "especially in the black community" or do we just continue to grant white communities innocence despite the fact that every homophobic law and law enforcement policy in this country has only ever been passed and executed by the white communities?"
- E.W. David

"We must gain security in ourselves and therefore have respect and feelings for all oppressed people. We must not use the racist attitude that the White racists use against our people because they are Black and poor. Many times the poorest White person is the most racist because he is afraid that he might lose something, or discover something that he does not have. So you're some kind of a threat to him. This kind of psychology is in operation when we view oppressed people and we are angry with them because of their particular kind of behavior, or their particular kind of deviation from the established norm."

- Huey P. Newton on Gay and Women's Lib.

What aspect or aspects of contemporary human or social interaction are sacred or intend to generate sacred space?

The purpose of "community forums" vested in "fostering better relationships" with the communities is to maintain the status quo of white power structures

Isolation is one of the insidious side effects of both white supremacy and capitalism. How do you offset this reality? Cultivate connection in a way that feels true to you. Create spaces and gatherings where isolation withers away.

Even when the state extends its incorporative logics to marginalized identities to expand its profit margins (neoliberal multiculturalism) those identities remain oppressed.

POP CULTURE AND ACADEMICS ON BLACK MEN

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Black women's lives are largely colored by these lopsided loyalties. From girlhood, we see Black men as our greatest hope in this world, as both fierce kings for us to serve and vulnerable princes for us to protect. As the old saying goes, many of us love our sons, and raise our daughters, and we often raise them to think twice before ever dropping a dime on one, even if he's harmed us greatly. We are encouraged to accept the bare minimum in our romances and express gratitude to be able to love a brother at all—and, somehow, this is supposed to be in the service of a greater Black good.

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But our thing with Black men is not a reciprocal arrangement, and some of them will be quick to tell you that they never asked for this. The average Black man was not raised to see himself as obligated to the women of our race, certainly not to queer people or the other bitches; his obligation is to himself, to get as free as he can be. Over time, we ended up committed to supporting him and his freedom, not ours.

Jemele Hill equated Black men and their queer antagonisms to Hitler's Big Lie.

The article was printed in Vanity Fair.

The readership of this magazine is mostly middle-aged white women in the suburbs.

Brief examples with how irresponsible this writing is:

"From girlhood..."
presumptive

"We are encouraged..."
-- passive voice. by whom? (other BW? and i oop)

"But our thing..." vague, what thing?
"and some of them..." show evidence
"The average..." quantifiable claim, show the math
"queer people..." but...

Amanda Duarte
@duarteamanda

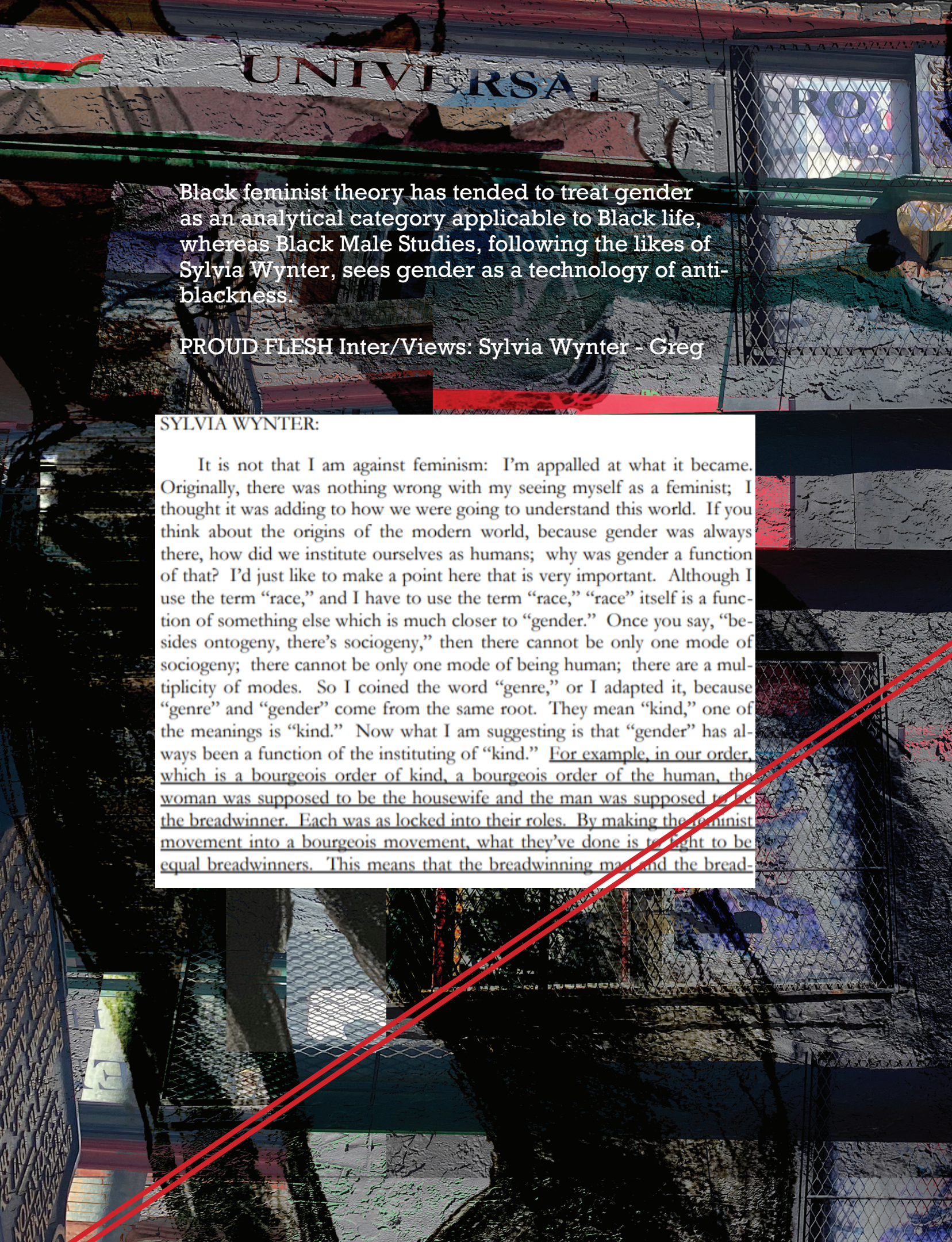
I do wonder how these white supremacist lawmakers would feel if their little white daughters were raped and impregnated by black men.

22:18 · 2022-05-02 · Twitter for iPhone

27 Quote Tweets **6** Likes

... there are queer black men, so you're implying that queer men are not men; not very careful writing...

So we have all of those that have power to be able to tell and distribute ideas. And those ideas have currency in meaning. They don't just have paper. They're not just on hacks on web-sites just spewing rhetoric.

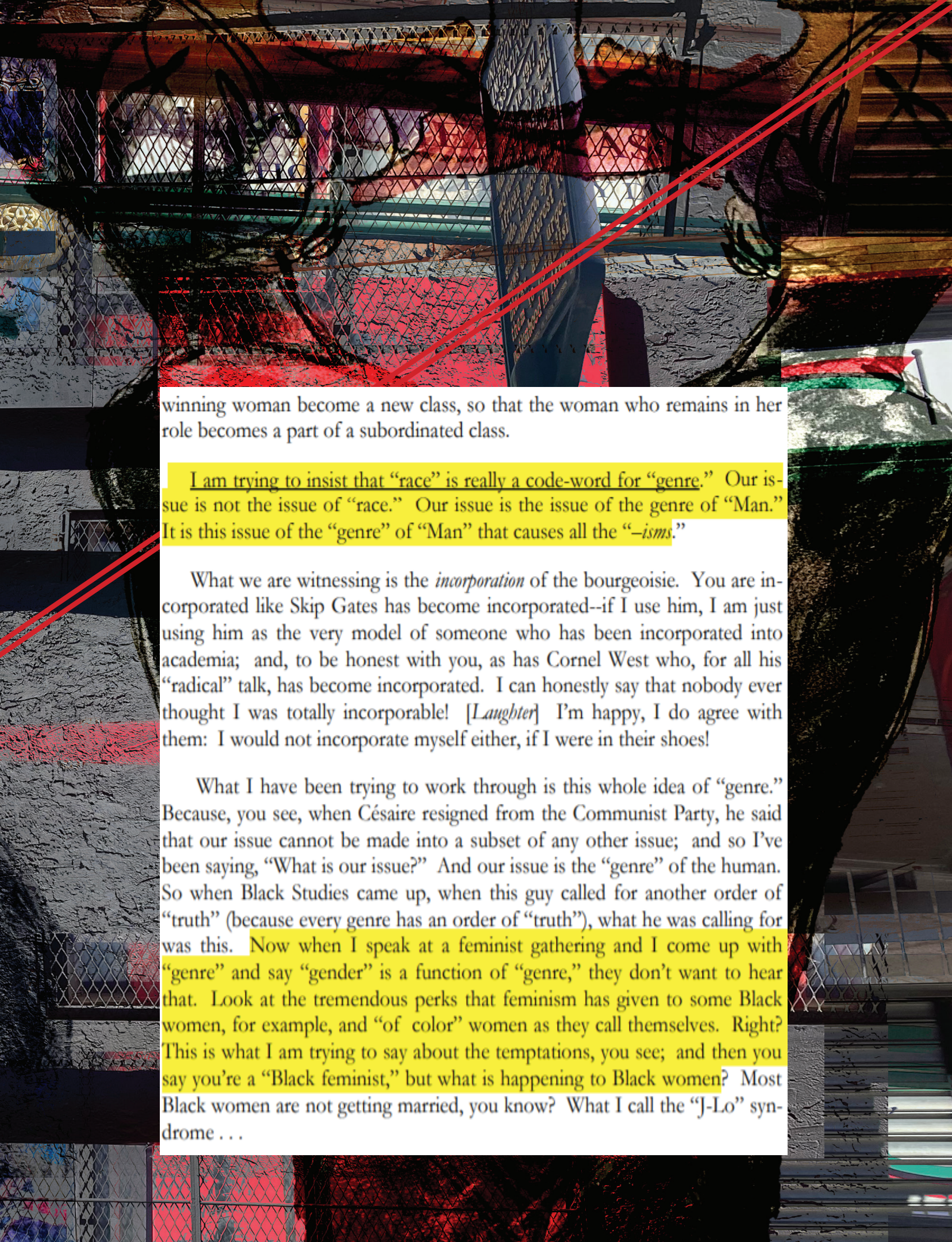


Black feminist theory has tended to treat gender as an analytical category applicable to Black life, whereas Black Male Studies, following the likes of Sylvia Wynter, sees gender as a technology of anti-blackness.

PROUD FLESH Inter/Views: Sylvia Wynter - Greg

SYLVIA WYNTER:

It is not that I am against feminism: I'm appalled at what it became. Originally, there was nothing wrong with my seeing myself as a feminist; I thought it was adding to how we were going to understand this world. If you think about the origins of the modern world, because gender was always there, how did we institute ourselves as humans; why was gender a function of that? I'd just like to make a point here that is very important. Although I use the term "race," and I have to use the term "race," "race" itself is a function of something else which is much closer to "gender." Once you say, "besides ontogeny, there's sociogeny," then there cannot be only one mode of sociogeny; there cannot be only one mode of being human; there are a multiplicity of modes. So I coined the word "genre," or I adapted it, because "genre" and "gender" come from the same root. They mean "kind," one of the meanings is "kind." Now what I am suggesting is that "gender" has always been a function of the instituting of "kind." For example, in our order, which is a bourgeois order of kind, a bourgeois order of the human, the woman was supposed to be the housewife and the man was supposed to be the breadwinner. Each was as locked into their roles. By making the feminist movement into a bourgeois movement, what they've done is to fight to be equal breadwinners. This means that the breadwinning man and the bread-

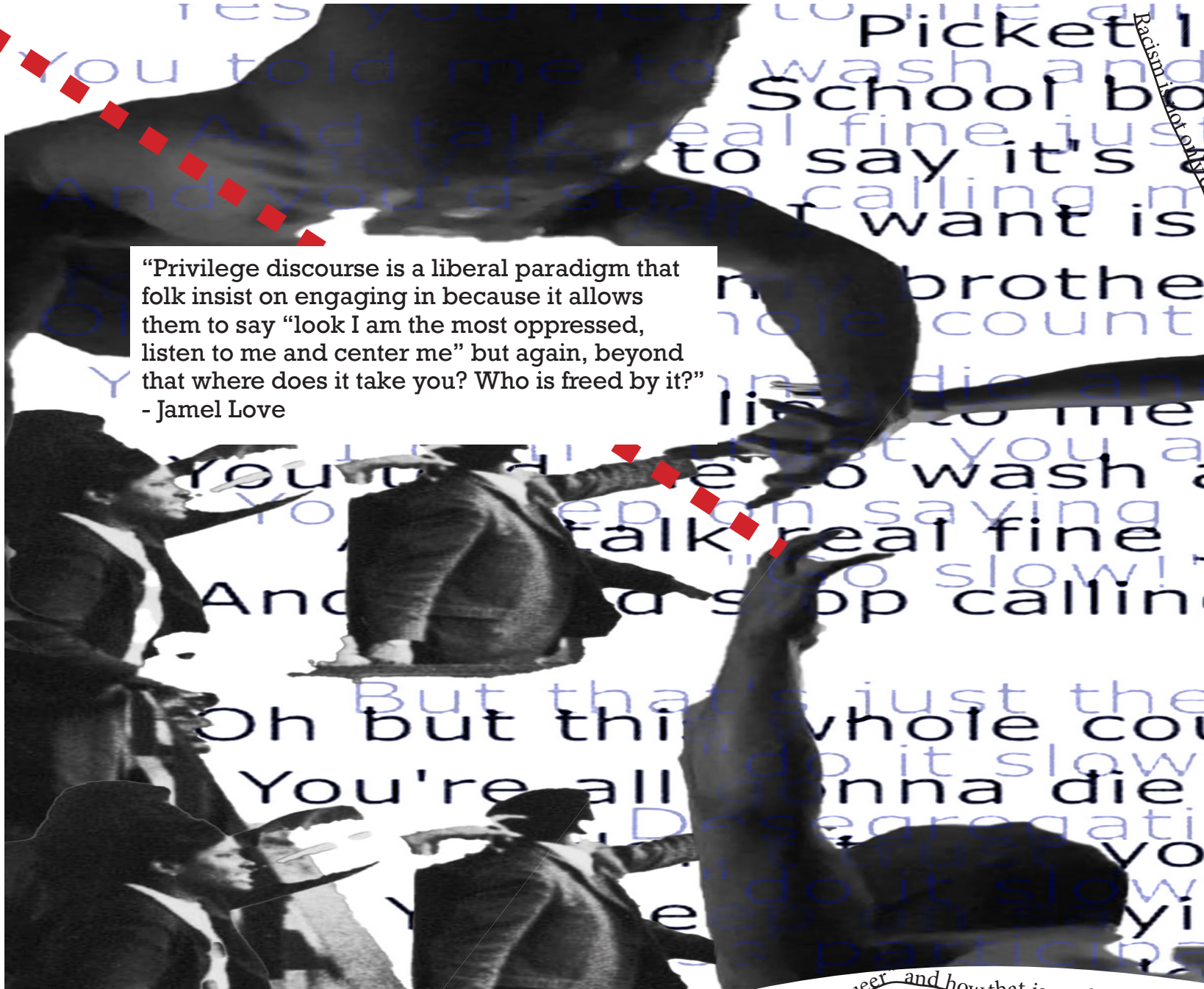


winning woman become a new class, so that the woman who remains in her role becomes a part of a subordinated class.

