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Notes on Contributors
Jordan Peele’s 2017 movie *Get Out* examines racism, the commodification of black bodies, and a racist desire to control black people through the lens of a horror narrative. Many of the themes that the film *Get Out* addresses and brought to the forefront of a national conversation are explored in great detail in the 2013 video game *Bioshock Infinite* produced by Irrational Games. *Bioshock Infinite* explores America’s relationship with its own identity, its past, and the creation of the myths surrounding American exceptionalism. *Bioshock Infinite* accomplishes this examination through an exploration of America’s troubled past with regards to race, America’s violent deeds, and an inability to overcome and deal with events that put into question the myths of American exceptionalism. *Bioshock Infinite*’s examination of these themes comes through in its setting – the fictional city of Columbia – the introduction of alternate timelines and histories, and through its main characters, Elizabeth, Booker DeWitt, and Zachery Comstock. Columbia is a city that literally resides in the sky above the coast of Maine as an alternate and twisted version of America. Set in an alternate 1912, the city of Columbia’s existence can be seen as an ultimate act of secession from the United States. As Booker enters into the city of Columbia, he sees Columbian propaganda that calls the United States, “the Sodom below” (*Bioshock Infinite*). Columbia combines the use of American symbols, myths, and generalized...
Americana within its society to craft a culture that is deeply racist, exclusionary, and fascistic. This marks the city of Columbia as a twisted doppelganger for American culture. *Bioshock Infinite* then uses this contrast to examine how aspects of American culture can lead directly to a society that adheres to beliefs and ideas that are supposedly the antithesis of what America stands for.

The main characters in *Bioshock Infinite* also work within this framework to explore the impact to the general American society of an American nation that does not live up to the mythic notions it has set for itself. The game accomplishes this through a science fiction lens as *Bioshock Infinite* utilizes the narrative tool of alternative realities and universes. The player character Booker DeWitt and *Bioshock Infinite*’s main antagonist Zachery Comstock are one in the same. The only difference between the two is that they are from alternate universes. This not only pairs the two characters in a literal sense, but it makes the point where they diverged from each other an important moment to examine. Booker DeWitt and Zachery Comstock lived the same life including serving in the US Army and becoming a member of the Pinkerton security force. After Booker returns from the Battle of Wounded Knee, a massacre in which the US Army systematically murdered an entire Native American tribe, he finds himself at a baptism in an attempt to release himself from the guilt he has due to his actions at the battle. The preacher standing in the middle of the baptismal lake asks Booker, “Are you ready to have your past erased? Are you ready to have your sins cleansed? Are you ready to be born again?” (*Bioshock Infinite*). This moment is where the Booker DeWitt and the antagonist Zachery Comstock diverge. Booker DeWitt rejects the baptism. Booker states, “You think a dunk in the river’s gonna change the things I’ve done?” (*Bioshock Infinite*). In this moment, he rejects the trappings of religion and the narrative that the actions he has committed can be washed away and forgiven. In the universe where Booker accepts the baptism, however, Booker abandons the name Booker DeWitt and adopts the name of Zachery Comstock. Comstock not only accepts the baptism, forgives himself, and abandons the guilt he holds, but he also lionizes himself and his past actions through his newfound religious beliefs. He creates a narrative for himself that sets himself
up as a prophet that will ultimately save the true Americans from the supposedly corrupt nation America has become.

These beliefs are carried out in the City of Columbia, which Comstock creates in the years following the baptism. Instead of feeling guilty about the actions he committed and seeing them for what they really are, Comstock creates a narrative that makes the actions he committed into righteous deeds commanded by God. He then manifests a society that has foundational principles set in the subjugation of people of color, women, and other minorities while privileging the white male heterosexual majority. Comstock wraps these racist and sexist views into the trappings of classic Americana and religion. Comstock’s Columbia literally idolizes the American founding fathers turning them into pseudo-Gods and himself into their prophet. When the player-controlled Booker DeWitt first enters into the city of Columbia, he is met with the statues of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. Beneath the statue of Washington, there are three citizens of Columbia praying before the statue chanting about the gifts that the founders gave Columbia so that they may live in the superior society of Columbia (Bioshock Infinite). The conventions of the society are taken directly from America’s past, yet used in ways that do not fit the American narrative of freedom and the ideal of the shining city on the hill. As Marjorie Suchocki writes, “Conventions range from notions of who we are as a nation to constructs governing individual behavior; they relate to politics, business, and religion. The more pervasive a convention is, the more mythical its expression may become” (Suchocki, 34). The conventions that surround American society are used by Zachery Comstock and the city of Columbia to fit the narrative for their way of life. In this way, the myths are used as mere window dressing to give legitimacy for the underlying ideology that governs the city of Columbia. The interplay of myth and society on display within the culture of Columbia shows the ability for common myths and a collective cultural history to be twisted and used to fit the political and social needs and desires of the current ruling class. The dynamic on display within Bioshock Infinite mirrors the dynamic often in practice within American society only set to an extreme nature for the modern audience. However, within the historical
context of America – particularly during the game’s setting of 1912 – Comstock’s beliefs are less radical, only his actions mark him as a radical.

The first section of the game is free from combat and allows the player to explore the city of Columbia and the conventions that govern its society in all of their twisted beauty. The visuals are stunning, with bright colors, interesting scenery, and classic symbols of Americana are found everywhere. Floating balloons of the founding fathers are scattered across the city. Columbian flags – which resemble the American flag with the red and white strips and deviates from its American counterpart with only having one star that symbolizes the one city of Columbia – are on everything from fruit stands to the trash cans. The city is bright, full of sunshine and happiness, and the comparisons to the classic American Fourth of July celebration leap off the screen. Yet, at every turn, there is an example of the darker nature of the society. Walking through the city Booker can eavesdrop on conversations held by the residents of Columbia. In one sequence the player can overhear a mother scolding their child for the act of, “stealing kisses from Irish girls” (Bioshock Infinite). In another section, the player can overhear the conversations of two women conversing about one of their nannies testing positive as not being purely white and take great offense that this person was ever allowed to be around their children (BioShock Infinite). These moments demonstrate the values Columbian society upholds and centers this all-American society as one where race and identity determine one’s place within Columbia. This is all centered on the first the thing player sees as they enter this section of the game. Centered in the town square is a large statue of Zachery Comstock. Comstock is positioned holding a sword and pointing as to lead his people to the promised land of Columbia. This marks the city of being led by a singular and charismatic dictator. This is further demonstrated by the many posters displaying Comstock’s face and the narrative he built as the prophet of the city. As the founding fathers are also intertwined within the mythos of Columbia, this comparison marks Comstock as an extension of the founding fathers supposed vision and also demonstrates the problematic ways the founders of this country are often portrayed within contemporary American society. In his book on the founda-
tion of American society, Paul Heike writes about the dynamic of molding the founding fathers into mythic beings, “It also strongly personalizes the origins of American nationhood, republicanism, and democracy by presenting them as the results of the political genius, virtue, and audacity of extraordinary individuals” (Heike, 198). Comstock uses this personalization of the American founding fathers to set up ideal mythic super beings that ground the foundational beliefs of Columbia. Comstock also does this with his own image as he sets himself up as the ideal citizen and leader. This dynamic put to work falsely makes the foundational beliefs of Columbia into tangible ideas that real people can achieve and strive towards. However, this does not truly represent reality as Comstock twists his own history and the history of the founding fathers in order to fit his narrative. Through this dynamic, *Bioshock Infinite* explores how once real people with complicated histories can be used to fit any particular narrative that the current society wishes to promote. The creation of these mythic historical figures also allows a society to ignore the complex historical truth. With the setup of the American nation as an example, the lionization of the founding fathers and the belief that it was their individual merit and skill that allowed for the creation of the American nation allows an easy path for a society to ignore or justify inconvenient historical facts. Such as how the institution of slavery helped build the foundation of America, or the systematic genocide of the Native American population.

The slow unraveling of the disturbing values of Columbia comes to a head in this section as the exploratory section of the game ends as Booker encounters a large crowd gathered singing the song “Goodnight Irene.” Like most of the previous experiences of the game, there is an odd serenity and calmness to the scene. The player is drawn to the crowd not only because the game leads the player there, but also the scene is inherently inviting. As Booker enters the crowd he enters into a mysterious raffle. The ticket he receives is in the form of a baseball. Booker wins, and the sinister side of this serene moment is revealed. Booker’s prize is revealed to be the opportunity to have the first throw of the baseball at an interracial couple that has been captured and tied up. Surrounding the couple there are Jim Crow era cardboard representations of the
bride and groom as monkeys and behind the couple is a minstrel representation of a preacher. Booker is shocked by this and hesitates. The man leading the raffle then taunts Booker urging him to, “Come on, are you gonna throw it… or are you taking your coffee black these days?” (*Bioshock Infinite*). The player is then given a choice of throwing the ball at the couple or throwing the ball at the raffle leader. Regardless of the choice the player makes, the scene breaks out into violence and the game properly begins. Through the serenity of the setting versus the terror of the intent laying underneath the veil of serenity this contrast shows how myths and conventions can become comfortable covers that justify and encourages acts of violence. This becomes particularly prudent when set against the background of an American mythology that fails to have an answer for our nation’s and our culture’s past mistakes. This dynamic is particularly poignant when confronted with how America has dealt with racial violence in its past. In reaction to the lynching of two Italian men in the city of New Orleans, a contemporary newspaper the Cotton Exchange stated, “That, while we deplore at all times resort [sic] to violence, we consider the actions taken by the citizens this morning to be proper and justifiable” (Wilson, 21). This is just one example of many, and within the context of the actual American past and within this framework of mythic conventions, Comstock and the society he creates act as an example of the worst impulses of American culture writ large. Just as American culture has often come up short in reconciling its troubled past and the mythic notions of its greatness, Comstock’s personal inability to deal with the trauma and guilt associated with his actions at the Battle of Wounded Knee leads him to create the city of Columbia. Also, in this instance, Wounded Knee stands in as a representation of the broader sins of the American past that the version of America Comstock and Columbia represent was unable to fully accept and deal with.

As Comstock represents an America that is unable to deal with its past by lionizing its own immoral behavior, Booker DeWitt does not stand up to Comstock as a vanguard of moral virtue; however, Booker stands in as another flawed example of how to deal with one’s troubled past. Booker is an alcoholic and a problem gambler. At the start of the game, Booker is deeply in debt. Booker’s debt
is so great, that he sells his daughter Annabelle unknowingly to his doppelganger, Zachery Comstock. Zackery Comstock is able to cross over into the universe where Booker and Annabelle reside and purchases Bookers daughter. Comstock renames her Elizabeth as he is in need of an heir to the throne that he holds in Columbia. Booker, overcome with grief and regret of this decision, creates a false narrative for himself that he must travel to the city of Columbia to return Elizabeth from the city of Columbia and bring the girl to mysterious debtors that Booker makes up. He is helped in this task by the Lutece siblings, the creators of the technology that allows travel between universes. Just as Comstock creates a narrative to deal with his grief and shame, so does Booker. Within this narrative, Booker creates a personal myth that gives him a purpose in attempting to rectify his past sins, without being fully aware of the magnitude of his past sins.

Booker’s narrative has himself confronting not only his past mistakes of selling his daughter, but also forces himself to confront the sins and the world his alter ego Zachery Comstock has created. However, Booker fails to realize that Zackery Comstock and he are one in the same until the end of the narrative, and throughout his time in Columbia, Booker ignores or fails to comment on the atrocities that the city cultivates. Multiple times throughout the narrative, Booker states that he, “just wants to be shut of this place” (Bioshock Infinite), and often attributes the atrocities that Booker and Elizabeth experience to the harsh realities of the world. However, Elizabeth does not fail to comment on the atrocities and wrongdoings she sees once she and Booker join forces in an attempt to escape the city. She finds common cause with the plight of the subjugated people that underneath the veneer that Comstock creates make Columbia a functional city. Yet her instincts to help are tampered down as Booker leads her in their attempt to escape Columbia.