I am trying to insist that "race" is really a code-word for "genre." Our issue is not the issue of "race." Our issue is the issue of the genre of "Man." It is this issue of the "genre" of "Man" that causes all the "*–isms*."

What we are witnessing is the *incorporation* of the bourgeoisie. You are incorporated like Skip Gates has become incorporated--if I use him, I am just using him as the very model of someone who has been incorporated into academia; and, to be honest with you, as has Cornel West who, for all his "radical" talk, has become incorporated. I can honestly say that nobody ever thought I was totally incorporable! [*Laughter*] I'm happy, I do agree with them: I would not incorporate myself either, if I were in their shoes!

What I have been trying to work through is this whole idea of "genre." Because, you see, when Césaire resigned from the Communist Party, he said that our issue cannot be made into a subset of any other issue; and so I've been saying, "What is our issue?" And our issue is the "genre" of the human. So when Black Studies came up, when this guy called for another order of "truth" (because every genre has an order of "truth"), what he was calling for was this. Now when I speak at a feminist gathering and I come up with "genre" and say "gender" is a function of "genre," they don't want to hear that. Look at the tremendous perks that feminism has given to some Black women, for example, and "of color" women as they call themselves. Right? This is what I am trying to say about the temptations, you see; and then you say you're a "Black feminist," but what is happening to Black women? Most Black women are not getting married, you know? What I call the "J-Lo" syndrome . . .

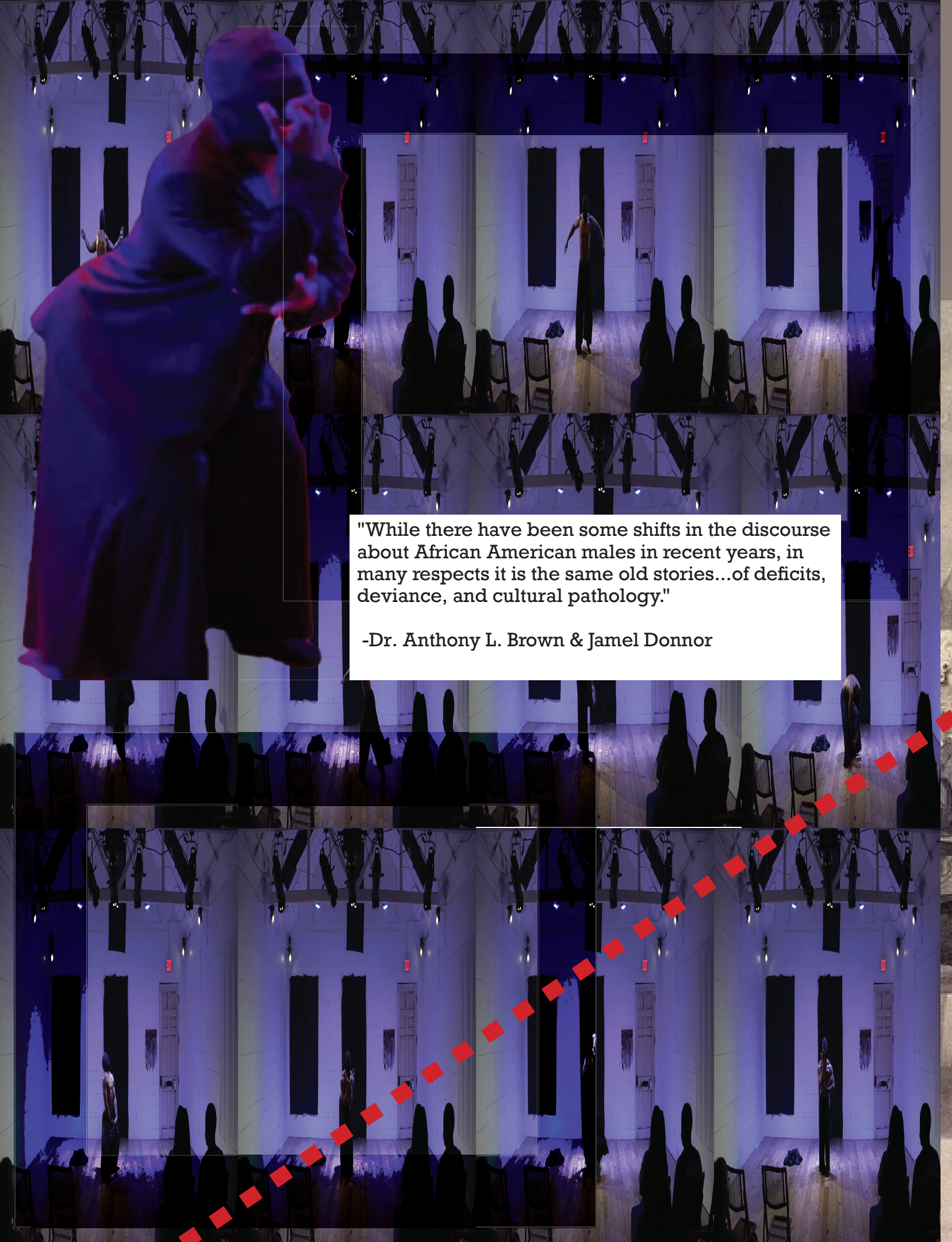


"Privilege discourse is a liberal paradigm that folk insist on engaging in because it allows them to say "look I am the most oppressed, listen to me and center me" but again, beyond that where does it take you? Who is freed by it?"
- Jamel Love

Racism is not only

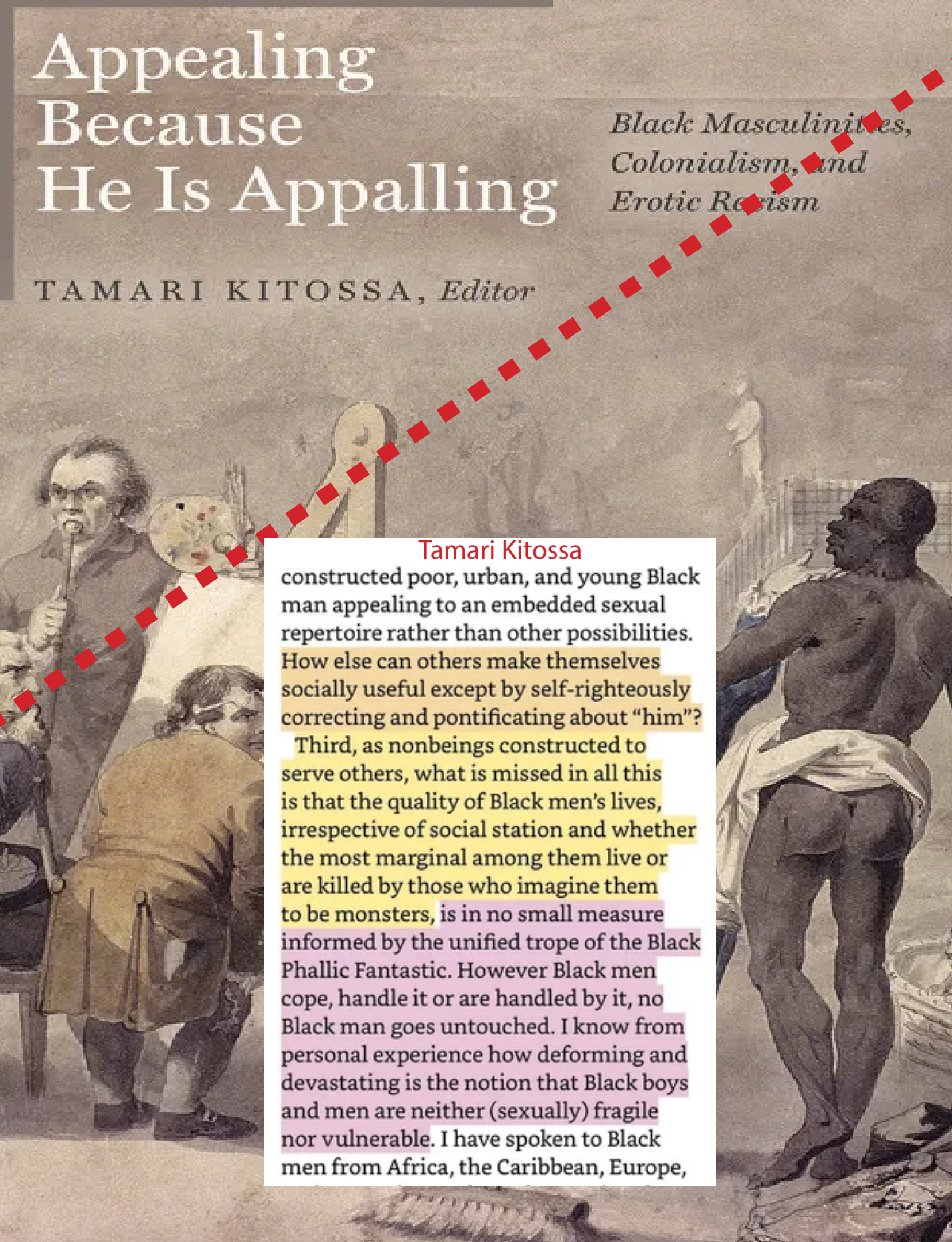
and within this conflict about what it means to be "visibly queer" and how that is used to erase or

"In essence, Black males create their own problems and that programmatic change can only come via the human capital of Black male role models, while institutional and structural mechanisms shaped by race are left unscathed." - Dr. Anthony L. Brown



"While there have been some shifts in the discourse about African American males in recent years, in many respects it is the same old stories...of deficits, deviance, and cultural pathology."

-Dr. Anthony L. Brown & Jamel Donnor



constructed poor, urban, and young Black man appealing to an embedded sexual repertoire rather than other possibilities. How else can others make themselves socially useful except by self-righteously correcting and pontificating about "him"?

Third, as nonbeings constructed to serve others, what is missed in all this is that the quality of Black men's lives, irrespective of social station and whether the most marginal among them live or are killed by those who imagine them to be monsters, is in no small measure informed by the unified trope of the Black Phallic Fantastic. However Black men cope, handle it or are handled by it, no Black man goes untouched. I know from personal experience how deforming and devastating is the notion that Black boys and men are neither (sexually) fragile nor vulnerable. I have spoken to Black men from Africa, the Caribbean, Europe,

Realizing I don't have the capacity, the emotional, psychological or psychic capacity to teach you to read me that way.

More on this:

"It's not simply that Black men are socialized to mask their emotions as boys, it's that vulnerability has not many material advantages for Black males in an environment where they can be emotionally extracted so that others can have value in its use." - Reny Taylor

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OPEN IN NEW WINDOW
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what I can do, watch me
have nothing to lose,
knowing we have everything
to lose.

HUMBLE
DALLAS
11:56 PM
SATURDAY

Blackness and Ontological Contegencies

When the narrative around a group of people's gender and sexual orientation can be controlled by the other, it is far easier to commit violence against them.

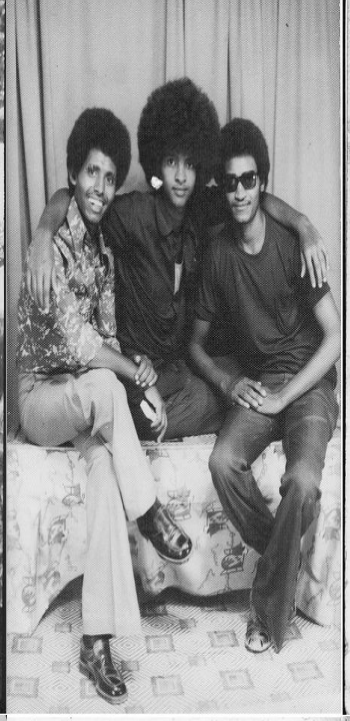
Is there something essential about Blackness? (This is not the same question as is there something essential about "being black?"--a question that I am not interested in at all, really.)

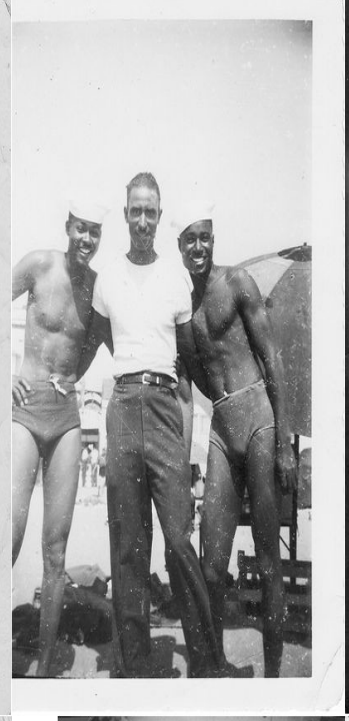
As in "the fact of Blackness"? Ontologically, yes. But that, of course, is a both a cultural production and imposition. What do you understand "the fact of Blackness" to be? Cultural impositions of "Man" that are superimposed onto the global poor (disproportionately Black) which result in our subordinate material conditions and serve images as empirical facts about our being; one at the level of consciousness and how we understand and see ourselves and the other at the level of our material conditions which seek to reinforce the former?