Through the dynamic of Booker and Elizabeth’s relationship she becomes the moral compass for the pair and ultimately shown to be the protagonist for Bioshock Infinite’s plot. As Zachery Comstock and Booker DeWitt both ignore their trauma and create worlds that are ultimately destructive, either to society at large or to themselves, Elizabeth’s journey is one of ever-expanding resolution. Her life
in Columbia is an isolated one, as she is locked up in a tower as Zachery Comstock’s preemptive measure to not only protect her from any assassination attempt, but also control her. Her existence and image are fully exploited to fulfil the narrative of Zachery Comstock’s mythos for Columbia as the tower she is kept in is in the shape of herself with angel wings and gilded with gold. She is portrayed as the ideal and pure woman who will one day lead the city of Columbia in retribution against the “Sodom below” (BioShock Infinite) that is America. Elizabeth’s captivity also works in similar ways to how Comstock frames himself and the founding fathers. As Comstock isolates Elizabeth, he dehumanizes her and in turn is able to create a mythos that surrounds her in order to further legitimize his worldview. While Elizabeth is used as a puppet for Comstock’s future plans, for Booker she is ultimately used as an object that Booker must take back in order to relieve himself of the burden of his debt, which is ultimately his guilt of selling her off and his inability to be a functional person after the trauma he experienced through the atrocities he committed at the Battle of Wounded Knee. In either of these scenarios, Elizabeth has little to no agency in her life and is ultimately used as a tool for either man to further their own personal agendas. However, Elizabeth transcends this fate as she takes her agency back from both Comstock and Booker as the narrative moves along and she continues to learn more about her world and the power she holds within it.

As the plot moves forward, it is revealed that Elizabeth has the power to open rifts into other worlds, and that she can manipulate the very fabric of the universe. Narratively this is explained through a piece of her pinkie finger being cut off due to her transportation from Booker’s universe to Comstock’s universe. However, thematically since she is inherently tied to both Comstock’s universe and Booker’s through their shared trauma and connection as duel father figures, this sets Elizabeth up as not only the true protagonist of the game, but ultimately as the arbiter for the solution to Comstock’s corrupted mythos and Booker’s immense guilt.

As Elizabeth escapes from the tower that has held her captive most of her life, she is inherently naive and sheltered. Just like Booker, she is taken aback with the beauty of the world of Columbia at first. The first time we see Elizabeth outside of her
tower she is literally dancing with the joy of being free for the first
time in her life. The only way Booker can get her to follow him
in an attempt to escape the city is to tell her that he will take her
to Paris. However, this naivety is quickly stripped as Booker and
Elizabeth travel through Columbia further. One particular sequence
stands out in this regard as Booker and Elizabeth find themselves
in the slums of Columbia where the underclass and minorities who
service the white ruling class live. There are starving children in
the streets and political protestors locked up in chains for all to see
as examples for the others. Elizabeth’s previous wonder with
her freedom is turned into disgust, and her desire to go to Paris is
quickly changed into a desire to help the people she sees. Elizabeth
then uses her power of transferring items from differing universes
– which up until this point is used exclusively to help Booker suc-
cceed in combat – to summon food so that the starving poor of this
little village may have something to eat.

Elizabeth’s helping nature and desire to fix the injustices she sees
is ultimately shut down by Booker as he leads her and the narrative
to ignoring the plight of the people of Columbia and ever further
down the path to escape. Booker’s inability to empathize with the
situation of the discriminated class in Columbia, despite the pleas
of Elizabeth further reinforces his own desire to shut everything
out and ignore his guilt and his trauma. Just as Comstock is an
example of American society lionizing its injustice and misdeeds,
Booker acts as an example of an American impulse to ignore and
shut away its negative past. Elizabeth however, rejects these modes
of coping with the societal and personal trauma and wishes to deal
directly with solutions that will help fix the negative scenario that
the Booker and Comstock, and the universe that both have created
find themselves in.

As the narrative comes to a close, Elizabeth fulfills her role as
the only one who can ultimately solve the problems that Zachery
Comstock and Booker DeWitt have made for themselves and the
worlds that surround them. Booker and Elizabeth ultimately find
and confront Comstock. Booker and Comstock end up getting into
a physical altercation and Booker drowns Comstock in a perver-
sion of the baptism that lead Comstock to be the man that he is.
This however, does not provide either Booker or Elizabeth with a
narrative closure. Elizabeth actually pleads with Booker to stop, as she knows that this act of violence will not ultimately solve their collective problem. As the game moves forward, Elizabeth continues to have her powers grow and as the story reaches its climax, she is able to fully open portals and travel into alternate universes. This power also gives her full knowledge of all the possible universes that she is a part of. With this knowledge she tells Booker that she is aware of how she can end Comstock’s existence forever. She leads Booker through several doors that ultimately led them back to the baptismal lake where Booker DeWitt and Zachery Comstock diverged. Elizabeth tells Booker that this is where it all began. Then, alongside the Elizabeth Booker has been travelling with, emerges several other Elizabeth’s that originate from different universes. All the Elizabeth’s join in unison to reveal to Booker the truth about his identity and that in some other universes Booker did take the baptism and become Zachery Comstock. One of the Elizabeth’s tells Booker that he is Zachery Comstock, another tells him that he is Booker DeWitt. It is at this moment that Booker utters, “No, I’m both” (Bioshock Infinite). As Booker fully realizes the true nature of his existence, all of the Elizabeth’s join together to drown Booker in the river before he can make the choice of becoming Zachery Comstock. This action then eliminates the possible worlds where Comstock exists.

Elizabeth’s actions here function in several differing ways. Throughout the narrative Booker as the player character is presumed to be the hero. Booker is the one with the agency as the player of the game literally controls him and it is assumed that he will be the one to rectify Zachery Comstock’s wrongdoings and bring closure to Bioshock Infinite’s narrative. However, Elizabeth takes away this agency from the supposed white male protagonist of the game thus undercutting the white male hero trope that is prevalent in not only video games, but across media as a whole, and within the American mythos that lionizes the white male founding fathers and other white male heroes. Elizabeth not only undercuts this trope but reveals it as a toxic foundation of American culture. Elizabeth’s resolution in drowning Booker in order to get rid of the possibility of Comstock, reveals that one cannot exist without the other. Elizabeth’s actions reveal that within the problematic
society that upholds the white male as the ultimate hero, the white male cannot possibly rectify the wrongdoings and misconceptions of the power structure that gave both Booker and Comstock their agency as they will ultimately be blind to the systems and false myths that privilege themselves and discriminates against others. This fear is echoed in the game as demonstrated in this exchange between Booker and Elizabeth, “Booker, are you afraid of God? No, but I’m afraid of you” (Bioshock Infinite). This statement signifies that Booker and in turn the white male power structure he represents have nothing to fear from God, as they are ultimately the God’s within their own power structure. Their only fear comes from the empowered minority that may ultimately undercut their society and expose the false myths that are foundational to a white male power structure.

The narrative and characters within Bioshock Infinite comment not only on the American past, but also on the American present. The city of Columbia represents an extreme case study on how American myths and the trappings of American culture can be twisted to serve the needs of bad actors and fascist dictators who represent the very antithesis of the foundational principals America was founded upon. However, the ways in which Columbia turns into the nationalistic and xenophobic city that it becomes should be examined not for the extreme nature of its outcome but how Comstock uses American myth to further legitimize his worldview and the government he creates. Through the examination of Bioshock Infinite, we can see the importance of cultivating an American society that is conscious of its history and collective cultural mythos. In the shaping of a society that is conscious of the power of these forces, it protects that society from indulging in the narrative of a figure like Zachery Comstock and in turn leads to a healthier and safer culture for all the members of its society.

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How Media Perpetuates Racial Injustice in Young African American Males in All American Boys (2015)

By Hannah Brooks

Jason Reynolds and Brendon Kiely’s young adult novel All American Boys follows a young teenager, Rashad, who experiences racial injustice after a brutal attack by a police officer leaves him questioning himself once messages in the media portray him as a criminal. Negative messages broadcasted through media about the world, values, and ideals have a large effect on young adults. These messages manifest within the places youth most often find themselves, like their school or home. The perception of media on individuals, especially black individuals, can be damaging to their psyche, leading to the development of double consciousness, a term coined by W. E. B. Dubois. Dubois describes this feeling as a twoness—a feeling Rashad experiences. He becomes the victim of police violence after he is wrongly accused of theft, and ends up in the hospital watching his face and story on the news for the following days. He witnesses strangers calling him a thug and a thief, and the novel follows his thoughts and feelings throughout the experience. Rashad sees himself through the veil which manifests through the media’s perception of himself. Rashad’s individual views become shaped by the news while the story develops on the television without hearing his side at all, perpetuating the double consciousness Rashad experiences as he has never viewed

IF YOU ARE NEUTRAL IN SITUATIONS OF INJUSTICE, YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE SIDE OF THE OPPRESSOR.
—Desmond Tutu, All American Boys
himself as a criminal before. Along with Rashad, the novel follows a young white man named Quinn. Quinn struggles with the realization of his white privilege. However, Quinn also struggles with right and wrong. This important message speaks to willful ignorance—white people do not find themselves in situations like racial stereotyping and violence, thus this allows them the option to ‘choose’ their side. The character of Quinn only further allows for the analysis of double consciousness, as the reader can compare and contrast the two situations and better understand what racial injustice means and spark the conversation of willful ignorance, which perpetuates racism.

Similarly, Jordan Peele’s horror film *Get Out* demonstrates the use of racial stereotypes as a form of constructing racial identity and perpetuating double consciousness. Chris, Peele’s protagonist, finds himself surrounded by white individuals who attempt to strip him of his own identity and replace it with their ideals and perceptions of black individuals. The garden party scene categorizes Chris through the way in which the white party-goers perpetuate African American stereotypes through their words and actions toward him; they categorize him as an athletic, muscular, and sexualized individual based upon his looks in context with racist stereotypes. Rashad finds himself within the same predicament in the hospital when watching the news—everyone categorizes him as a thief and thug based upon his appearance. Both pieces of text offer conversation as well as concrete instances of the effect of racist stereotypes placed upon young African American males, and the violence resulting from said stereotypes. Kiely and Reynolds point to the way media representation actively constructs and perpetuates racial stereotypes and double consciousness. In the novel *All American Boys*, Brendon Kiely and Jason Reynolds demonstrate the pervasiveness of African American male stereotypes on young adults, and speak to the struggle of racial injustice and the way society harmfully perpetuates this injustice in response to racial violence.

The media constructs an image of Rashad on the television screen that strips him of his former identity and replaces it with the image of a violent, dangerous criminal. Kiely and Reynolds use repetition of the word “custody” to reinforce the way the officers,
and the media, now categorize Rashad with being a criminal (Kiely and Reynolds 43-44). Though Rashad’s arrival at the hospital is a blur for him, the word rings throughout his head multiple times. Each thought he has leads back to the realization that he is now no longer in charge of his own body; moreover, the ones who now have control over him are the same group of people who he now associates with trauma. This moment marks the beginning of not only Rashad’s physical captivity, but also his societal captivity through racist stereotypes that will inevitably fuel his double consciousness. From this moment on, Rashad will view himself through the veil of racially charged stereotypes. Rashad explains that he is transported to the hospital with “[a police officer standing] outside the hospital room on guard, making sure I didn’t run. As if I were a real criminal. As if I were a criminal at all” (Kiely and Reynolds 44). The absurd insinuation that Rashad is a criminal is his first contact with the veil. Rashad notices the way the police officer perceives him. Until this moment, Rashad has neither categorized himself as being a criminal nor had to view himself through another person’s eyes. Even still, Rashad uses the phrase “as if,” indicating that he is still struggling with the idea that anyone could think of him as acting criminally (Kiely and Reynolds 44). However, this identity of criminality will stick to Rashad for the rest of the novel, growing in intensity the more he sees himself plastered on the television screen.