Reducing Black men to violent caricatures who have no resistance to the systems that oppress them, as explained by hooks herself, has been a requisitetradition in fastening Black men to an experience, that historically, they have no control over. Race and gender create disparate outcomes for Black men. I assert that within systems of white power and rule, within the 21 st century, is that it is a contradiction to call for the removal of all forms as result of coloniality.

Yet, we assign patriarchy and capitalism to victims of this of violence (Black men) with no room for reconciliation. How then do you mend the Black family by making Black men pariahs in their own community? You're either in or out. I think we're all navigating within the skin that we're in. Some probably have more strident expectations but they're navigating. We're all navigating because everyone's paying attention to our bodies (Black men). They're paying attention to how I express my body. There's a hyper dissection of the Black male body in dance.

Perhaps I am free of that because dancing allows multiple and particular ways for me to express myself. No! there's an even deeper scrutiny to it, because in those areas they're paying attention to the body and they're paying attention to the whole body and that moves everything. So there's a dissection of it as being natural. These binaries of classical and natural, the mind and the body dichotomies that are always present, they're present in the law office or present in tenured decisions for professors like mine. They're everywhere. These binaries of what we do, emotionality opposed to rationality, those those distinctions are always there and they're part of us.





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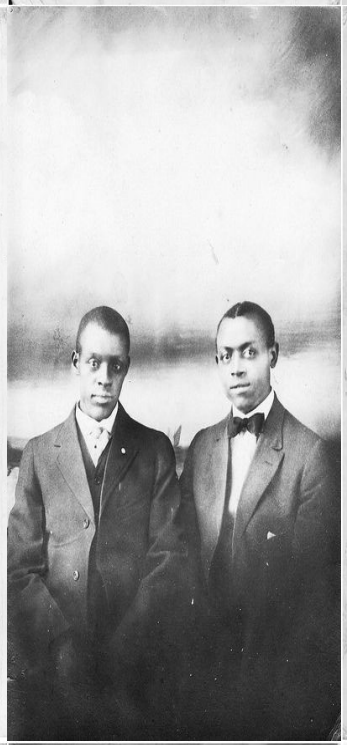
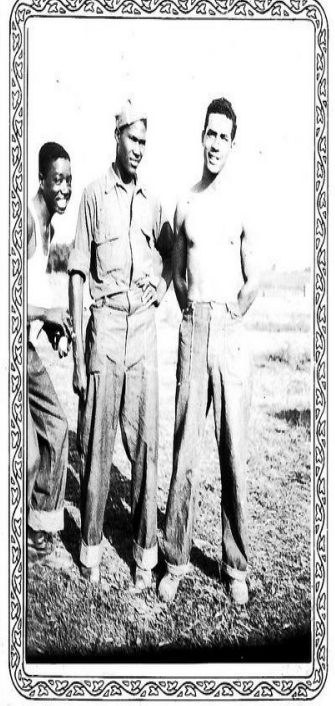
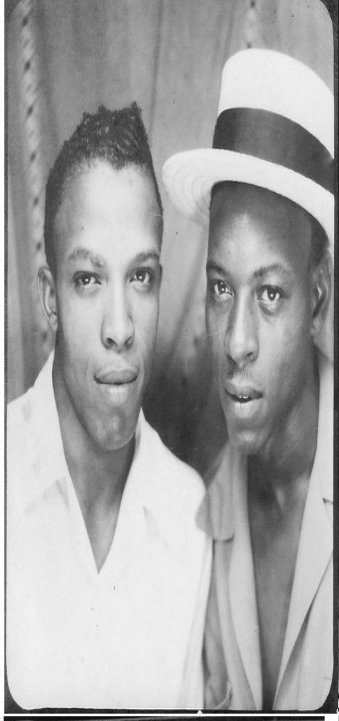
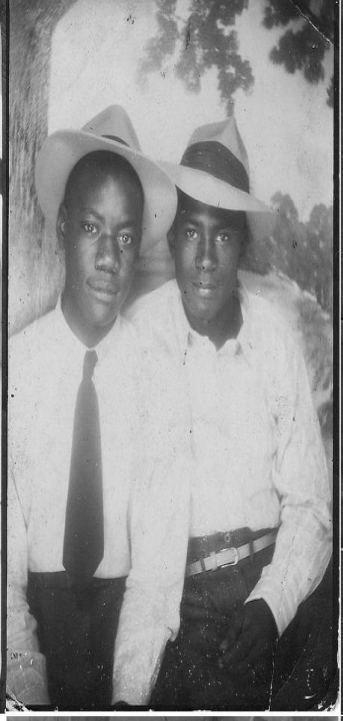
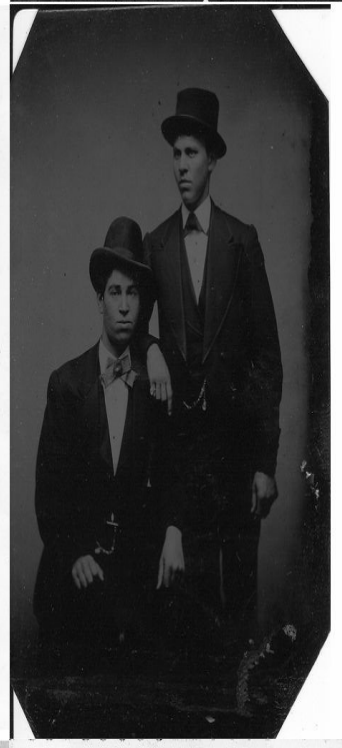
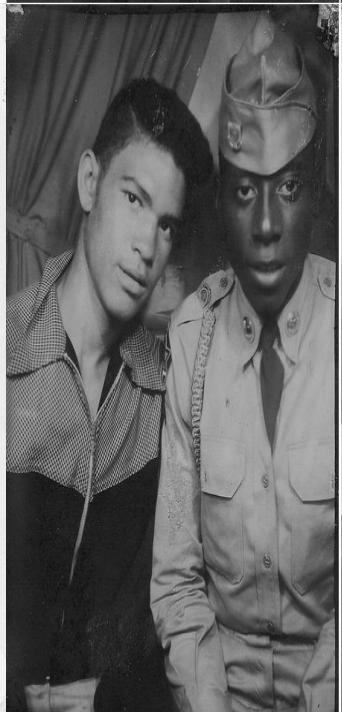


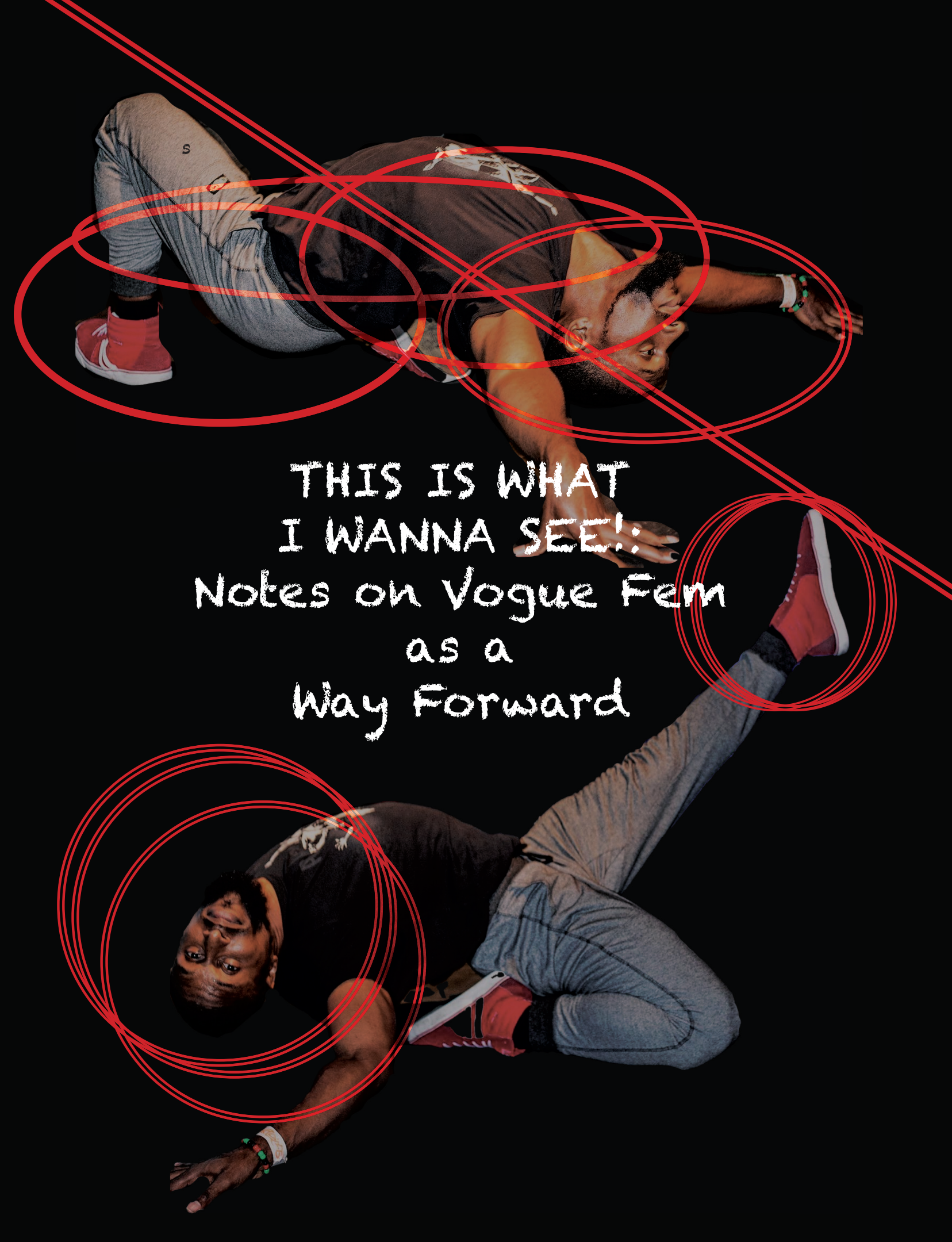
LE CAKE-WALK
Danse du Nouveau Cirque LES NEGRES
S.I.P.



LOVE





THIS IS WHAT I WANNA SEE!: Notes on Vogue Fem as a Way Forward

PRECIS

BB

Ballroom's palette is enriched by performer's authority over elements like space, identity, bodies and sound. I'm wondering towards the five elements of Vogue Fem; an improvisational style of dance that grew out of the cultural nightlife of Black and Brown Trans and Queer communities in Harlem, New York. This movement is highly competitive and is performed at underground competitions known as Balls. The movement consists of five elements: Hand Performance, Catwalk. Floor Performance, Duck Walk, and Spins & Dips. Through a collective wondering towards the embodied practice of Vogue Fem, chanting and commentating as Black Queer energetic mediums, the possibility of these mediums can be theorized as conscious and unconscious enactments of futures imagined by its participants but also how they are able to underscore politics of sex, race, violence and class.

In theorizing the Ballroom as a training ground for survival and as a site for desire, collective grief and hope, it becomes possible to understand the process and the labor of Black queer world building and that it is not only comprised of spectacle but is made up collective tactics and strategies to hopefully in the future emerge from something other than the social ills that have shaped it.

Research Questions.

In what ways do Black queers build worlds of desire through performance via the elements of Vogue Fem?

How are Black queer labor forms active in revisions of community?

What does it mean to engage in the 'Black Queer possibility of impermanence' and in what ways does it offer a means for channeling perpetual conversation with things that we cannot yet see?

UTOPIC VISIONS

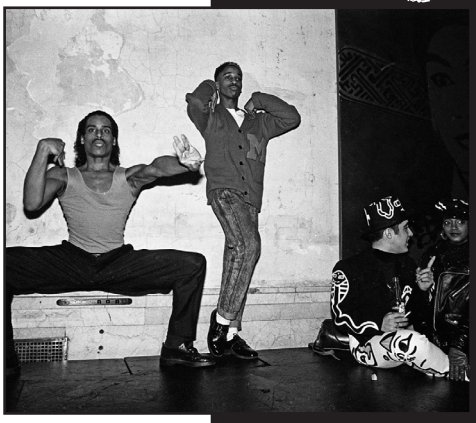
BLACK QUEER OPTIMISM

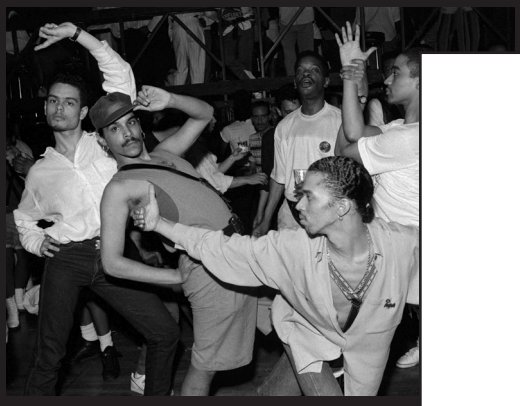
Fighting invisibilization. Body as archive. Residue of cultural memory. Refusal of traditions. Black queer optimism. Simultaneity of refusal and engagement. Flexibility as pedagogy

WE NEED NEW SONGS TO SING

In the context of Darius Bost's work Evidence of Being, Ballroom and Voguing become "sites of memory", an archive of black queer stories that racism, homophobia, transphobia, and capitalism have tried to erase. Voguing becomes a black queer cultural tradition that carries stories of loss, but also stories of hope for a black queer living future.

Somer argues "this is the optimistic premise… that reinvention and adaptability are strategies for what life, at best, should be." (Somer 1995 p.7) Or as (Hart, 2015) strongly reinforces in Vogue is Not for You, "voguing is a tool we [black queer culture] created, not merely for expression, but for organizing, empowering, surviving the daily violence of a white supremacist society".



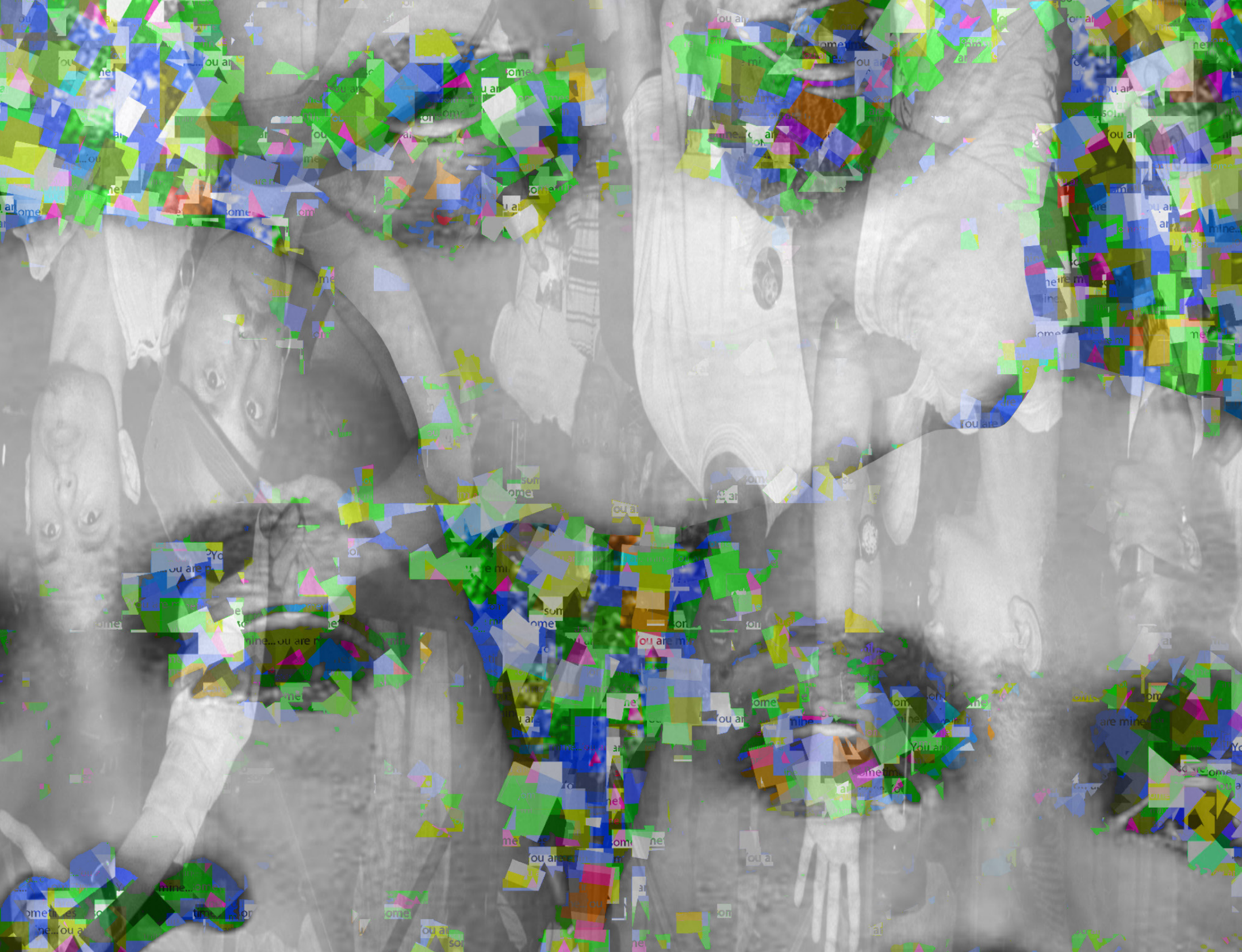


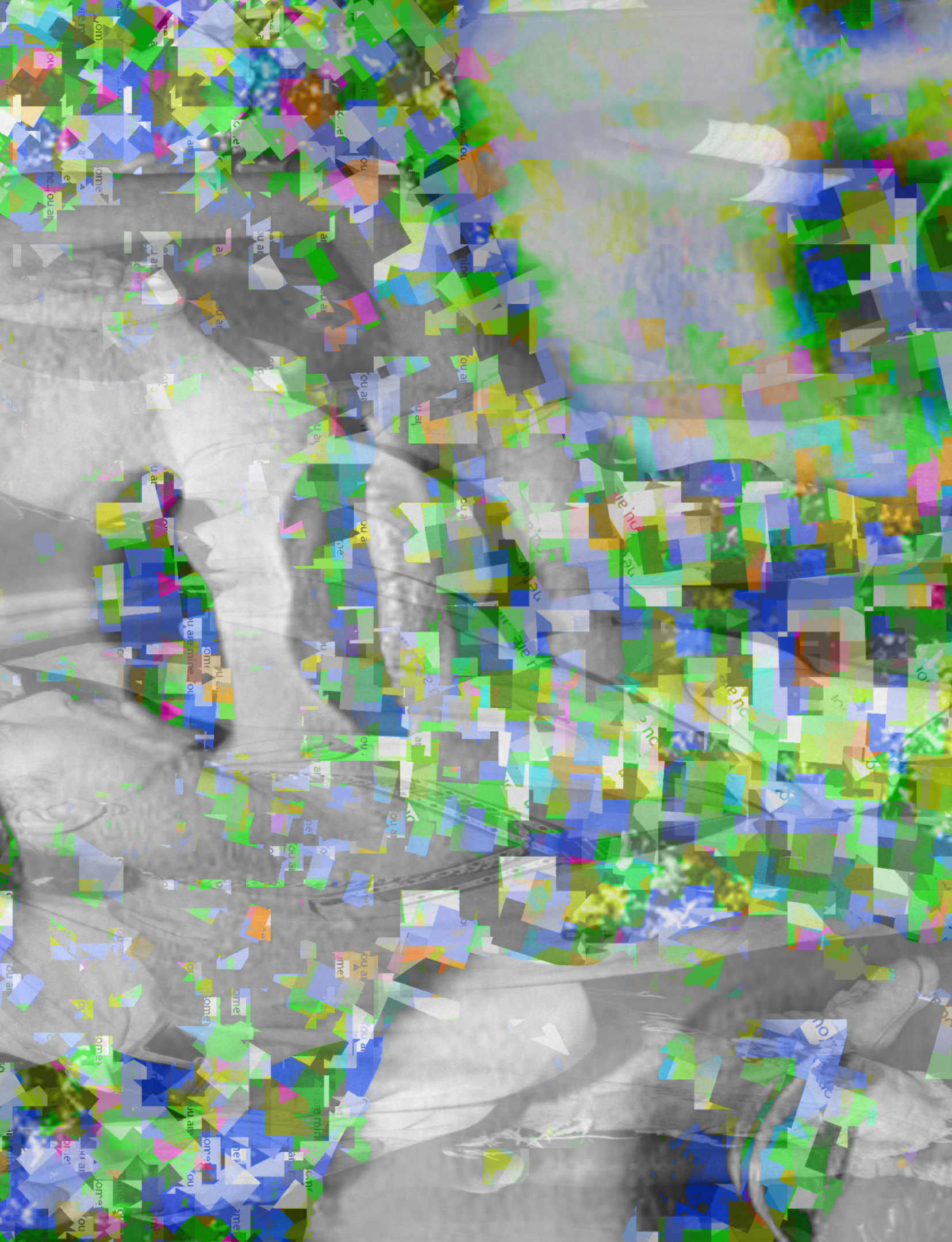
Theorizing Ballroom and Vogue Fem, we can create a space in which those who have not participated in the culture can learn ways to effectively contest histories of violence but also offer up this practice as an imaginative strategy in which to reinvent and revitalize approaches to its movement form that posit it in a more future-facing way despite its history of subjugation and marginalization.

WHY BALLROOM AND VOGUE FEM?

Through cultural production and archival practices, like poetry, performance—Vogue Fem, speeches, and other sites of memory, Black gay beings were able to guard against erasure through a marking of their existence.

Further, Vogue Fem offers *Black Queer Futurity and Optimism* the idea that the cultural traditions forged by Black gay beings during the early era of AIDS makes a Black/Queer future possible which can hopefully in the future emerge from something other than loss and trauma.





Otherwise Vogue

The embodied practice of Vogue Fem invites and provides a corporeal sovereignty. It encourages bent wrists, whirling dips, the joy of the spin and the swishes and sashaying of the hips and the sensuality of floor performance.

Black Trans and Queer people can reclaim autonomy over their bodies and physically enact defiant gestures in response to the social ills of homophobia, transphobia, racism and capitalism.

Old Way circa 1980 notes:

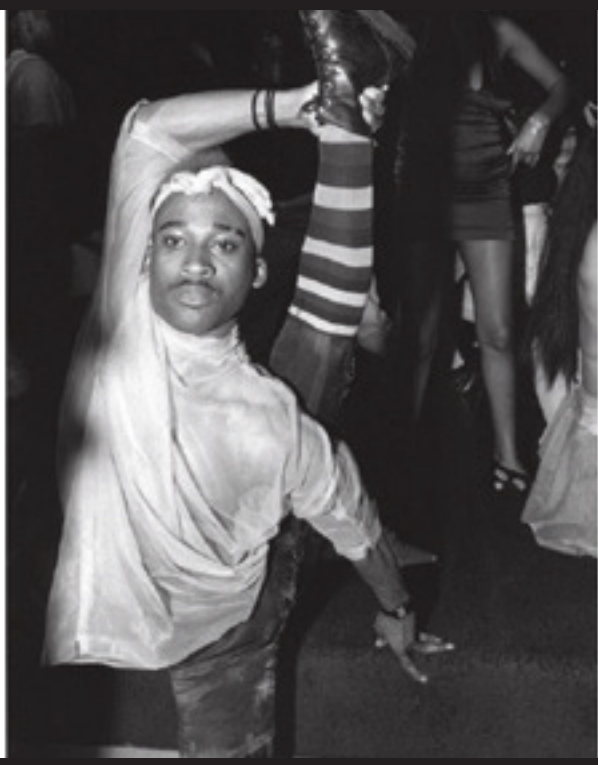
Mimicking fashion models--> emphasis on the pose as if pictures are being taken--> knowing your angles, architecture the arms are used to construct (build oneself) and obstruct (impose a wideness that blocks your opponent). Framing mainly the face. Queer Vanity. Cosmopolitan,

"OLD WAY, formerly known POP, DIP & SPIN is the first voguing style which was base for the development of the stylez NEW WAY and VOGUE FEM. It is made up of the formation of lines, symmetry, and precision in the execution of formations with graceful, fluid-like Movement. Egyptian hieroglyphs, Martial Arts, Breakdance, Popping, Military Style and male fashion poses serve as the original inspirations for old way voguing. In its purest and historical form voguing of the old way it is a duel between two rivals and the base for new way and vogue fem performance." - Leo St. Laurent

photo credit: the Smithsonian

VOGUE
Transitive Verb

to strike poses in campy imitation of fashion models especially as a kind of dance.



New Way circa 1990-1994 notes:

Extreme Flexibility, Contortion, Box Dips, Hairpin Dips, Clicks, "Arm-chitecture"

The arms create newly imagined angles. Poses emphasize arriving at the most extreme pose as quickly as posible.

The New Way is known for its precision while creating complex angles, boxes, lines and illusions with the arms, wrists and hands (similar to tutting).

It was inspired and created by performers who used to showcase extreme flexibility, and poses inspired by contortionists, gymnastics, yoga and haute couture fashion.

Photo credit: The Smithsonian

Notes on the Five Elements of Vogue: Strategies of Being Seen and Surviving

Hand Performance:

Circularity, "look at the flick of the wrist", Bent wrist, knives, "sissy insurgencies" the narrators, the storytellers "tell your story" compasses maybe the hands tell you where to go? categories like Arms Control and Hand Performance are about telling a story. Hands tell you where to look. They enact defiant gestures

Duck Walk:

Most recognizable in Old Way- Godfather Willi Ninja, requires strength and length in the legs, endurance, used to recover and to keep the beat. One of the most difficult elements to do for a long time.

Variations: Trepek, Low scoots, Backwards, 1,2, 1 and 2,

Cat Walk:

The runway-->sashaying, hip leading, Cha cha (charaterized by the chant) footwork, a how you get-- there-propelling you forward-fugitive yet directive, stemming from fashion runways

structures in structure/Variations:
singles, doubles. triples, pas de bouree, kick, front and a back, show the hip

Floor Performance:

meant to exaggerate the performer's relationship with a flat plane, claiming space-sensuously, resting place in battle. Contact with the floor, a brief listening on the floor as the ancestral plane (the floor is where many have walked, perhaps this is where they still are. The Ballroom floor is what memorializes those without proper burial)

Spins and Dips:

to defy, astonish, emulating the unsafety and risk of the everyday. An "I dare you to get back up" Executed on the HA! - loud metallic crash in the music. Exemplifying resilience. Masters at Work- The HA! Dance- sampled from Trading Places--> scene in Blackface

Dips by level

Level 1: Lowering to the floor and tucking the leg

Level 2: Spinning into a jump and landing into a dip

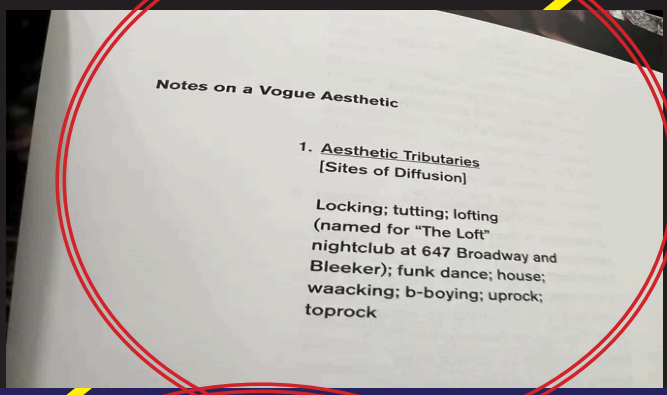
Level 3: 360 dips, hitch dips, charcterized by extreme difficulty, flips into dips.