Through his internalized racism, Rashad’s father, David, perpetuates the idea of double consciousness and the negative racial stereotypes placed upon young black males. One of the first things Rashad’s father asks him is if his pants were sagging, a common racist stereotype associated with criminality. David comments, “if it walks like a duck, and it talks like a duck…” in relation to the appearance of Rashad on the day of his assault (Kiely and Reynolds 49). Despite not having any knowledge about the events that occurred leading up to the assault, David has categorized Rashad within a specific, stereotypic subset of individuals who are the victims of racist ideals constructed and maintained by society. In response to the way Rashad’s brother, Spoony, dresses, David makes remarks like, “They’ll think you’re doing [and selling] drugs” (Kiely and Reynolds 52). David is aware of the veil, and
perhaps views himself through it as well. As someone who upholds respectability politics, David strives to make sure his children follow his rules and advice as well. However, a portion of this determination is likely derived from his own awareness for the way others view African American males. His comments point to his understanding, as he is conscious of the way appearances maintain negative stereotypes that seem inescapable. W. E. B. Du Bois points out in “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” that “[The American Negro] simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face” (3). David’s way of fulfilling this merge of double self is to maintain the respectability he believes will allow for not only him but his sons to successfully live within a country built to tear them down. As David is aware of what law enforcement categorizes criminality with, he makes his point to remain the opposite even if that means he is perpetuating those very stereotypes.

In contrast to David, Rashad’s brother Spoony fights against the unfairness of race and the media’s portrayal of his brother. Spoony acknowledges the construction of Rashad’s image created by the media, thus creating a pushback against double consciousness. When Rashad is in the hospital, an image of him in his ROTC uniform flashes across the television. In response, Spoony states, “I had to make sure we controlled as much as the narrative as possible” (Kiely and Reynolds 94). Spoony acknowledges that he has to send Rashad’s photo in or else the media would take control of the narrative—depicting Rashad as a violent criminal who is only stopped through the aggressiveness of a police officer. These actions by the media occur not only in the novel, but in present day as well. Kristin Dukes covers the victim-blaming of minorities in cases of police brutality, providing instances of media coverage which characterize victims as perpetrators who acted upon their own will which thus led to the occurrence of police violence. Rashad becomes an individual of media victim-blaming when the news begins to spread images of him with “jeans sagged below the waist…flipping the camera off” (Kiely and Reynolds 277). These photos are followed with comments insinuating Rashad is a criminal based specifically off what he looks like in these images.
Despite Spoony’s efforts, the media was able to twist Rashad’s story into one of victim-blaming. Without knowing Rashad, the public has taken upon itself to categorize him as a criminal simply because of his appearance rather than who he is as a person. This action causes Rashad to question himself even more, as the photos are paired with images of him in his ROTC uniform with positive comments. These two images, which elicit contrasting opinions from the public, provide a physical example of the double consciousness that Rashad is facing. He describes his jeans sagging and t-shirt attire as being his every day, casual wear. Yet the ROTC uniform is meant to appease his father, someone who follows the cult of respectability.

Rashad becomes the victim of systemic racism through the actions of his basketball coach, who excludes his players from speaking about what happened to Rashad. In “The Paradox of Black Patriotism: Double Consciousness,” Micah E. Johnson describes the variation of double consciousness through the words of W.E.B DuBois: “The American identity, a soul that yearns for the fulfillment of full social inclusion and is attached to American history, values, and spaces, contradicts the black identity, a soul that is the victim of Americanism, systemic racism, and hegemonic patriotism” (56). The multiple identities represented within double consciousness is reflected through Rashad. In the beginning of the novel, Rashad is presented with social inclusion through his interactions with his friends and indication that he is a part of the school’s basketball team. However, the assault causes Rashad to isolate himself in his own mind about the events surrounding the attack, both during and after. He becomes a representation of one soul splitting in two—his American identity and black identity. Rashad becomes the victim of systemic racism without realizing it, when his basketball coach tells the team, “there’s a lot of bullshit out there, and it needs to get resolved, but we’re not resolving it in here. Not in practice and not on this court” (Kiely and Reynolds 220). The coach, whether intentionally or not, is silencing the team from speaking out about Rashad and the atrocity committed against him. The coach is a white man, meaning he never experienced the trials or hardships of black American citizens. It is easy for him to refer to what happened to Rashad as “bullshit”
and not address the violence brought against an innocent young man instead. In fact, the coach’s words could even be interpreted as Rashad’s act of “thievery” as being the bullshit, as it never specifies exactly which part of what happened to Rashad he is referring to. Regardless of the case, the coach is creating an exclusion to not only racial violence and Rashad, but to the other young black males on the basketball team. He continues to do so by threatening the team if they join the protest against police brutality. Not only is he excluding young African American males, but he is also representing what it means to have white privilege, something Quinn offers as well. Like Quinn, the coach has the capability of pushing the notion of police brutality out of his mind with ease, as he, being a white male, has never had to worry about being a target of racial violence.

Quinn encompasses willful ignorance in his journey to recognizing his white privilege. Willful ignorance allows for white individuals to choose not to acknowledge the racism occurring around them, and even the actions they take which perpetuate racism. In the beginning of the novel, Quinn repeats phrases like “it didn’t happen” (Kiely and Reynolds 39, 61). Quinn is portraying willful ignorance, like Paul, by pretending that Paul attacking Rashad was something so small and simple that it was easy to say it never happened. Quinn’s initial reaction is that Paul is only performing his job. He believes that, while the attack was brutal, that there must have been some reason for Paul to react that way. Childs points out in his article that, “This racially charged media [is] undergirded by historical discourses that systematically created negative caricatures (i.e., Sambo, Mammie and Uncle Tom Tropes) of the ‘Negro’ as sub-human, unintelligent, lazy, irresponsible, unattractive, untrustworthy, violent and immoral” (61). Due to these underlying stereotypes, Quinn believed that Paul had a reason to attack Rashad. By choosing to ignore the injustice that occurred, Quinn is also choosing to remain willfully ignorant instead of pushing back and fighting the system that creates these negative stereotypes. In Quinn’s mind, Paul was doing no wrong because he is a cop, and therefore must know what he is doing and must do the right thing. However, just because Paul is law enforcement does not mean that his actions are justifiable, which is what Quinn spends most of the novel attempting
to do. Quinn is a lot like the individuals who comment on Rashad’s pictures and the news, defending the officer before considering his actions. Even if Rashad was guilty, Paul acting with such violence and brutality should not be accepted as okay (like many characters in the novel act like). By defending Paul and dehumanizing Rashad, Quinn and the other minor characters are perpetuating racism. Quinn is remaining willfully ignorant by not considering the violent actions against Rashad as wrong, or even considering whether or not Rashad actually did anything to even be arrested. In this situation, Quinn was the one committing the crime as he was attempting to buy alcohol despite being underage, and not Rashad. Yet Rashad was placed in the hospital and Quinn was able to run away without any repercussions. These actions perpetuate the racist double standards of white and black individuals.

While harmful stereotypes are placed upon young black Americans like Rashad and contribute to double consciousness, white individuals perform worse actions with little to no consequences. While the news outlets attack Rashad’s character, Paul is the one with the violent history which the law enforcement fails to recognize. It is not until later in the novel that Quinn questions Paul’s violence. Quinn is reflecting on a time where he encountered a violent bully, and after telling Paul about it, the response is, “Paul found him later that same night. Beat the hell out of him. Paul was banged up too, but he said he’d won. Fucking thug won’t bug you anymore, for real” (Reynolds and Kiely 32). Paul’s violent tendencies are deeply rooted in his character’s past, and it is likely that Rashad and the violent bully were not the only ones he has harmed. Paul associates the bully as being a “thug” thus contributing not only to harmful stereotypes, but racial violence as well. Despite the fact that Paul has an issue with anger and violence, he is still allowed to be an officer of the law. This contributes to double standards of race and racist stereotypes as well. Paul being a police officer allows him to be seen as a hero within the community instead of an individual capable of wrongdoing. When trying to stick up for Paul, his mother Mrs. Galluzzo states “Paul has a hard job, and sometimes he has to make tough decisions…respect that, and who he is” (Kiely and Reynolds 115). When news breaks of the brutal assault, the community is divided between those sup-
porting Paul’s actions and those fighting against the injustice committed against Rashad. Quinn is among those divided, witnessing both the attack and those who try to stick up for Paul. The Galluzzo family try to mend their relationships with the community with a cookout at their house, though it only serves to raise more questions for Quinn around the validity of Paul’s actions. The Galluzzo’s are placing Paul’s actions into a category of his career, like unnecessary violence is just a typical part of his job. In “Race and Reaction: Divergent Views of Police Violence and Protest,” Mora Reinka asserts that “Black Americans also report greater mistrust of, and worse attitudes toward, law enforcement in general than do their White counterparts” (769). This fact comes from the countless reports of the illegal use of violent and deadly force by police towards unarmed African American citizens. The exposure of these acts through media have created many social movements, such as Black Lives Matter, Say Her Name, and many #JusticeFor… hashtags (769). Racial violence plays into the highly uneven statistics of trust in the police force across races, as black citizens are the prevalent individuals targeted by police brutality. Reinka’s statement of trust in law enforcement is mirrored in the Galluzzo household during their cookout, when so many of the white persons dictate the actions of Paul as justifiable in accordance to his job.

When playing a game of basketball with Galluzzo, Paul’s overbearing and violent tendencies are directed towards Quinn. When Paul forces Quinn to the end of the driveway with no way out, Quinn ends the game by throwing the ball carelessly at the basket and walking away with Paul shouting after him: “I’m just trying to help you, Quinn. Like I always have. You remember that” (Kiely and Reynolds 119). The entire game between Paul and Quinn is a metaphor for Quinn’s inner struggles against willful ignorance and admission to Paul’s actions being wrong. The driveway is described as being narrow, and Quinn repeatedly mentions the lack of space he feels. This reflects on Quinn being forced to face racial injustice, or ignore the actions because of his friendship with the Galluzzo family. Quinn feels the pressure of the injustice, but struggles with coming to terms of naming Paul’s actions as wrong. Paul is constantly referenced as being larger than Quinn, with “arms as thick as [Quinn’s] neck” and “too big to take [Paul] to
the hoop” (Kiely and Reynolds 118). This reflects the presence the Galluzzo family, and Paul, have in Quinn’s mind as he struggles to understand and admit the unjust actions of Paul against Rashad. Quinn perceives Paul as being larger than him, with the ability to easily overthrow him. Quinn has already witnessed Paul attack Rashad, and he knows from past experiences that Paul has gotten into violent altercations. Now Quinn is struggling between right and wrong, and instead of viewing Paul as a protector, he now views Paul as a threat.

In *All American Boys*, Jason Reynolds and Brendon Kiely bring to conversation police brutality and how racist stereotypes contribute to racial injustices, but many white individuals within society still choose to remain willfully ignorant rather than to admit the wrongdoing of police officers. The evidence of double consciousness and racial injustice within the novel is depicted with the way the media outlets portray Rashad and his response to said portrayal; in the way the white individuals react to Rashad’s assault, and the way members of the society choose to either acknowledge the violent act for what it is, or support law enforcements decisions of illegal use of violent and deadly force. Many white members of society tend to speak the names of the victims of police brutality without implementing any real action against the perpetrators. However, the novel offers an insight to a white individual coming to terms with racial violence, and how he responds to the knowledge he discovers. Quinn is among those divided, witnessing both the attack and those who try to stick up for Paul.

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Racism in the history of America has always been a prevalent topic that surrounded the country itself. Writer John B. McConahay, of Duke University, explains in his article “Has Racism Declined in America? It Depends on Who is Asking and What is Asked” that along with time, representations of the African American community has not only revealed the ideas that are behind the creation of America but also how the white elite social class feels about African Americans overall. He writes, “The theory of modern racism addresses these issues, distinguishing between old-fashioned racial beliefs recognized by everyone as racism and a new set of beliefs arising from the conflicts of the civil rights movement” (McConahay). Since whites started invading land that was not theirs, whites view African Americans as less humane, inferior and also submissive to the white race. During slavery, slaves would not only have to endure extreme punishment but slaves also had to portray a false type of identity when they were in the presence of white men or women. While some slaves had to act uneducated for they were in fear, it was rarely a time when they would take their chance to appease the white man. However, whites still saw African Americans as less human and still as objects even after what the slaves did to be viewed as superior. In the film, 12 Years
The film *12 Years a Slave* (2013), directed by Steve McQueen, portrays the treatment of the black body through both the main African American female, Patsey, and male African American character Solomon Northup. In the film, Patsey is the favored slave that can pick more cotton than the average man and is also sexually and physically abused. Solomon is a free man that was forced into slavery by two white men that he believed he trusted. Throughout various scenes he is tortured both mentally and physically. Likewise, in Jordan Peele’s film *Get Out*, various African American characters are used only for their bodies. The main character Chris is tortured in the form of slavery through hypnotization. Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* and Steve McQueen’s *12 Years a Slave* uses the objectification of the black body and the use of modern day blackface to show how the African American body demonstrates the use of cultural appropriation. However, the usage of the black body ultimately leads to the embodiment of modern day slavery.

When African Americans are illustrated in the media today, it is majority of the time that negative and also degrading connotations of the African American community and culture are being represented. Blacks are portrayed as felonious and also animals but never any positive images like judges or lawyers. When African American actors would obtain roles in a film, they were scripts that would attack their character. Black actresses and actors alike had no choice but to take the embarrassing roles because they desperately needed the money. In her article “From Blackface to Blaxploitation: Representations of African Americans in Film,” Jennifer Thompson describes the insulting depictions of African Americans in films. She explains, “Early depictions of African American men and women were confined to demeaning stereotypical images of people of color… African American characters, in keeping with the dominant stereotypes, were portrayed as incompetent, childlike, hyper-sexualized, and criminal” (Thompson). Eventually, the African American culture became tired of being mocked. From then on, blacks began to create and star in their own films. Because African Americans live in a society where everything is advanced around technology, it forces society to view subjects in a different manner. An example that is common today example this is how the media depicts a black teenager getting killed by the police. The
media shows a picture that is negative, like a mugshot, instead of something like a graduation picture like they do for whites.

In *12 Years a Slave*, McQueen portrays the objectification through of the black body through culturing process in slavery. The viewers see this when the film starts with the idea of a positive character with Solomon being free but this turned negative once Solomon was captured by people that he trusted. In the scene, Solomon is first given a new set a clothes, thinking that he is going to be going home soon. The camera pans back out to show the two men who captured him come into the room. They began to whip Solomon as they are trying to break him both mentally and physically. As the character Burch is beating Solomon, he keeps yelling “Yah a Slave, Ya a Georgia slave” (McQueen). Even though Solomon tries his hardest to explain that he is a free man. But unfortunately, they are only seeing him as a mule that needs to do work instead of talking. In the same scene, McQueen also captures how whites felt about the black community by though the dialogue from the character Radburn. Radburn says, “What was all the beatin’ and abuse for? Things end as they should, and the violence was for naught. So why cause trouble when they ain’t no cause for it Or, yah can carry on like yah been, and I fear yah won’t live to see Sunday next” (McQueen). Radburn believes that blacks should just listen to whites for their own good.

Additional to Solomon’s character, McQueen also shows the objectification of the black body through the use of sexism shown in the main African American female character Patsey. Patsey is a slave woman, who is 23, is a beautiful slave girl that belongs to the slave owner Edwin Epps. During slavery times, women had to go through worse conditions than the men. African American women also had the stereotype of being “whores” through the eyes of whites. While society views white women as sanctified and pure, the same society views African American women as promiscuous because of the rape and other abuse at the hand of their white husbands. In the film, the audience sees an example of the intersectionality when Patsey sneaks away to the neighboring plantation to borrow some soap. When Patsey returns, the camera cuts to a wide shot of Solomon, Epps, and Patsey. She tries to explain that Mrs. Epps is giving her the most unfair treatment, due
to the fact that Patsey is his favorite female slave. Patsey pleads “I got this from Mistress Shaw. Mistress Epps won’t even grant me no soap ta clean with. Stink so much I make myself gag. Five hundred pounds ‘a cotton day in, day out. More than any man here. And ‘fo that I will be clean; that all I ax. Dis here what I went to Shaw’s ‘fo” (McQueen). Patsey picks the most cotton on the plantation, receives unfair treatment through the slave owner’s wife, and also gets abused but the only thing she asks for is to be clean. Patsey’s body is being used for both labor and also for Mr. Epps and other plantation owners for the white sexual gratification. However, when she wants to be clean, Mr. Epps looks down upon her because being clean is seen as trying to become white. During slave times, being clean would also be a way to try and appease better plantation owners and also other men.

In *Get Out*, the objectification of the black body is represented in the film in two different stages. In the article “Where’s the Representation: The Impact of White Washing on Black Children,” writer Kai Nelson, of Johnson and Wales University, explains that having a darker skin has always been undesirable. She writes, “It is incredibly difficult to grow and thrive in a world that that views your body and your skin as undesirable, or to value your unique beauty in spite of being told that your skin is anything but beautiful” (Nelson). The first stage that the audience sees is that evaluation process. The viewers sees the evaluation process in the scene when Chris is attending the dinner party. As he is talking to different couples, one of the elites makes a statement about the color of Chris’s skin complexion. He says “Fair skin has been in favor for the past what, couple of hundreds of years...But now the pendulum has swung back. Black is in fashion” (Peele). Peele uses this situation to show that since the creation of racism and slavery, the upper white social class have always had superiority over African Americans. Now that the Armitage Family developed a system that uses African Americans strictly for their bodies, whites will now able to have the chance to be black. The second stage is the surgical procedure of changing one’s identity. The technique of taking the African American body and replacing the brain with someone’s who is white is an example of blackface that has evolved through technology. Peele portrays the surgery as a
symbol to express that once the upper white society is in control, African Americans have no agency in the actions that they make.

Jordan Peele also uses the objectification of black bodies to show the significance of the colors black and white. In his article “A Review of Get Out: On White Terror and the Black Body,” author Kevin Lawrence Henry Jr, a professor at the University of Arizona, explains that Peels separation brings the idea of anti-blackness to the spotlight. He says, “Peele’s Get Out illustrates the protracted terrorism that is whiteness and the concomitant objectification and utilization of the black body for white survival, accumulation, and pleasure” (Henry). The audience first sees the color contrast in the opening scene with Chris and Rose together. Chris has a deep dark complexion while Rose on the other hand is a deathly pale white. Next, another example of the importance of race and color is when Rose and Chris get into an accident with a deer that was trying to cross the street. As the police is writing down Rose’s information because she is the driver, the camera cuts to a wide shot of the officer noticing the interracial couple. Viewers of the film see that the officer’s facial expression was disapproving. Peele uses the police officer’s negative approval to show how white society feel about the intermingling of the African American and Caucasian race. When Rose starts to become irritated with the officer, the audience can see a close-up shot of Chris. Chris knows that if he also starts to have a problem with the police his life would be in danger, not Rose’s. Peele uses this image to show that Africans Americans are judged based solely upon the color of their skin. Lastly, Peele represents the objectification of black bodies through the “sunken place” When an African American is hypnotized, they are surrounded by negative black space. There is no way out, except when the whites allow you to. Peele also uses the “sunken place” to represent how African Americans have no voice in a society that is set up to oppress them.

McQueen also uses symbols throughout the film to demonstrate not only the representation of the black body but also how the black body is disregarded for. In the film, the rope, well in this case noose, is used as a dual symbol. The first symbol, which is the fear, creates a power structure between the whites and blacks. However, on the other hand, the rope can also be used a symbol for freedom because
the slaves know once they are hung they will no longer suffer in the conditions of slavery. The viewers can see symbolizing rope in the scene where Solomon is being hung for resisting a whipping. The scene starts with a long shot of Solomon hanging and tip-toeing around the tree, begging for any air that comes his way. For about thirty seconds, the scene only has Solomon, the tree, the slave racks, and also the house that Solomon was building. As the scene goes on, slaves start to come out of their quarters and continue with their daily activities. When they see him hanging from the tree, none of the other slaves approach him. However, when one of the slave women finally approaches him to give him water, the audience can see the look on her face as she looks at the rope. She knows that if she gets caught helping a troubled slave, she will be in the same position. In the same scene, the viewers also notice that the time changes. We see this as the colors go from a vibrant green to a dull brown. McQueen uses the rope to show that whites only looks at slaves as property and not as human. Solomon was there hanging all day with no food or water. By the time he is rescued by Mr. Ford, it is already evening time.

In the film *Get Out*, Jordan Peele demonstrates the objectification of the black body through the symbol of the deer. Viewers first see the symbolization meaning in Rose’s attitude toward the animal. Even though Chris is sincerely disturbed by the death of the deer, Rose brushes the accident off as it was a piece of lint on her shirt. The camera then pans in on her face as she laughs off the thought of the deer being alive. Peele uses Rose’s attitude to show how whites feel toward the African American Community, they have no compassion at all. Peele also uses the symbolization of deer to represent the African American community when Rose’s dad is complaining about the deer population. Dean says, “One down... a few hundred thousand to go. Those things are everywhere up here, Chris; like rats. The damage they’ve done to the ecology alone” (Peele). As the camera cuts to a shot of Chris’s face, the viewers see that he obviously felt offended by the comment. Along with Rose and Rose’s mom, Chris also thought that the remark was over the top. Here, the audience understands that Peele is using the deer to symbolize slavery in the south. After the Emancipation Proclamations, it was illegal to practice slavery.
Because slavery was the main source, this eventually caused the southern economy to suffer.

In 2008, the House of Representatives “apologized” for the enslavement of African Americans. Politians alike said that “African-Americans continue to suffer from the complex interplay between slavery and Jim Crow—long after both systems were formally abolished—through enormous damage and loss, both tangible and intangible, including the loss of human dignity” (US House Representative). In 12 Years a Slave, McQueen purpose was to depict the truth about the treatment of slaves. McQueen uses the film to provide a true story of how the slave system works, from the slave master down to the bottom slave. Along with slavery, McQueen also uses sexism in the film to show that slavery was not excluding African American women as well. McQueen makes sure to display to the audience that the objectification of the black body was strictly driven by economics and not with a moral background. Get Out is horror film that brings the modern day black experience to the public eye. The film makes viewers think about the imbalanced power structure that was created between the whites and all minorities. Peele demonstrates throughout the film that we are not living in a society that can be equal and accept all people of different skin colors. Peele uses events like the dinner party and the auctioning scene to show how white elites can easily make life hard for the African American community. Peele ultimately uses this film to show that racism is a powerful structure that has a main goal of oppressing blacks. When racism is viewed across different media outlets, directors of all genres are making a basic statement collectively: racism is spiteful and malicious. Both McQueen and Peele ultimately use their films to portray how the white Americans benefit from a society that shelters them from racial strains while at the same time suppressing any minorities that try to have any progress in the same society.