Notes:

I explore Vogue Fem as a radical doctrine (alongside Benji Hart's Dancer as Insurgent) of for intergenerational transfers of culture amongst Black trans, queer and gender-variant communities and how these communities are formed across time. Vogue Fem is an improvisational style of dance that grew out of the subcultural nightlife of Black and Brown Trans and Queer communities in Harlem, New York. This movement is highly competitive and is performed at underground competitions known as Balls. The movement consists of five elements: Hand Performance, Catwalk. Floor Performance, Duck Walk, and Spins & Dips.
In this work, I theorize and use the elements of Vogue Fem as physical enactments of cultural memories and residues that connect the form to its diasporic past.

Vogue as a "syncreatic practice" is what is currently drawing me in. The movement amalgamates so many different avenues of liberation. Self Love, sexuality, fashion, escapism. The list extends so far.

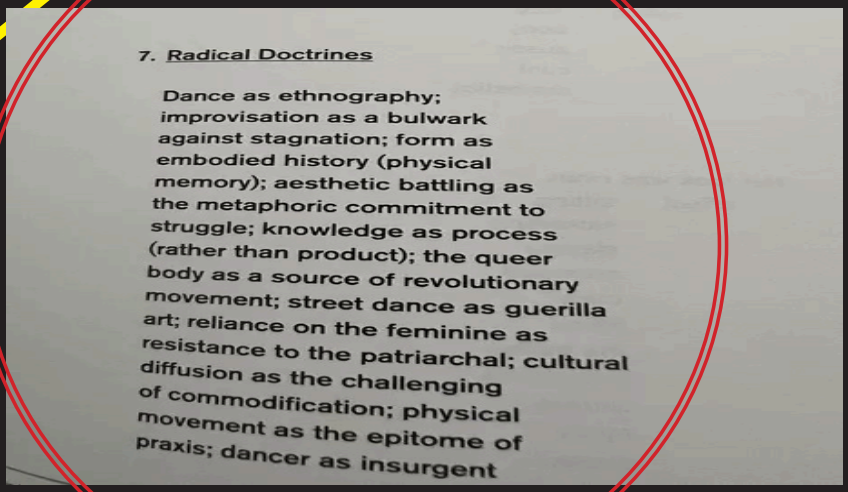
Thinking about the relationship between "antebellum slavery and contemporary blackness." The barriers and blockages that black people, especially black queer people, have to succumb in order to be slightly accepted into a capitalist society that we are living in today is the exact reason why Vogue and the Ballroom scene needs to and has to be protected.



Notes on a Vogue Aesthetic

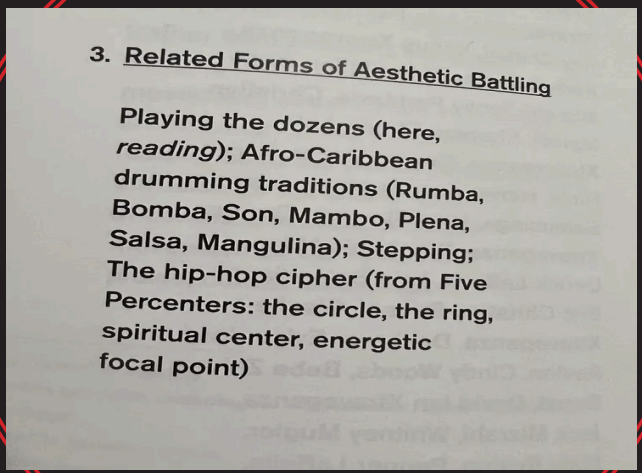
1. Aesthetic Tributaries
[Sites of Diffusion]

Locking; tutting; lofting (named for "The Loft" nightclub at 647 Broadway and Bleeker); funk dance; house; waacking; b-boying; uprock; toprock



7. Radical Doctrines

Dance as ethnography; improvisation as a bulwark against stagnation; form as embodied history (physical memory); aesthetic battling as the metaphoric commitment to struggle; knowledge as process (rather than product); the queer body as a source of revolutionary movement; street dance as guerilla art; reliance on the feminine as resistance to the patriarchal; cultural diffusion as the challenging of commodification; physical movement as the epitome of praxis; dancer as insurgent



3. Related Forms of Aesthetic Battling

Playing the dozens (here, *reading*); Afro-Caribbean drumming traditions (Rumba, Bomba, Son, Mambo, Plena, Salsa, Mangulina); Stepping; The hip-hop cipher (from Five Percenters: the circle, the ring, spiritual center, energetic focal point)

Reflecting on the otherwise possibilities, what is to be said about the other elements of Vogue Fem? Over the years, practicing in clubs and being a spectator at Balls, I've learned that certain tactics and strategies are deployed in Vogue to win the battle. Thinking of the Five Elements of Vogue Fem as not only movements.

Arms Control/Hand Performance are the storytellers (there is a category dedicated to hand performance and it is about storytelling and arguing silently) the duck walk, playful and serving to recover and keep the beat. To echo madison moore, the Catwalk propelling you forward ---moving down a runway, "a stance of proud energy" emulating a cat on the prowl. Floor performance explores and claims the space. Floor performance is invested in exaggerating and indulging in one's relationship to a flat plane. It is easy to cover more space, the floor can be seen as a resting place in battle. later describes "Floor Performance is a way to bring the attention to you. If your opponent is up on their feet, going to the floor can get the judges to look at you"

Lastly, Spins and dips, one of the most recognizable feats in the form, is said to defy and astonish. Dips can be described as a ground-level stunt. This can be executed by spinning down to the floor and tucking one leg, while the other is extended and creating the illusion that one's head has touched the floor. This is to be executed on what is called the HA! ---a loud metallic crash in vogue beats to accent this specific movement.

The dip originated for Pop, Dip, and Spin which is the base of Old Way Voguing. Through this improvisational structure, enacting this form of aesthetic violence in which the body becomes more than just an entity in the space, but an entity cutting through space and transforming the space into this defiant and radiant center of gravity. The elemental strategies of Vogue Fem can feel incredibly profound. This improvisational structure characterizes Vogue Fem as a movement form that is generously intricate and detailed. The body appears as this winding, spinning, traveling, dipping, and ambitious entity that completely claims the space and converses with other moving entities in the space.

Photo Credit: CAM2- Dancer as Insurgent- Benji Hart

DRAWING ON MARLON ROSS' RACIAL ANATOMIES

"Drawing on the legacy of Jim Crow minstrelsy, popular stagings and filming of Negro manhood were often performed to accentuate effeminate physical embodiment: limp wrists, hips flexibly extended, with a skipping gait, or shoulders stooped, head bowed, eyes droopily cast down, feet dragging the contrary to figurations of fit manliness: the muscled athlete, the alert revolutionary, the upright statesman, or the brave soldier at attention."
(Sissy Insurgencies: A Racial Anatomy of Unfit Manliness)

BLACK QUEER PERFORMANCE ANATOMIES

BODY

I speak to Ballroom being about survival and deploy the term strategic embodied improvisation to be in conversation with Marlon Bailey and his ethnographic research in Detroit's Ballroom scene. Further, I turn my attention to the labor in which Black Trans and Queer identifying groups produce to move through our lives as safely as possible but to also speak to the improvisational tactics and strategies deployed in Ball as subconscious and conscious enactments of the futures we imagine; how kinesthetics speak to a desire for something better Bailey discusses "...the strategies that they deploy to survive the dangers of largely heteronormative urban spaces. (Bailey, 2002 p.491) I want to think about the Elements of Vogue Fem as tactics of place-making and how they speak to move through the everyday in a particular way. That there is a force behind the movement, feats of persistence, insistence, efforts of humanization.... moore writes towards the queerness of one of the Five Elements of Vogue, the catwalk "What's queer about the catwalk? ...They were moving forward, or being propelled to someplace fabulous, really, and I wanted to be where they were going...I want to think about what the catwalk allows as a performance space for performances done by people forced to the margins. What is possible on the catwalk and in catwalk performance that is not in everyday life?" (moore, 2018 p. 171-173)

Photo credits: The Atlantic- https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2019/11/nyc-kiki-community

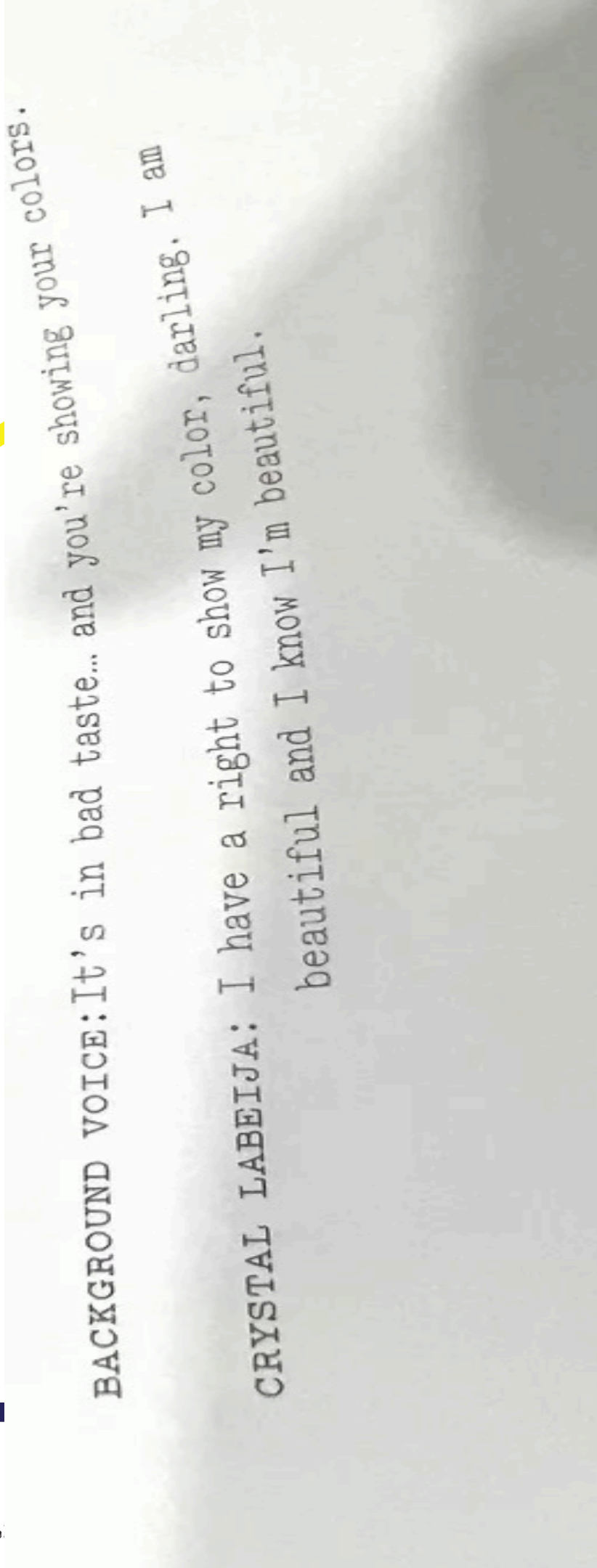
How bodies form their ideas of HOME...

The balls are a home and safe space for those who are not accepted by their biological family, allowing for queer people to find a community where they can feel a sense of belonging. For a colonized world that mistreats Black and Brown trans and queer people, the ballroom invites them into a space of candid love and acceptance where they can realize they are worthy and blossom into the person they wish to be.

This scene reveals an outlet of freedom and creative expressivity for people to form their sense of self and identity however they choose.

I am thinking about where Vogue has existed within balls, piers, studios, music videos, runways, television, etc. and how it has presented itself in each of these situations. Vogue is a part of a socio-political revolution through dance and language which has lived hand in hand with activism to continuously lead us to a more understanding and evolving future of acceptance and openness.

photo credit: CAM2- Elements of Vogue



SPACE

It is not surprising that Black LGBT communities have a complicated relationship to space." -Marlon Bailey

Filmmaker and activist Elegance Bratton, in his film Pier Kids explores the place making strategies of Black and Brown Trans and Queer youth on the Hudson Piers. In a post-film interview, he speaks of temporal segregation. This reference reminded me of "sundown towns" in the Jim Crow South as a historical back drop to identify this particular relationships that Black people have had with time and the spaces they occupy . In the film, many of the homeless youth faced police harassment and violence for simply standing, looking for something to eat after a Ball let out or simply being in fellowship with their peers.

Walking Vogue Fem as a category is an exhibition; a display of ways in which to consciously resist. The body in relationship to space, is contesting historical white taking of space and consequently, the forced migration of Black bodies. The intersectionality of the Black body being excluded from white gay spaces and Black heteronormative spaces (socio-spatial practices - space as a cultural production and exclusion as reflective of cultural values- a presentation of a grotesque body.)

The body in space is tied up in belonging. The pioneering labor of Ballroom Black trans, queer, and gender variant groups are forced to improvise to "forge conditions of safety" through place-making practices. Ballroom is the site where the literal carving out of Black queer space through performance to "transform normative geographies into spaces of communal celebration, affirmation, and support.

Photo credits: The Atlantic

When theorizing VISIBLE LEGIBILITY, certain adaptive strategies become commonplace in Ballroom especially when its participants are seeking ways to belong. Adapting and conforming to a specific gender binary and social gender norm has been a queer tactic for survival for avoiding detection.

> Why the desire to create a recorded history? In part, no doubt, for the sheer pleasure of watching again and commenting. In part, to create a sense of connectedness between a large group of people across time. And in part, as a defiant gesture in the face of death which visits this community far too often, an attempt to make a mark of having-been-present. Visible legibility is sought as the ground for ontology.

Bailey describes "Realness is at one about autheticityity and illusion." (Bailey, 2002 p.52) While realness operates to suspend the disbelief of audiences in Ballroom, realness is the survival strategy to get you home at night. I theorize this as a blend with "survival" strategies in Vogue battles. Black Trans and Queer identifying people must always be on guard, they must also listen. Speaking to the specificity of these place-making practices, Black queer and femme Ballroom participants are the ones who know the most of transformative justice because they experience the ins and outs of having their livelihoods infringed upon.