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Appropriating Black Existence within *Get Out* (2017) and “The Lamentable Ballad of the Tragical End of a Gallant Lord and a Vertuous Lady” (1683-1694)

By Raven Holmes

Written in 17th century Britain, “The Lamentable Ballad of the Tragical End of a Gallant Lord and a Vertuous Lady” opens with a lord taking a hunting trip. To better assist him along the way, he decides to bring his slave (known as the blackamoor); however, during the trip, the blackmoor commits a wrong-doing, unknown to the reader, and the lord reprimands him for it. Throughout the following day, as the lord continues on his hunting trip, the blackmoor decides to stay at the estate and take revenge on the lord’s wife and children by raping the wife and killing both children: bashing one’s head against the estate wall and slitting the other’s throat. Upon hearing the news from passersby, the lord races back to the estate in effort to save his wife. The lord states to the blackamoor, “If thou wilt save her life/Whom I do love so dear:/I will forgive thee all is past,/Though they concern me near” (149-152). He decides to go with the lord’s proposition, while asking the lord to cut off his nose in order to save his wife. After the lord completes the task, the blackamoor pushes the wife off of the estate tower where she falls to her death. The lord then proceeds to bleed out from cutting off his nose which results in his death. Knowing that he was going to be murdered, the slave threw
himself off of the tower, into the horse’s pit, where they tore his body apart. The narrative that follows the ballad is also seen within *Get Out*, the 21st century horror film directed by Jordan Peele. They both contextualize the ideal of erasing one’s existence as a way to liberate one’s self or relieve one’s self from others, which in this case defines, “others” as being white existence. *Get Out*’s narrative is structured in a similar way as the ballad; however, Chris erases the narrative of white existence at the end of movie by killing the Armitage family in order to liberate himself while the blackamoor erases white existence by murdering the lord’s family due to revenge. As both characters seek to liberate black life and erase white existence, the distance between each time period and geographical positioning speaks back to the problem within today’s society: whites desiring to appropriate black bodies as way to promote white life which results in the following: black erasure, black rebellion, and/or cultural assimilation. The commodification of black existence portrays the promotion of white life within *Get Out* and “The Lamentable Ballad of the Tragical End of a Gallant Lord and a Vertuous Lady” as a way to highlight the temporality of black life and the longevity of white life, while adhering to the notion of living/surviving/existing; however, the primary characters eliminate the potentiality of an erasure while also taking on the role of caricatures. At the end of each text, the commodification of black bodies assume a type of reversal as whites become appropriated and are eventually erased from existence. The ideal of the enslaved and the enslaver associates the primary characters, Chris and the blackamoor, as caricatures that perform their physical attributes and characteristics in a liminal space which equates their objectification as a reconstruction of themselves. As seen in both texts, the primary characters end up controlling the narrative at the end of each text in order to eliminate their possible erasure. Relating back to the notion of the one who lives, exists, or survives, Chris deems the title of the survivor because he literally survives the Armitage massacre in which he gains agency by controlling the narrative, while on the contrary, the blackamoor lives at the end of the ballad because his narrative will continue to live on even when he is not here physically. These characters are associated with the term surviving and living because they will continue
to face the harbors of black existence: not obtaining freedom until they are completely appropriated to fit the reconstruction that whites idealize them for, which explains why whites are associated with the term, existing. Their existence is based on the appropriation and reconstruction of blacks, while blacks constantly attempt to operate in the white man’s territory, hence the association to caricatures, as a way to avoid disembodiment. Blacks and whites have an inverted relationship in which they both require one another; one that exists within society, while the other lives and/or survives. In order to live, black life operates within the liminal space of commodified caricatures which portray the physical appropriation of their bodies. Their physical attributes and characteristics show whether they will survive (as an attempt to avoid reconstruction) or whether they will live (continuing the narrative and taking ownership). Within the film *Get Out*, the audience sees Chris’ survival during his interaction with Logan. When Chris meets Logan during the garden party scene he states, “Good to see an old brother around here” (00:45:00-00:45:03) showing his initial comfortability by knowing that he is not the only black man at the party. Chris soon realizes that Logan is not the familiar black male that he expects. Their interaction with one another shows how Logan’s appropriated body contextualizes his existence in the form of erasing and reconstructing his identity to one that is more white-friendly. Logan’s survival functions within the liminal space that whites have placed him in. Chris’ association of “brother” establishes a sense of familiarity that he desperately desires in order to eliminate the feeling of being othered. Logan’s reaction to Chris’ racial etiquette gesture displays the physical caricature that Logan appropriates.

The death of both the Armitage family and the lord’s family displays the criminality of Chris and the blackamoor in hopes to highlight their insanity as merely a response to being commodified black men. Within each text, both primary characters associate death as a form of liberation; however, Chris kills the Armitage family while the blackamoor murders the lord’s family. Although they each have a different motive for erasing each family, the dehumanization of both characters portrays their supposed insanity. Within Andrea Stone’s article “Lunacy and Liberation: Black Crime, Disability, and the Production of the Eradication of the Early National Enemy,”
she focuses on the broadside ballad “Dying Confession of Pomp, A Negro Man, Who Was Executed at Ipswich, on the 6th August, 1795, for Murdering Capt. Charles Furbush, of Andover, Taken from the Mouth of the Prisoner, and Penned by Jonathan Plummer.” Stone highlights the dehumanization of black men as a reconstruction of their identity in order to show how the white audience reifies the criminality and insanity associated with the killings of these black men: “Blacks came to symbolize sin and its consequence for white audiences and readers, as crime narrative simplicitly or otherwise warned slave masters against treating slaves too leniently” (111). Stone continues by placing the main characters at the forefront of the white audience to highlight their disembodiment from themselves and from society: “They (Pomp and Plummer) demonstrate the forces that translate the black disabled criminal into legal person, only to identify him as a public enemy and eradicate him from the social body” (111). Criminality reifies the narrative of the insane black man which shows the disembodiment from his psyche and therefore from society (white audience) as well. Stone compares blacks to that of sin because during the 17th century, the society was primarily based on religion and morality. Similarly in “The Lamentable Ballad of the Tragical End of a Gallant Lord and a Vertuous Lady,” the narrative captures the blackamoor in a vulnerable state as he takes revenge on the family due to the lord’s supposed reprimand. The revenge deems the blackamoor as insane by a white audience due to the vivid description of the murders he commit (smashing one child’s head, cutting the other child’s throat, throwing the wife off the tower wall, and asking the lord to cut off his nose) and also for the simple fact that he desires revenge because of the lord reprimanding him. His insanity, as told through a white narrative, reifies the white construction of black existence through of the use of disabling his body and mind, which further shows his commodification. Stone focuses on the idea of the black men being seen as a public enemy through the lens of the white narrative which suggests how black life exists within temporal boundaries while white life establishes longevity. The evidence of this inconsistency shows the power disparity of the existence of human life. Learning the metaphysicality of black life maximizes the true potentiality of whites’ lives.
The ideal of caricatures, specifically the Coon and the Sambo, questions the notion of Chris’ portrayal and the blackamoor’s portrayal of exemplifying a white narrative to eliminate the possibility of an erasure. The Coon caricature submits to the ideal of the African-American slave that doesn’t care to work, tries to position himself around the white presence in attempt to forecast his intelligence and showcase his incivility toward whites. The Sambo exemplifies the obedient slave that obeys the master yet he is not as independent and capable of thinking on his own like the Coon. Within Dr. David Pilgrim’s article, “The Coon Caricature,” Pilgrim states the primary differences between the Coon and Sambo caricatures and how they both submit to the white narrative that not only appropriates their bodies but also re-identifies them: “Sambo was identified with older, docile blacks who accepted Jim Crow laws and etiquette; whereas coons were increasingly identified with young, urban blacks who disrespected whites. Stated differently, the coon was a Sambo gone bad.” The reader must then question which caricature fits Chris and then the slave; two distinctly different characters with similar catastrophic events in the narrative, the death of white people. Dr. Pilgrim associates the Coon with the rebellious black while the Sambo is the obedient black. It’s safe to categorize Chris as the Sambo with different limitations. Throughout the movie, Get Out, Chris does not question the Armitage family or anyone during the garden party scene as his body becomes appropriated. When Elisa feels on Chris’ arm muscles, she turns to face Rose and asks her, “Is it true? Is it better?” (00:43:33-00:43:38). Her appropriation of Chris’ body broadcasts the power disparity between whites and blacks while proving Chris to be the true Sambo caricature. He does not stop her from touching him, move away, or even asks her to stop. The fact that she publicly humiliates Chris in front of Rose and the other guests, suggests the amount of control she has over his body. Chris assumes the Sambo role by being the obedient black that does not question the authority and power that whites possess; however, the blackamoor within “The Lamentable Ballad of the Tragical End of a Gallant Lord and a Vertuous Lady” assumes the role of the Coon by acting on impulse and murdering the entire family through painful, brutal, deaths. The Coon depicts the rebellious and impulsive black since he tries to compete with
whites’ intelligence. In both the film and the ballad, both representations of each caricature are flipped, toward the end of each text, to display the construction of these figures as an elimination of their previous identities. As each story ends with the death of a white family, the family’s existence allows Chris and the blackamoor to recreate a new identity, giving them the agency since they are ultimately in control of the story. Chris killing the Armitage family and the blackamoor murdering his lord’s family portrays the ideal behind both characters ridding themselves of the pre-constructed Coon and Sambo narrative as they rewrite their legacy.

Although Chris is the modern-day construction of a Sambo figure, his appearance does not mimic that of a Sambo; however, the blackamoor having on only a pair of pants actively mimics the Coon caricature showing a type of appropriation. According to Donald Bogle, a film historian, the coon’s “appearance, too, added to the caricature. He was tall and skinny and always had his head shaved completely bald. He invariably wore clothes that were too large for him and that looked as if they had been passed down from his white master” (41). The fact that the blackamoor wears pants that are obviously too big for him, suggests that they were handed down from his lord. His ability to wear the pants and murder the lord’s family displays how the physical appropriation of his body positions him on a similar level as he outwits them and murders them all. The pants he wears physically represents his identity since he is identified through his lord. Wearing these pants suggests that the lord still has control over his body. This suggestion could mean that when the blackamoor murders the family, it is not his fault or his own thinking that caused him to do it; it is the simple fact that his body was appropriated by a white man so when wearing these clothes, he appropriates the white mind and way of thinking: Manifest Destiny, white supremacy, etc. It is as if the slave is under hypnosis which is similarly seen when Chris kills the Armitage family in Get Out. Although Chris does not have the same attire as the blackamoor, his body is physical appropriated when he is tied up in the chair as the family prepares for the surgery. The reader sees that with Chris sitting in the chair that the Armitage’s own, and as he is constantly hypnotized over and over again, this excites his ability to kill the family and gain agency in the novel.
The temporality of black life is associated with the longevity of white life that displays how living/surviving/existing is not subjected to merely the physical body; it can also be associated with the mind as well. The desire to live allows whites to seek meaning in life; it allows them to seek meaning in appropriating black existence. During the garden party scene, Chris’ body is appropriated by majority of the guests. Even Jim Hudson, who admires Chris’ photography skills, appropriates his body. He talks to Chris openly about his eyes and the great quality of his photography skills. What Jim Hudson is doing is openly appropriating Chris by using photography, a topic that Chris is passionate about, as a way to appropriate his mind. Since photography is a skill that uses not only the eyes but also the hands, he appropriates Chris’ body as well. The reason for this is to establish a sense of comfortability in Chris so that he can view Hudson as a trusted figure. Similarly with Chris, the slave’s body is physically appropriated when the master strikes him for committing a wrong-doing, while his mind is appropriated as he murders the family since he is wearing the masters’ handed-down pants. To differentiate both *Get Out* and “The Lamentable Ballad of the Tragical End of a Gallant Lord and a Vertuous Lady,” the ballad ends with the death of the entire white family as well as the blackamoor while the movie only shows the death of the Armitage family with Chris surviving. The reader must then understand the notion between the binary: survive/live. Chris saves himself from being commodified and eventually killed by the Armitage’s but instead of having lived past the experience, he survives it which suggests that he can be put into the same experience again. Although the slave ultimately commits suicide, he lives past and through his experience because he writes the narrative. No one tries to kill him. The lord actually pleads with him to not murder his family. The way the slave writes the narrative shows how he lives beyond his experience; the townspeople and passerbys will never forget what he did because of his public murdering of the family. Chris killed the family within the solitude of their home, which shows how he survived the experience. Taking a personal event and making it public displays the narrative and how it’s solely controlled by the slave.

Black existence compares to the temporal life of animals as each text commodifies animals showing the power disparity: dominant/
inferior; however, the agent that kills the animals assume the initial control of the narrative, which symbolizes how they keep the slaves enslaved. At the beginning of each text, animals are at the forefront, particularly animals that are often hunted. In hoping to display the temporal existence of blacks, each narrator fixes the beginning of each text around animals being killed: Animals being hunted in the ballad and animals being hit by a car in the film. Similarly within each text, both killings are completed at the hands of whites, allowing them to control the narrative. This control of the narrative functions around the temporal life of blacks and longevity of whites because whites desire to take control of the narrative and tell the story in their own way. As each animal dies, their death not only pivots back to their eternal erasure, but it shows the commodification of their body as they are killed and objectified. Their life and untimely death relates back to black existence. The fact that each text begins with the death of animals (blacks) by the hands of whites displays the growing issue of temporal black life due to the narrative being written by whites. Since Get Out was written and produced in the 21st century, the film displays the problem of black life being treated as temporary since their physical and mental existence is murdered by whites; Whites desire to stay in control of the narrative hence, their need to function within the realm of longevity.

*Get Out* and “The Lamentable Ballad of the Tragical End of a Gallant Lord and a Vertuous Lady” display the troubling, contemporary issue that black people continue to face in modern society: Assuming the role of living within commodified bodies that are short-lived because whites are in control of the black narrative which not only shows the power disparity between both races but it also displays how they each exist within society. Whites tolerate black life which explains why black existence becomes short-lived. In modern society, blacks such as Trayvon Martin, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and Walter Scott assume the role of objectivity as police officers murder them similarly to animals being hunted. Each of these gentlemen had their narrative written and re-written for them in order to give the police officers agency. Similarly within each text, every officer that participated in murdering these gentlemen were white. These white, male police officers also did not have
any charges brought against them that terminated their functionality within society: Writing people’s narrative. The difference in time period within each text displays how black bodies have been commodified and have had their narratives re-written for a long time; this is not simply a contemporary issue. The longevity of white life includes primarily males at the forefront; however, what if a white female assumes the position of objectifying blacks and re-writing their narrative? Would she succeed and gain her longevity or fail? A female police officer did indeed tried to assume the role of commodifying a black body when she “entered the wrong apartment” and shot a black man. This officer is being indicted on a charge of manslaughter and murder. Attempting to the assume the role that only white males can exhibit shows the power disparity between male and female as well as race and the social hierarchy in this society. Although many look at the American view, this issue is actually global since history within all countries was written by whites, which displays how and why they assume control of the narrative; they desire to broadcast the longevity of white life through their ancestors that have conquered the time before them while also placing other races at the bottom of their hierarchal pyramid. These races are the people that were and are still being conquered by whites. This form of conquering goes back to the ideal of the enslaved and the enslaver which also takes on the role of the one having survived and the one living. Although Chris and the blackamoor are subjected into surviving and living when talking about the narrative they assume, these terms ultimately come down to the role and functionality of whites and blacks in society; whites desiring to exist in order to write their narrative and to support their longevity, while blacks ultimately only survive and live within society: by rebelling, being erased, or culturally assimilated.

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White privilege is the weapon that the oppressor uses to get the oppressed to conform to his ways of living so that he can attain power over the minority. White privilege is a common theme that is found in Jordan Peele’s film Get Out (2017). One way in which the Armitage’s use their white privilege on Chris is through how treat him as if he is famous in their adoration. Their subtleness of their white privilege comes to play when the movie shows their true motives of wanting to take over Chris’ body; therefore, the Armitage’s emphasize their dominance over him which shows how they are always one step ahead of him. Their white privilege reflects how the majority use their white privilege to perform actions on the minority that would otherwise be considered to be an atrocity, thus showing how they have power over the minority because the minority cannot fight back due to their lack of possessing privileges. The Armitage’s use of their white privilege relates to the character Sophie Mol in Arundhati Roy’s novel The God of Small Things. The God of Small Things is a physiological fiction novel which portrays how the character Sophie Mol, who is a child that is partially white and from England, visits the Kochama family, who live in India and give Sophie Mol complete devotion with the exception of the twins Estha and Rahel who are children when Sophie Mol arrives. Although she is highly regarded, the novel shows how Sophie Mol tries to connect with
the twins because of her implied desire to be like them. This novel has an intriguing take on how white privilege presents itself from a new lens through the reversal roles of the oppressor and the oppressed. In *The God of Small Things*, when Sophie Mol attempts to befriend Estha and Rahel, she reverses the roles of the majority and the minority by appearing to give up her white privilege over to the twins which enables them to have power; she performs her actions so that she can feel fulfilled for her own benefit through her service to them.

Sophie Mol is a girl who is adored by the other characters because of her partial whiteness which allows her to attain privileges. She uses her white privilege to elevate herself over the Kochama family. The Kochama family shows Sophie Mol devotion such as treating her as god-like by putting her on a pedestal over the family. In this context Sophie Mols’ white privilege is “The unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed upon people solely because they are white” (University of Calgary). Sophie Mol’s white privilege overrules the expected social standards of Indian culture through her elevation to taking the position of the future leader of the house. This statement is shown when Kochu Maria, who is Mamachi’s and Baby Kochamma’s house keeper states to Rahel: “See her?... When she grows up, she’ll be the next Kochama and she’ll raise our salaries” (Roy 175). The adults put her on a high pedestal to the extent that Rahel is forced to her ‘greatness’ and to know that in her greatness, Sophie Mol will always be higher than her in social ranking. The phrase *our Kochama* is significant in this quote because in the context in the novel the word Kochama translates to an honorary title for a woman. This role is important to attain because in the Indian tradition, having an honorary role in the family translates to having the leadership position in the household. This means that the person held high authority over the family and the family members follow their orders without question. By Sophie attaining the privileges in being the head of the house, Kochu Maria’s statement to Rahel implies that she wants Rahel to understand that even though Sophie Mol is not the Kochama of the family, the treatment of her must reflect that she is the head of the family. Sophie Mol’s destiny of taking the Kochama name
when she grows up reflects the white privilege that she possesses. Her white privilege allows her to take over the family without them questioning her authority because they understand that she possesses power over them in her whiteness. Her power represents how the minority must give into the privilege of the white majority because of the unspoken conformity that they must adhere to which is to bow down to their rule. Their authority over the minority shows how they always stay on top to keep the system of their superiority over them.

When Kochu Maria states that Sophie Mol will be the next Kochama, Sophie Mol uses her proclamation to her advantage so that she can drive the concept of her superiority on the twins. She reminds the twins of her original superiority over them. Sophie Mol’s enforcement of her greatness over the twins is found in the article “Beyond White Privilege: Geographics of White Supremacy and Settler Colonialism” by Anne Bonds and Joshua Inwood. They state, “The removal of First peoples” was to “reap incredible profits out of lives”; thus, “This dialectic drives the socio-spatial logics of contemporary settler colonial nationalism and identity” (Bonds, Inwood 721). This article explains the motivation of why white settlers claimed the land and its original inhabitants. The white settler’s usage of nationalism signals their permission to themselves to enforce their white privilege on the natives; thus, their white privilege gives the setup that their nationalism is excusable because of their implied intention of ‘spreading’ it. The concept of nationalism is shown in Sophie Mol through her destiny of being named the next Kochama. Her nationalism represents her eventual takeover of the family. Her control will be her takeover because the other characters motives are in line with her to be the ruler of the family; once the twins comply to her rule, she will have complete authority to enable the full use of her white privilege over them. Her use of white privilege shows how she can use nationalism as a way to take over the family.

In response to Kochu Maria’s adoration of Sophie Mol, Rahel does not fall for the trap of conforming under Sophie Mol’s white privilege. When Kochu Maria tells Rahel that “Jealous people go straight to hell”, Rahel gets defensive and says, “Who’s jealous?” (Roy 176). The dialogue between Kochu Maria and Rahel shows
how the adults’ adoration over Sophie Mol makes Rahel jealous. Rahel’s jealousy is seen in the phrase “jealous people go straight to hell”. By Kochu Maria pointing out Rahel’s jealousy, she indicates her recognition of the depth of Rahel’s jealousy thus she uses her weakness to her advantage by making this remark. She uses Rahel’s jealousy because of the indication that she knows that Rahel’s jealousy is deeper than merely wanting attention from the adults. Rahel’s jealousy is seen as a form of denial of her wanting to acquire Sophie Mol’s white privilege so that she can be loved by the adults. Rahel shows her denial when she states: “who is jealous?” her statement demonstrates a form of denial because when someone is in denial of something, they will avoid the question that is being asked of them. The person’s avoidance is often rooted in a deeper problem that they face. For Rahel, the deeper problem is that she is not loved. Rahel’s denial of being jealous of Sophie Mol shows her attempt to eliminate the influence that Sophie Mol has over her in being the child who is loved.

Sophie Mol rejects the ideals of the majority’s expectations for the minority to bow down to them through her showing the twins compassion. Sophie Mol’s usage of compassion shows how she uses her white privilege to her own advantage in appearing as saint like to them. The concept that Sophie Mol uses when she shows her understanding to the twin’s situation is compassion; even James Baldwin addresses the concept that Sophie Mol embraces when she portrays love through her compassion that he talks about to his nephew by using it. Baldwin constantly brings up the concept of love to his nephew to stress the importance for his nephew to look beyond the violent oppression that he is facing from the majority. He says to his nephew that he must: “accept them…accept them with love, for those innocent other people have no other hope” (Baldwin 3). Baldwin’s urge for his nephew to love his oppressors is seen when he states the phrase “no other hope”. Baldwin’s usage of this phrase indicates that his nephew is the majority’s only hope who can help them to understand the detrimental effect of their oppressive actions. Likewise, Sophie Mol puts herself in the shoes of the oppressed. She carries out Baldwin’s message to his nephew through her empathy towards the twins. Although Sophie Mol’s choice to serve the twins looks applaudable, her actions
show how she takes advantage of the situation she is in. Sophie Mol’s taking advantage is seen when she performs “unfalteringly under the twins’ perspicacious scrutiny and [confounds] all their expectations” (Roy 180). The description shows how Sophie goes out of her way to prove to the twins that she is on their side. In addition, this quote shows how Sophie Mol always goes out of the way to make sure that the twins notice her actions. By the twins noticing her actions, Sophie Mol is using her white privilege to assure herself that she is serving the twins. Sophie Mol’s assurance shows how she uses the white savior mentality. His action is done so that he can receive praise for ‘serving’ the oppressed. When the oppressor desires to feel good about his actions towards the oppressed, he will use the white savior mentality as presenting himself in a saint-like way. His action is done so that he can receive praise for ‘serving’ the oppressed. Sophie Mol shows the white savior mentality because she is constantly serving the twins which leads to the implication that her service is not done for the twins, but rather it is done to appease herself.