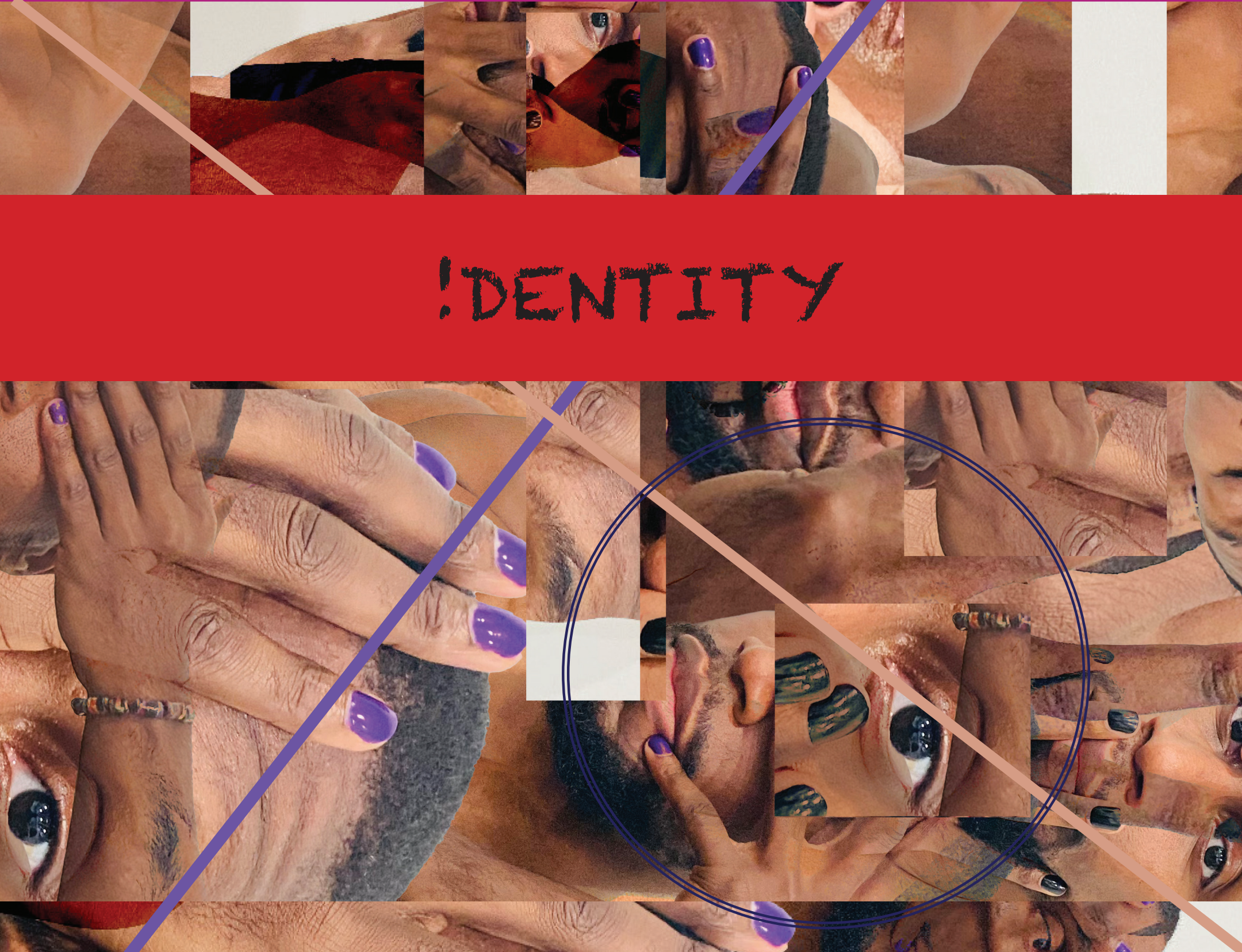
Vogue Fem combines sometimes unsafe, complex movements that mirror the unsafety Black trans and queer individuals may feel outside of the Ballroom scene. The possibility of being chopped brings in this idea of "survival" that Marlon Bailey theorizes "participants worry about survival" ---making it to the end. Within Ballroom they do not have to worry about hiding who they truly are or who they want to be. Yet, their everyday lives depend on always listening. Their lives depend on a type of reckoning with ecological systems of chance occurrences in which they deploy the defiant acts present in Vogue Fem to survive to always and actively transform a space that is not invested in accommodating and affirming their existence. Lee further explains the "less power people feel they can exert over their environment, the more they attempt to do so over their own bodies" (qtd. in Susman, 2000 p.134)

IDENTITY

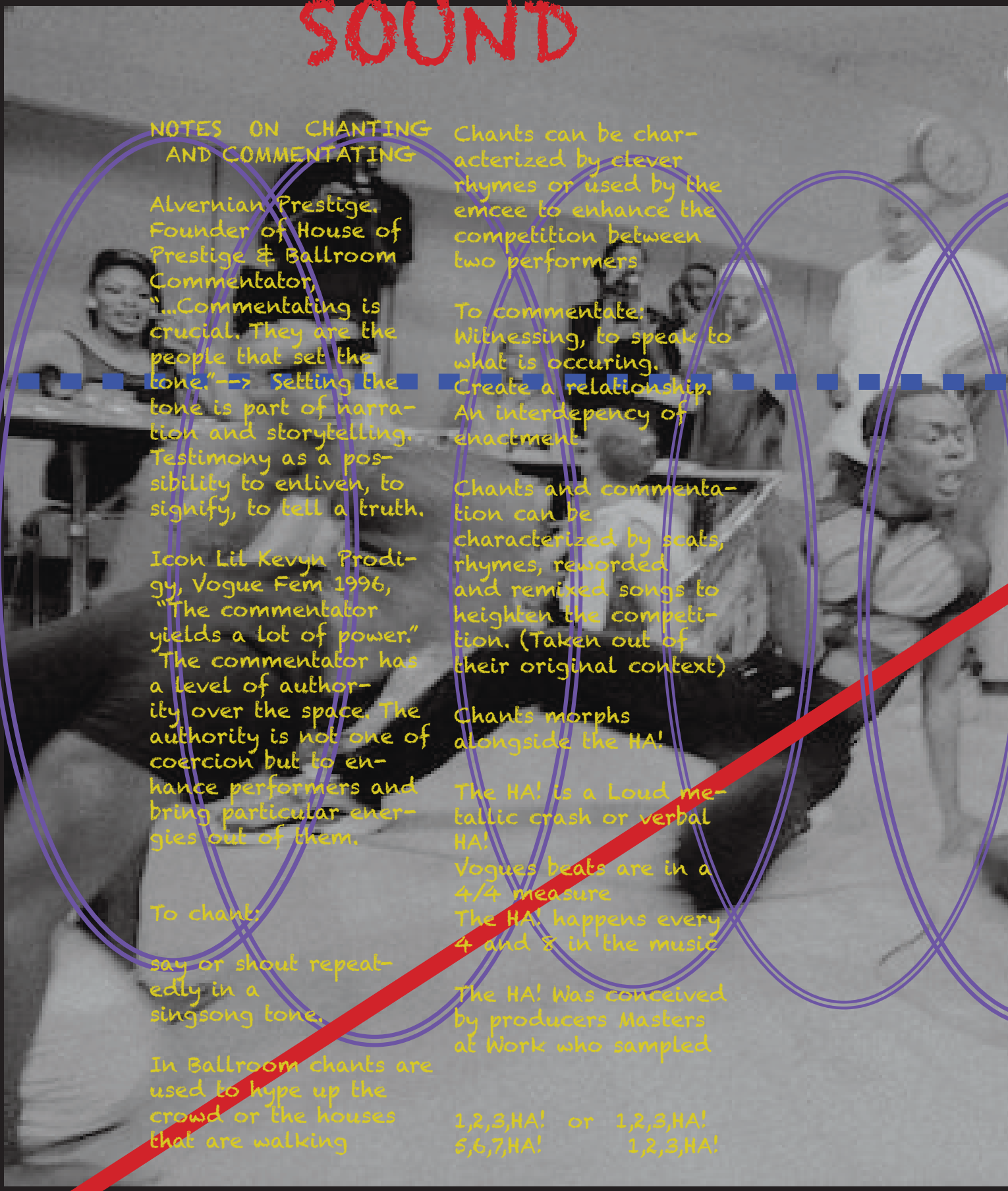
You are not always praised or applauded for how you show up. The labor of self-making is not cause to get your tens. However, I want to think that this labor can be crucial for survival and how one sees themselves in the world. That Ballroom as a site of imaginative reimagining could facilitate ways in which one could express a piece of their identity safely and perhaps be celebrated for it.

Roberts suggests that the house/ball culture is rooted in a rich tradition of African American cultural practices that privilege "inversion" and "code switching." Cultural inversion is a cultural innovation in which "minorities express their opposition to the dominant group by emphasizing other behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings as more appropriate for themselves" because they are not part of the dominant way of life. (Ogbu, 1993, p. 491)

The ways in which Ballroom has become a site of imagination speak to the subjugation that many of its participants face. This process of being subjugated is cyclically manifested in the ways that Ballroom as a subculture refuses categorization, adheres to categorization, and then refuses it again. I theorize this as the complicated process of placemaking---seeking what affirms, what feels natural, what works and, in some cases, what is more relational.


!DENTITY

SOUND



NOTES ON CHANTING AND COMMENTATING

Alvernian Prestige.
Founder of House of Prestige & Ballroom Commentator,
"..Commentating is crucial. They are the people that set the tone."--> Setting the tone is part of narration and storytelling. Testimony as a possibility to enliven, to signify, to tell a truth.

Icon Lil Kevyn Prodigy, Vogue Fem 1996,
"The commentator yields a lot of power."
The commentator has a level of authority over the space. The authority is not one of coercion but to enhance performers and bring particular energies out of them.

To chant:

say or shout repeatedly in a singsong tone.

In Ballroom chants are used to hype up the crowd or the houses that are walking

Chants can be characterized by clever rhymes or used by the emcee to enhance the competition between two performers

To commentate:
Witnessing, to speak to what is occuring.
Create a relationship.
An interdepency of enactment

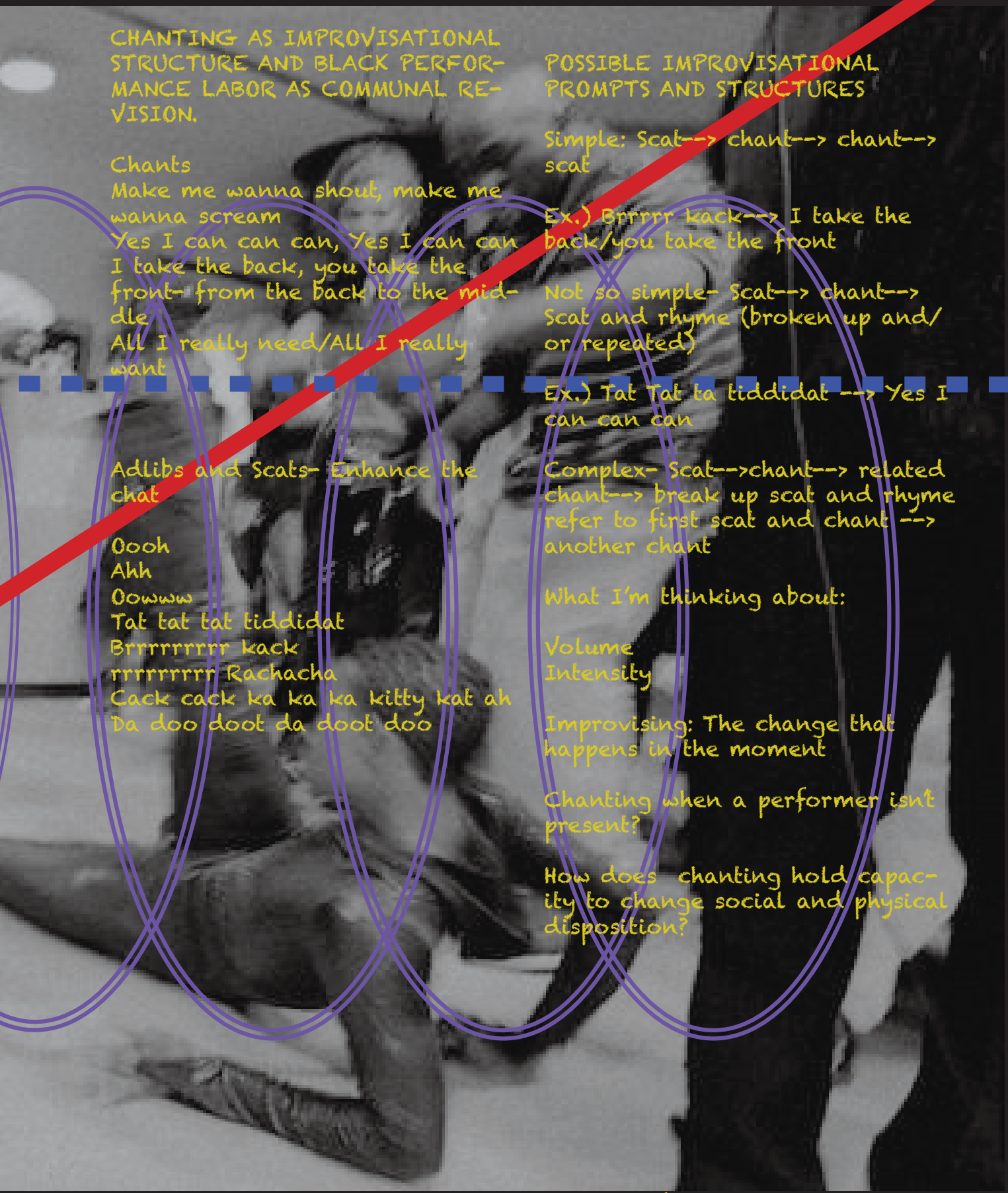
Chants and commentation can be characterized by scats, rhymes, reworded and remixed songs to heighten the competition. (Taken out of their original context)

Chants morphs alongside the HA!

The HA! is a Loud metallic crash or verbal HA!
Vogues beats are in a 4/4 measure
The HA! happens every 4 and 8 in the music

The HA! Was conceived by producers Masters at Work who sampled

1,2,3,HA! or 1,2,3,HA!
5,6,7,HA! 1,2,3,HA!



CHANTING AS IMPROVISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND BLACK PERFORMANCE LABOR AS COMMUNAL RE-VISION.