Sophie Mol’s explicit actions to impress the twins imply her need of alleviating the white man’s burden off of herself. She attempts to eliminate this problem because the more she adheres to the twin’s expectations, the more good deeds she can check off to satisfy the requirements of serving them for her own benefit. Sophie Mol attempts to remove the white man’s burden off from herself when she performs certain tasks for the twins such as “[turning] down Mamachi’s offer that she replace Estha and Rahel” and “[rejects] outright and extremely rudely all of Baby Kochamma’s advances and small seductions” (Roy 180). Sophie Mol’s behavior reflects her blatant offense to the adults so that she can connect to Estha and Rahel. The phrase “rejected outright and extremely rudely” demonstrates how Sophie Mol makes her white privilege a visible display to the twins. Her showing off her white privilege is crucial because through her actions, Sophie Mol indicates her need to justify herself so that she can relieve the heaviness of the white man’s burden.

Sophie Mol disguises her white privilege through using white man’s burden to fulfill her duties in serving the twins. According to the article “Was it Really the White Man’s Burden? The
Non-British Engineers who Engineered the British Empire” by John Broich, he sets up white privilege in his article to be viewed through using a man who came to the East to have “a share of the White Man’s Burden for the rest of his life…an Englishman who generally got no reward other than satisfaction of having done work well” (Broich 1). This quote demonstrates how the man’s intentions in serving is to fulfill the checklist of requirements for his privileges. Likewise. Sophie Mol’s must fulfill the requirements of her privileges. Her actions in fulfilling the requirements are proved in the phrase “a share…for the rest of…life” thereby showing that Sophie Mol’s intentions in serving the twins lie in fulfilling her duty to satisfy the demand of the white man’s privilege. Like the article, Sophie Mol must keep serving the twins in order to keep her privileges. By keeping her privileges, Sophie Mol can remain above them. Another concept that relates to Sophie Mol's burden that stands out in this article is how other services to the irrigation systems are overlooked. The article states, “On smaller scales- schemes…indigenous engineers played significant roles…the people without whom there would have been no water systems at all” (Broich 2). This quote is interesting because it shows how when the indigenous people demonstrate the same action of providing services, they are overlooked thus demonstrating back to if the twins had served under Sophie Mol, they would not be receiving the same accreditation for their actions. The lack of the twins receiving recognition reflects back to the bias of how the privilege system is geared towards the white majority.

Sophie Mol portrays herself as innocent through her manipulation which is shown constantly throughout the novel. Although she never states that she is in the right and the twins are in the wrong due to her innocence, her actions imply her making sure that the twins are hyper aware of this fact. Sophie Mol shows off of her innocence as a way to resolve her dilemma of how she will adjust to their culture so that she can rule over the family. In the article “On White Ignorance, White Shame, and Other Pitfalls in Critical Philosophy of Race,” Marzia Milazzo, describes how whites’ question if they will be able to live in a land South Africa where there is a “moral duty to address race and oppression” (Milazzo 558). This quote reflects back on how Sophie Mol behaves in the
novel. Her cautious nature implies her desire to test the boundaries of how far she can go with her white privilege in a society that may be hesitant to welcome her in their culture. Her testing the boundaries is significant because she can manipulate a situation and the people so that her desires are fulfilled. This initial statement reflects Samantha Vices article in Milazzo’s article on how “people should realize that they have been morally damaged by racism, acknowledge that they have a problem and concentrate on recovering and rehabilitating [themselves]” (Milazzo 558). This quote reflects Sophie Mol’s ignorance regarding her white privilege. Her testing of the boundaries shows how she takes caution for the sake of fulfilling her desires. She takes caution in the novel so she can have the knowledge of where she can and cannot use her white privilege in the twins and their family’s society; her cautious nature allows her to manipulate the family to serve her under her conditions. Because Sophie Mol manipulates the family through her cautious nature she is unaware of her racism toward the twins and their family members because she is blinded by her white privilege and her expectation that she is entitled to her desires.

The twins accept Sophie Mol when they see her vulnerable state of crying. Sophie Mol uses this tactic to gain the twins favor thus showing how she uses her white privilege. Sophie Mol appeals to the twins favor when “one day the twins returned…and found her crying in tears…’Being lonely’ as she put it. The next day Estha and Rahel took her with them to see Velutha” (Roy 180). Sophie Mol’s action reflects her relatability to the twins; therefore, they start taking her with them on their adventures. Two phrases that stick out in this quote are: “crying in tears” and “Being lonely as she put it.” These phrases reflect Sophie Mol’s courage in showing her vulnerable side to the twins. When a person shows their vulnerable side to another, their vulnerability reflects their ability to be authentic with the other person. The person may show their vulnerability as a means to gain the other person's favor which is how Sophie Mol gains the twins favor. We see this in the following: “The next day…took her to see Velutha.” When the twins take her to see Velutha, their action shows the triumph of Sophie Mol’s win over the twins. Her victory demonstrates how she has had the
upper hand on the twins with her white privilege all along. She played the role of serving the twins as a way to manipulate them into believing that she was on her side. She never lost anything in her service to the twins because she could have fallen back to the other characters for their service if she desired to do so. Her manipulation reflects how the white majority act like they are on the minority’s side by serving them when in reality their true intentions lie in serving themselves through their usage of white privilege. They use their service as a mechanism of setup for the minority; the moment the minority puts their trust in them, the majority withdraws and leaves them, thus causing the minority to be lower in the hierarchical system of power.

Sophie Mol’s befriending of Rahel demonstrates how she alters the norm of the mindset of the white supremacist in their treatment of the minority through the use of her white privilege. An instance in the novel where this behavior is seen is when Sophie Mol interacts with Rahel when she meets her. Sophie Mol says to Rahel when she is killing the red ants: “Let’s leave one alive so that it can be lonely’ Sophie Mol suggested” (Roy 177). This quote shows how Sophie Mol initiates the conversation with Rahel as a way to let her know that she wants to befriend her; her desire to befriend Rahel is seen in the word *suggested*. Sophie Mol’s suggestion to Rahel is interesting because it shows Sophie Mol’s initiative to talk to Rahel when she is entitled to treat her as less. Sophie Mol’s action shows how she can use her white privilege to accommodate her desires to connect with whoever she pleases. In the article “Asserting the Local: White Subversions in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*,” Priya Menon argues that Sophie Mol demonstrates her white privilege in that she sets the precedent on Rahel by making her believe that “Those afflicted with whiteness will not believe in non-white values unless an authoritative white endorses or appropriates marginalized viewpoints” (Menon 75). This quote relates to Sophie Mol’s action in communication with Rahel because her suggestion sets the new precedent that makes talking to the minority acceptable. This new precedent sets the new standard which subverts the expectations of the relationship between the majority and the minority.
Another factor in Sophie Mol’s action of imitating the conversation with Rahel is how her initiating the conversation makes the statement that the majority and the minority are equal. This form of equality is shown through the lens of Rahel (as the minority) when she ignores Sophie Mol by killing all of the ants (Roy 177). An interesting piece in this quote is Sophie Mol waits to intervene when there is one ant for Rahel to kill. Sophie Mol’s attempt to spear the ant by letting it live translates to their relationship in how Rahel represents the red ant and Sophie Mol is the person who has the authority to destroy; however, lenient nature towards Rahel shows that she spears her by letting her interact with her when Rahel is the one who should be bowing down to Sophie Mol by following her commands. The reversal of roles in this passage is shown when Rahel kills the last ant. When Rahel performs this action, she implies that Sophie Mol’s presence does not have an effect on her; therefore, she can perform any action she desires. Although Rahel appears in control when she ignores Sophie Mol, she contributes to her white privilege. In her ignoring of Sophie Mol, Rahel demonstrates how Sophie Mol affects her in their relationship through her usage of guilt on Rahel. Through her intervention Sophie Mol demonstrates how the majority do not feel guilty when they destroy the minority through Rahel. She uses this tactic as a way to keep the blame of her actions off of herself which is a mechanism for her to be blind to her actions of being the oppressor. Rahel’s ability to ignore Sophie Mol shows how she falls for the unprecedented notion of accepting Sophie Mol’s white privilege; therefore, she remains tied down to Sophie Mol’s rule. Rahel’s inability to escape from Sophie Mol’s white privilege shows how Sophie Mol can acquire power over any person that she desires.

Sophie Mol’s service to Estha and Rahel shows how she uses her white privilege which demonstrates her motivation to fulfill her personal duties of feeling secure. Sophie Mol’s actions in serving the twins to reflect how the white majority sets up the facade of “serving” the minority to appear saint-like. Their scripted service is a reflection back on their insecurities that lie within. Their feelings of having contributed to the lesser creates a never-ending viscous cycle of constant disappointment that will always require them to start over.
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Race is not an incidental marker of difference or Othering. A history of structural injustices, colonialism, and slavery haunt its discourses, and this history produces a global community founded in a structure of antiblackness and white supremacy. This community possesses its own racially-charged form of social, ontological, and political hermeneutics. DuBois describes this phenomenon through his understanding of the Veil. Blackness, corporeal, cultural, ontological, etc., is interpreted through a violent history of race, which uses violent semiotic registers to represent Black folks as fungible and dehumanized. These ideas concretize into systemic repression and dehumanization, even infecting the interpretation of forms of self-expression and intimacy. These histories inform the creation and interpretation of Jordan Peele’s horror film *Get Out* (2017). Peele uses the horror genre to express experiences and interpretation of racialization. Rather than focus on unstoppable serial killers, immaterial demons, or monsters born out of science’s hubris, *Get Out* creates horror out of the experience of Black within white supremacist institutions by flipping the spectacle of terror. It explicates how Blackness observes white violence, depravity, and evil to argue that racialization affects how an audience interprets a spectacle of terror. *Get Out* combs
the horror movie archives like a Simpson’s Treehouse of Horror to reveal horror tropes and apply them to racialized experiences.

While Peele has described *Get Out* as a documentary, a horror, and a comedy, he permutes these genres together to coin a new category: the social thriller. In his exhibit at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, “The Art of the Social Thriller,” Jordan Peele shows the different influences for the film like Bernard Rose’s *Candy Man* (1992), Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980), Stanley Kramer’s *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967), etc. and connects them to reveal how they build upon and comment on their work. Peele’s shows these distinct films together to highlight what Frank Wilderson calls “the grammar of cinema” in describing race (Wilderson 81). The Grammar refers to the way semiotic registers within a text reify histories of structural antagonism. Structural here refers to a repetitive and ongoing process which begins to mold and create an overdetermining representation of race. The tropes compose the grammar of the horror movie genre. This understanding of Blackness’s (ir)relationality influences the creation of Jordan Peele’s Social Thriller as it develops through and in conjunction with social antagonisms. Because the film understands terror and its spectacle through a specific racialized experience, some gazes cannot fully see the work as their structural position cannot be reconciled without confronting the antagonistic relationality. Thus, the Social Thriller inherently alienates part of the audience, but that can both make vulnerable audience members comfortable and distance the comfortable ones. The Social Thriller can never be fully contextualized without lifetime experience of the subject matter, because it draws its story from collective experiences of a phenomenon. As Daniel Kaluuyah stated, “(the) party sequence is why I really wanted to do this film, because I’ve been to that party” (Yamato 2017). Thus, the audience contextualizes and interprets the horror of the film through their own understanding of racial etiquette. To forge his social thriller, Peele flips the assumed interpretation of terror by abandoning the white gaze as the lens to read terror.