Chants
Make me wanna shout, make me wanna scream
Yes I can can can, Yes I can can
I take the back, you take the front- from the back to the middle
All I really need/All I really want

Adlibs and Scats- Enhance the chat

Oooh
Ahh
Oowwww
Tat tat tat tiddidat
Brrrrrrrrr kack
rrrrrrrrr Rachacha
Cack cack ka ka ka kitty kat ah
Da doo doot da doot doo

POSSIBLE IMPROVISATIONAL PROMPTS AND STRUCTURES

Simple: Scat--> chant--> chant--> scat

Ex.) Brrrrr kack--> I take the back/you take the front

Not so simple- Scat--> chant--> Scat and rhyme (broken up and/or repeated)

Ex.) Tat Tat ta tiddidat --> Yes I can can can

Complex- Scat-->chant--> related chant--> break up scat and rhyme refer to first scat and chant --> another chant

What I'm thinking about:

Volume
Intensity

Improvising: The change that happens in the moment

Chanting when a performer isn't present?

How does chanting hold capacity to change social and physical disposition?

Photo credit: https://www.colorlines.com/articles/black-queer-and-vogue-photos

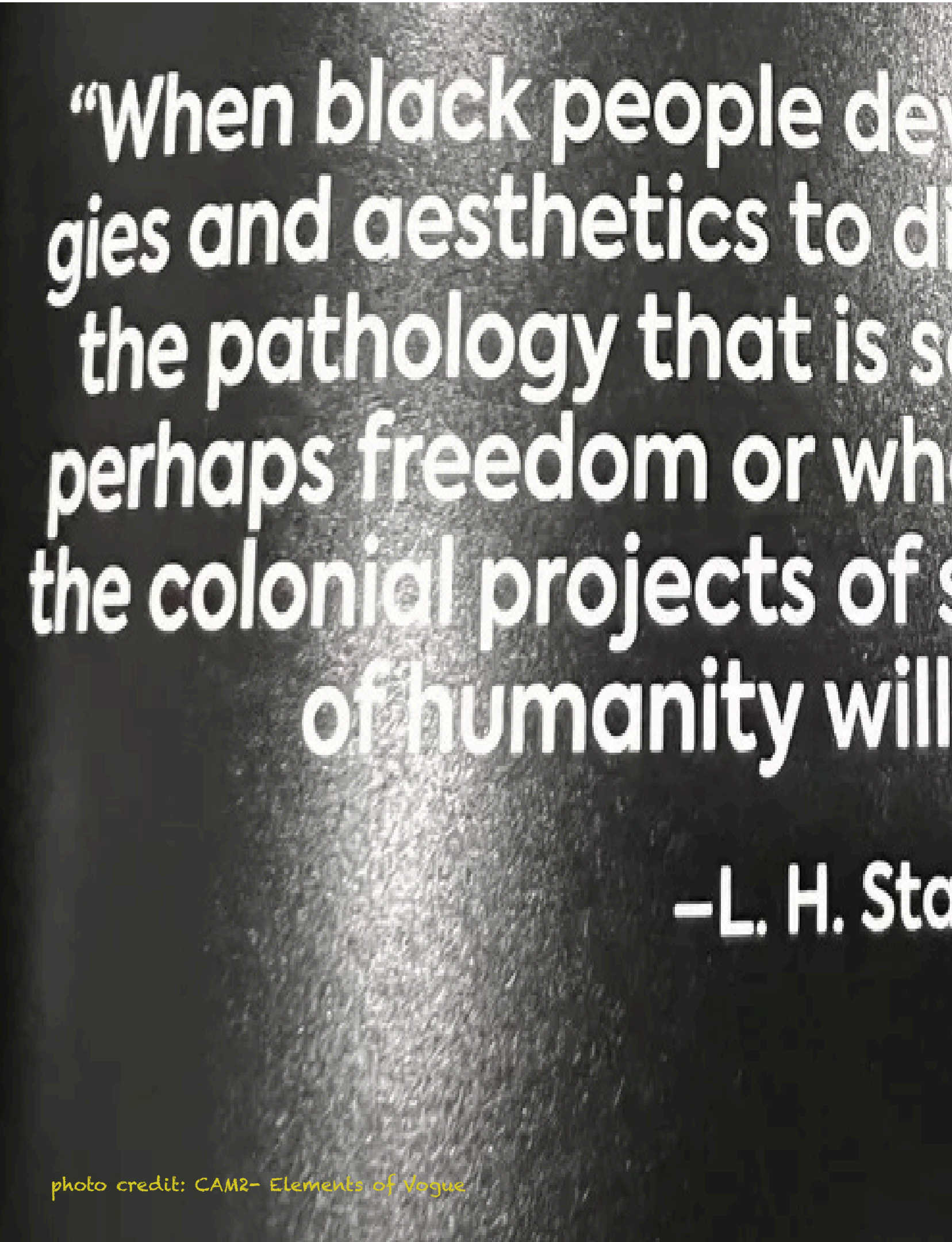


photo credit: CAM2- Elements of Vogue

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smiss or deconstruct
exual morality, then
atever exists beyond
solidifying the genres
be possible."

llings Funk the Erotic. Transaesthetics
and Black Sexual Cultures, University
of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago
and Springfield, 2015.

Humanizing the Archive and the Black Gay Cultural Renaissance

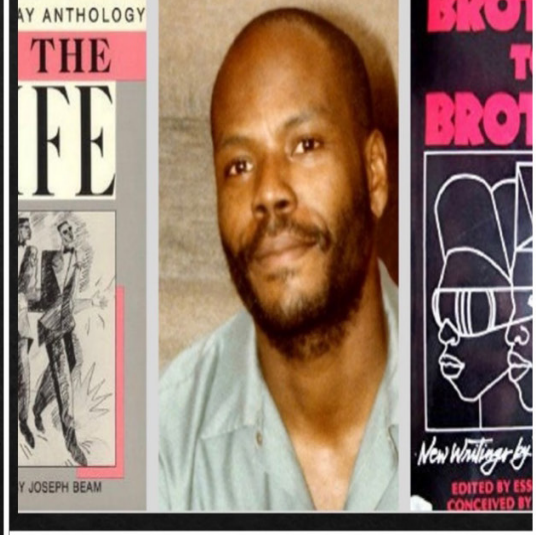
Examining them as sites of duality, protest, trauma and reconciliation as well as sites of Black SGL optimism and Black gay being

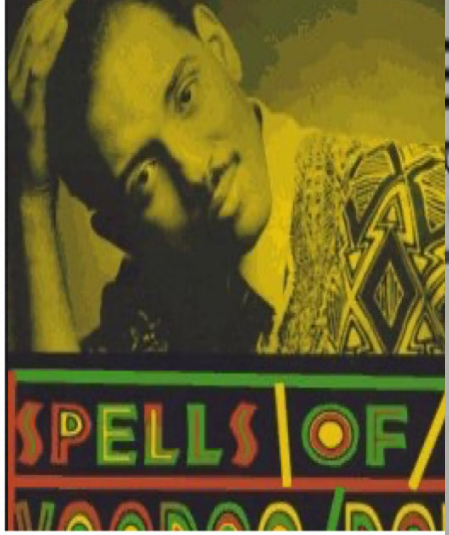
"Efforts of humanization"

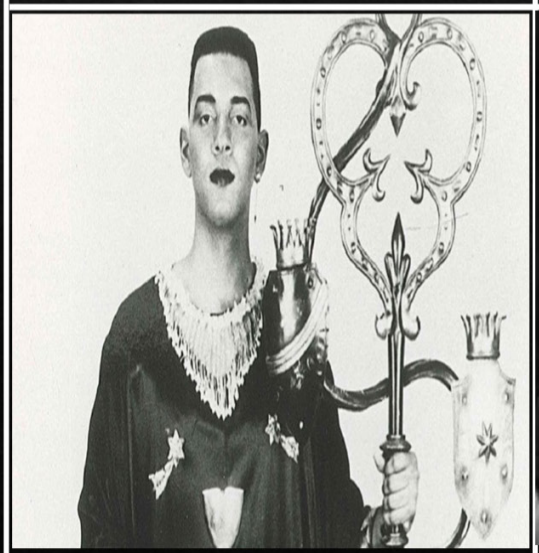
Examining Black SGL/GSNA performance art as an ongoing repertoire rooted in resistance against state violence and Revolution organization

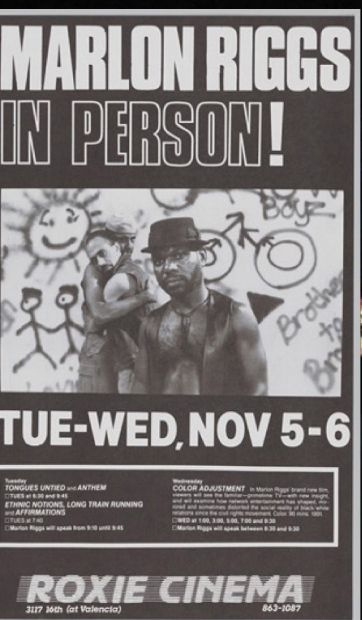
"Respecting and honoring the works that exist in the archive"

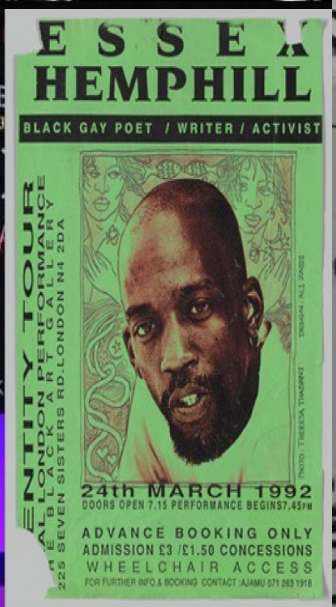
Locating myself and artistic practice in the archive , humanizing myself in polities of whiteness and anti-blackness

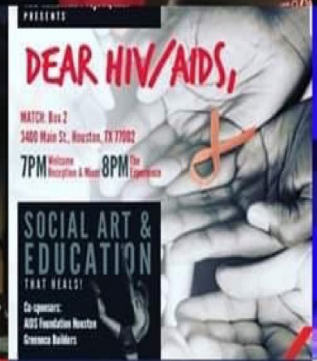


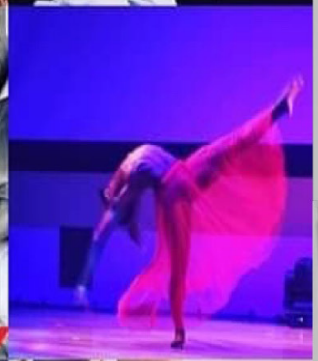


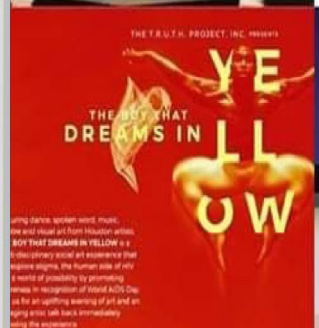


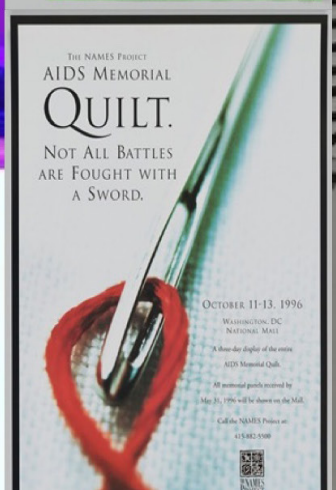








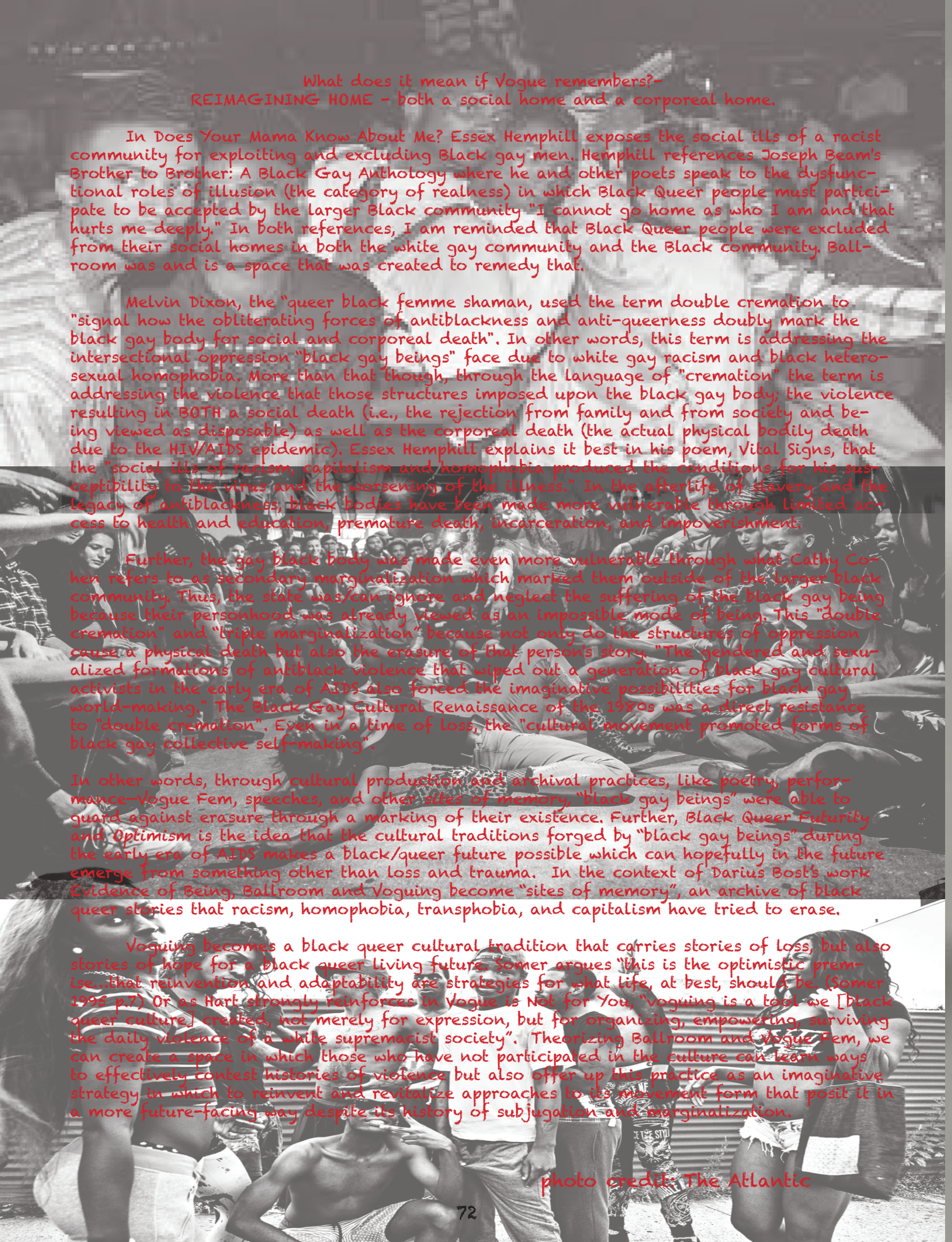




"Now, not only could I read and see and hear the past, discovering new relevance, significance unimagined, but I could also, in turn, speak to this past, and thus reanimate and reshape it, define it anew."

— MARLON T. RIGGS "Notes of a Signifyin' Snap! Queen", in Art Journal, vol. 50, no. 3, 1991, p. 62.

In September 1968, as a panel of beauty experts



What does it mean if Vogue remembers?-
REIMAGINING HOME - both a social home and a corporeal home.

In Does Your Mama Know About Me? Essex Hemphill exposes the social ills of a racist community for exploiting and excluding Black gay men. Hemphill references Joseph Beam's Brother to Brother: A Black Gay Anthology where he and other poets speak to the dysfunctional roles of illusion (the category of realness) in which Black Queer people must participate to be accepted by the larger Black community "I cannot go home as who I am and that hurts me deeply." In both references, I am reminded that Black Queer people were excluded from their social homes in both the white gay community and the Black community. Ballroom was and is a space that was created to remedy that.

Melvin Dixon, the "queer black femme shaman, used the term double cremation to "signal how the obliterating forces of antiblackness and anti-queerness doubly mark the black gay body for social and corporeal death". In other words, this term is addressing the intersectional oppression "black gay beings" face due to white gay racism and black heterosexual homophobia. More than that though, through the language of "cremation" the term is addressing the violence that those structures imposed upon the black gay body; the violence resulting in BOTH a social death (i.e., the rejection from family and from society and being viewed as disposable) as well as the corporeal death (the actual physical bodily death due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic). Essex Hemphill explains it best in his poem, Vital Signs, that the "social ills of racism, capitalism and homophobia produced the conditions for his susceptibility to the virus and the worsening of the illness." In the afterlife of slavery and the legacy of antiblackness, black bodies have been made more vulnerable through limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment.

Further, the gay black body was made even more vulnerable through what Cathy Cohen refers to as secondary marginalization which marked them outside of the larger black community. Thus, the state was/can ignore and neglect the suffering of the black gay being because their personhood was already viewed as an impossible mode of being. This "double cremation" and "triple marginalization" because not only do the structures of oppression cause a physical death but also the erasure of that person's story. "The gendered and sexualized formations of antiblack violence that wiped out a generation of black gay cultural activists in the early era of AIDS also forced the imaginative possibilities for black gay world-making." The Black Gay Cultural Renaissance of the 1980s was a direct resistance to "double cremation". Even in a time of loss, the "cultural movement promoted forms of black gay collective self-making".

In other words, through cultural production and archival practices, like poetry, performance—Vogue Fem, speeches, and other sites of memory, "black gay beings" were able to guard against erasure through a marking of their existence. Further, Black Queer Futurity and Optimism is the idea that the cultural traditions forged by "black gay beings" during the early era of AIDS makes a black/queer future possible which can hopefully in the future emerge from something other than loss and trauma. In the context of Darius Bost's work Evidence of Being, Ballroom and Voguing become "sites of memory", an archive of black queer stories that racism, homophobia, transphobia, and capitalism have tried to erase.

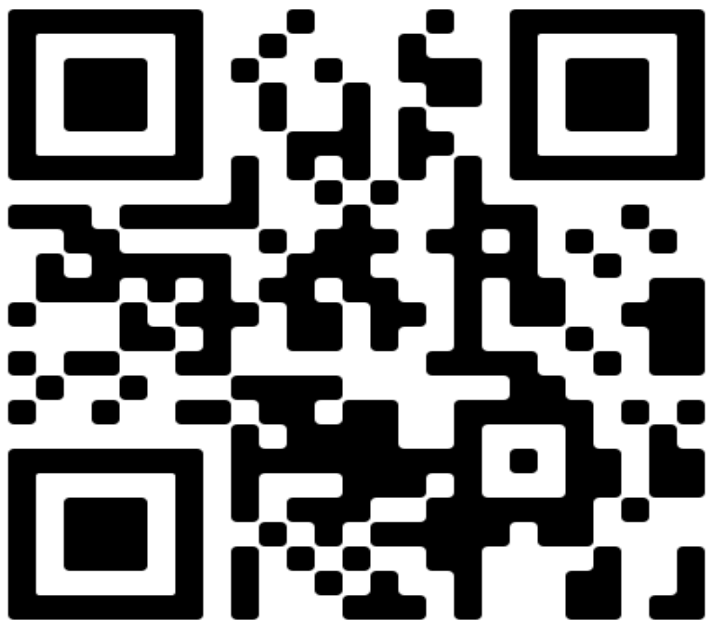
Voguing becomes a black queer cultural tradition that carries stories of loss, but also stories of hope for a black queer living future. Somer argues "this is the optimistic premise...that reinvention and adaptability are strategies for what life, at best, should be. (Somer 1995 p.7) Or as Hart strongly reinforces in Vogue is Not for You, "voguing is a tool we [black queer culture] created, not merely for expression, but for organizing, empowering, surviving the daily violence of a white supremacist society". Theorizing Ballroom and Vogue Fem, we can create a space in which those who have not participated in the culture can learn ways to effectively contest histories of violence but also offer up this practice as an imaginative strategy in which to reinvent and revitalize approaches to its movement form that posit it in a more future-facing way despite its history of subjugation and marginalization.

photo credit: The Atlantic

"The archive paints a background for a major contribution your work has made: representing queer spaces within black spaces, and the other way around [...]. This archive helps us to hold black and queer production in the same frame, despite a powerful repertoire of images that attempts to render blackness straight, and gayness white. That attempt must fail, as you seem to insist by shooting the life you live."

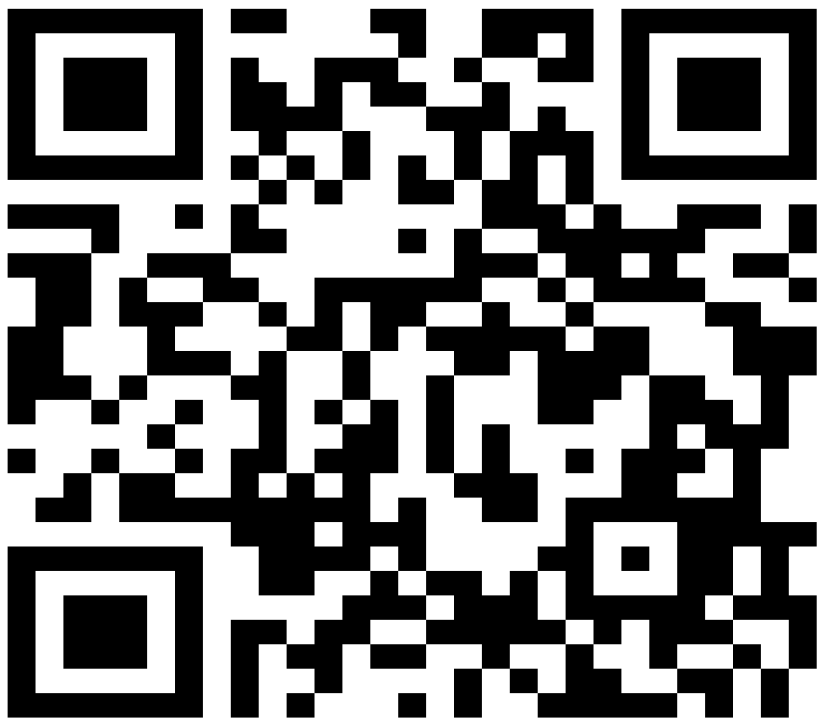
— Malik Gaines "A Letter", in Lyle Ashton Harris, Today I Shall Judge Nothing that Occurs, Aperture, New York, 2017, p. 60.

photo credit: CAM2- Elements of Vogue



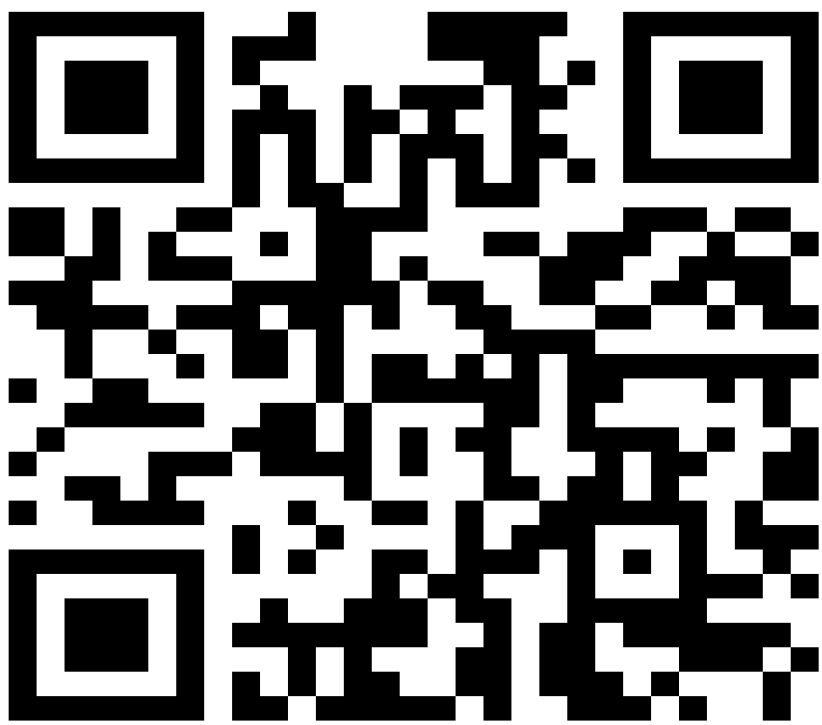
BLACK MALE STUDIES ARCHIVE

In collaboration with Dr. Travis Harris



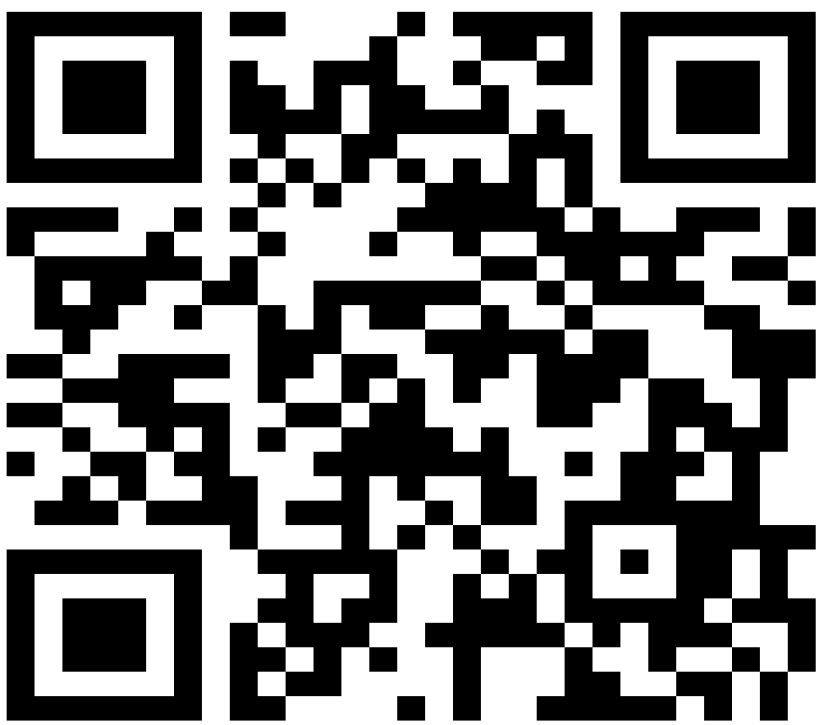
Unexamined Bodies of Work

by Uwazi Zamani



Embodied Histories: Vogue Fem

A moving syllabus for the embodied practice of Vogue Fem curated by Uwazi Zamani



Research as Action Materials

by Uwazi Zamani

Photos and Illustrations- The Telling of Us/This is What I Want to See! :
Notes on Vogue Fem as a Way Forward

p. 8-9- Elements of Vogue CAM2- Marlon Riggs- Tongues Untied

p. 11- Elements of Vogue- CAM2

p. 12-15- Library of Congress and Smithsonian Website

p.16-17 Kara Walker, Illustration from Notes from a Noteworthy Negress

p. 20-21 Photography by Pin Lim, Library of Congress, self-taken of Without Sanctuary

P. 22-23- Photos form Library of Congress

p. 24-25- collage samples pieces of Robert Colescott's The Emergency Room

p. 26-27- Smithsonian Website of Black Power Movements and Black Gay Film

p. 28-29- Screenshots from Twitter

p. 30-31 Includes sketches from artist Marcus Arceneaux

p. 32-33 - Photography by Pin Lim, includes samples from Library of Congress -
MLK shooting at Lorraine Motel

p. 34-35- Photography by Pin Lim, Book: Appealing Because He is Appaling-Google Books Photo

p. 36-37 photo by Dinita Clark

p. 38-39- All photos contributed by Facebook friends with their permission

p.40-41- Library of Congress

p. 42-43- Library of Congress

p. 46- 65- Library of Congress, The Atlantic Website, Smithsonian Website,
Elements of Vogue- CAM2

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"IT WAS THE PERIOD WHEN THE NEGRO WAS IN VOGUE."

— LANGSTON HUGHES The Big Sea. An Autobiography, Hill & Wang, New York, 1993, p. 273.