*Get Out* is a Social Thriller, despite its horror tendencies, because its terror speaks to a specific social experience, which builds a different relationship with the audience. Whereas most horror movies depend weaponize a neutral threat to everyone (e.g. a serial
killer, genocidal or animalistic aliens, etc.) *Get Out’s* bases its spectacles in specific social experiences of racialization that only affect certain people. Because antiblackness exceeds mere day-to-day violence, presenting a neutral threat (i.e. one that affects ‘everyone’ equally) often masks deeper forms of antagonistic violence. Horror movies often assume this Grammar through their point of view. While these movies often seek to discomfort and disrupt safe spaces, the challenges are usually limited. As *Get Out* indicates, horror depends far too often on the disruption and discomfort of white spaces. The horror movie as entertainment seeks to provide a faux spectacle of terror to be consumed within the time of the movie. *Get Out* highlights how the terror exists outside of a terrorized/safe binary. Rather, the film’s criticism of white liberalism exposes that even spaces designated safe can be violent and exploitative. By removing that neutrality, Peele uses his work to express the perspective of a Black man, who, because of a history of criminalization, media, and over-policing, is often the spectacle to be read as terror. In reversing the spectacle, *Get Out* reveals how the White Gaze structures our interpretation of both the environment and the text writ large. The film highlights how white supremacy and its semiotic lexicon structure consciousness, relationality, and interpretation.

*Get Out* presents systemic understandings of Blackness structure racial and interpersonal relationships and implies that white interpretations of Blackness originate in histories as commodification and consumption. Slaves were literal property, and lynching and extrajudicial murders coalesced white communities. *Get Out* follows this history to the neoliberal moment. Under late modern capitalism and the post-racial era of Obama, whiteness consumes Black people through cultural iconography. Their Blackness is “in fashion” in movies, music, and television. This turn does not result in more or better representation, but rather further consumption of Black identity and flesh. Part of Peele’s criticism of white liberals focuses on their obsession with appearances, social hermeneutics, their reputation, etc. When Dean says “White family, Black servants… I hate the way it looks,” he attempts to create hollow ethical ground with Chris (Peele 0:18:24). He merely lampshades racial differences and inequalities without attempting to reconcile
this history. The film suggests that neither the Armitage’s nor their real-life counterparts actually care about race or justice but keeping up appearances. That obsession feeds the false neutrality of white supremacy, because it obfuscates the true insidious nature of antiblackness. White liberalism thus seeks a false inclusion, based on racialized stereotypes, white commodification and appropriation, and normative, but unhelpful, relationships. For example, the ethic of interracial sex assumes that sexual attraction can accurately measure the success of inclusion, but Get Out reveals that white power structures weaponize sexuality to tokenize Black folks. Rose limits her appreciation of Chris to racialized schemas that objectify him. When she reveals her true intentions, she laments that Chris was “one of her favorites.” This language places Chris into a collection of Black folks, like toys or cars. Their ultimate motivation reveals that White Liberals consume Blackness to mask their own production of structural antagonisms. They present their evil plan as good for both the white body snatcher and the Zombified Black people. The Armitages use naturalistic rhetoric to imply Black people are ontologically pre-disposed to athleticism, sexual virility, etc. Essentially, this interpretation reduces Black people to their bodies to make consumption of that pained flesh easier, robbing them of agency and will.

Get Out uses horror elements, icons, and tropes to express the horror of antiblackness. Rose’s shift in character instantiates how horror movies interrupt the audience’s sense of comfortability. In every subgenre of horror, films take away the characters’ security, comfort, and freedom. Horror movies deploy an immaterial villain, a home invasion, a possession of a family member to upset the audience and characters. Get Out flips this narrative to express how normative spaces hide racialized pasts. Andre’s comments about his discomfort in suburbia. The old house in the woods is a refurbished, nice house, unlike the creaky houses in woods like James Watkin’s The Woman in Black (2012), Dennis Iliadis’s The Last House on the Left (1972), and Sam Raimi’s The Evil Dead (1981). Chris’s game room prison is no Buffalo Bill hole in the ground. This process reveals how systemic racism can catalyze and evolve a sort of environmental racism. Normalized and quotidian racism creates a constant state of precarity for racialized people,
rather than small, isolated threats. The Armitage’s racial violence bleeds into the environment, which forces the audience to read the setting as neutral while it harbors a dark and violent past. White liberal spaces still structure themselves around white privilege and antiblackness, inaccessible and based on continuing white life at the expense of people of color. The auction displays this concept best as it reveals that the aesthetics of the house and grounds were merely a ruse to bring Chris into these white spaces and isolate him as prey. The film not only targets white liberalism, it reveals the motivation behind all these spaces and their structuring. White Liberalism obscures and masks antiblack violence, commodification, representation etc. Hence it normalizes racist policies like The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which saw to the imprisonment and criminalization of millions. White liberalism thus fuels white spectatorship of Black folks. The white people’s attitudes and claims used to veil their actions disorients the people of color by alienating them from the environment.

The deconstruction of quotidian spaces alienates Chris from his environment, but his othering originates from the people who occupy the environments. In Mike Flanagan’s *Oculus* (2014), Scott Derrickson’s *Sinister* (2012), and James Wan’s *The Conjuring* (2013), the malevolent forces interrupt a family by isolating and manipulating its members. The isolation fuels tension as the protagonist(s) cannot find solace, help, or relief from others. Social attitudes and prejudices, not demonic forces, create *Get Out*’s isolation. The party guests cannot communicate with Chris without discussing racial distinctions, and the Armitages are awkward, (Dean) aggressive, (Jeremy) and enabling (Missy) racists. Rose gaslights Chris throughout the film by undermining his perception and invalidating his feelings. These attitudes and behaviors make Chris an alien within the haunted Armitage estate, which culminates in his isolation in the sunken place. Unlike *The Shining*, the evil environment does not make evil people, but the inverse. Chris is the sacrifice not based on some destiny or evil force, but because he decided to date the wrong white woman, who just wanted a Black man. While the Armitages disorient Chris within the house, they also sever his connection to other Black folks who can sympathize or help. While Rod does save the day because of TSA
power, the Armitages isolate Chris for most of the film. Because it was 2017, and no one uses land lines anymore, an uncharged cell phone replaces *Halloween*’s cut phone lines, *Friday the 13th*’s slashed tires, and John Carpenter’s *The Thing*’s cut radio Wires. These cut communications isolates Chris from the only other (non-zombie) Black person he can use for help. *Get Out* uses this trope to express how white folks and white supremacy rely on isolation. Missy excavates his most isolating memory to lock Chris in the sunken place. The film expresses the alienation created through the social and structural grammars of horror to express the form of horror racialized folks feel.

In the film, the alienation in an environment seeks to survey and break down Black bodies for consumption, a distorted cannibalism. While Buffalo Bill, Leatherface, and Hannibal Lector collect skin, organs, and blood for décor or a fancy meal, the racialized cannibalism of *Get Out* highlights a different, normalized form of human consumption. While many of fiction’s sadistic killers use cannibalism to express something or to fulfill a personal need, the mad scientist white family use Black bodies to extend white life. This goal arises out of a history of medical racism, discrimination, and apartheid which privileges white life over Black people. Essentially, like the Tuskegee Syphilis experiments, the stealing of Henrietta Lacks’ cells, and the invasive surgery performed on slaves, the Armitages using Black lives to make white people live longer. This mad science which haunts America’s history normalizes within the film through naturalistic rhetoric. The world interprets Black people as corporeally superior, but this only fuels the understanding of their minds and selves as fungible. The Armitage’s victims remain as Frankenstein’s Monsters of Black flesh and white brains. *Get Out* frames the flesh-eating monsters as the white people who stole Black bodies for their immortality. The film seems to argue that appropriation results in a form of Zombification, as if, for whiteness to understand Blackness, it must kill Blackness first and then bring it back to life. Peele’s references to George Ramero’s *The Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and other zombie films also creates a connection both with neoliberalism and antiblackness. While George Romero’s zombies initially represented endless consumerism, Peele uses zombification to express
the incongruity between white consumption of Black flesh and Black folk’s ownership and assertion of self within that flesh. The zombified servants (or sex slaves) reveals how whiteness or white people can never fully digest and imitate Blackness as they do not understand it. “Gina” not understanding “snitch” and “Logan” responding to a fist-bump with a hand shake reveals whiteness’s inability to understand Blackness or Black forms of sociality. The tears juxtaposed with a smile and the chorus of “no” and “get out!” display their fractured mind and by extent, their fractured understanding of Blackness. Like a demon, whiteness can merely possess Blackness, like the owner of an object or a demon, but cannot replicate its meaning.

*Get Out* distinguishes itself from other cult movies because it recognizes what forms the violent and evil coalition, whiteness. While Ari Aster’s *Heredity* (2018) and Roman Polanski’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968) have respective old white people cults who both seek some form of immortality through satanic worship, *Get Out*’s cult arises out of the history of medical apartheid and structural antiblackness. *Get Out* expands the cult to be reflective of a structural position. The cult in the other films gains power and influence by selling themselves to a demon, but *Get Out*’s cult members were born into power through structural white supremacy. Their whiteness exists outside the individual body, in the very forms of white relationality itself. Thus their cult births from the violent and privileged belief that they own all other groups out of arbitrary understandings of melanin. The cult is socially impowered, not demonically. It implies that a structure or grammar of antiblackness produces the evil forces at work rather than some transcendent entity. While Chris follows along the role of the ritual sacrifice, his structural position distinguishes him for particular use. The white people consume and commodify black people for both their bodies and their Flesh. As Hortense Spillers describes, “(African’s) New-World, diasporic plight marked a theft of the body—a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire.” (Spillers pg. 67) By contextualizing the theft of the captive body to the horror genre, Peele expresses the horror and violence embedded within systemic antiblackness. He makes Spillers concept literal,
by giving the theft an actor: whiteness. White liberals thus continued participation within racialized politics reveals the cult-like sociality of whiteness. This interpretation reveals more about Black hermeneutics of white structures and spaces. Andre’s comments reveal the ironic discomfort of white suburbia to reveal his voice.

Social Thrillers use tropes like discomfort, isolation, cannibalism, and cults to express the structural nature of antiblackness and what reinforces it. Peele uses the film to reveal how different interpretations of racialization reveal social inequalities. Because audiences interpret the film through differing understandings of racialization, the film speaks of unspoken grammars. Microaggressions, for example, often go ignored or misrepresented within informal and formal discourse, but the film confronts their violent reality. While the White Gaze creates forms of fragility that can often reinforce and ignore microaggressions, Peele’s social thriller extends the logic of microaggressions to their structural limit. The rude and racist party guests expose how seemingly small forms of racism evolve into larger antagonistic and evil behavior. The woman at the part wants more than to have sex with Chris; she wants to rape him by stealing his body and giving it to her husband. The Man wants Chris’s Skin as a fashion statement in the way one would want a fur coat. The microaggressions of the party reveal themselves as buyer inspections before an auction. This connection evinces how microaggressions solidify into gratuitous antiblack violence and structural racism. Quotidian thoughts and commonplace beliefs reify structural imbalances and mystify the institutional nature of antiblackness. For example, the party scene reveals a form of racial etiquette where white people can only talk about and around race to Black folks. The film presents these attitudes seemingly as harmless but masking the violent and cannibalistic desires of white folks. The movie plays with normalized behaviors, attitudes, and ideas to upset the horror genre and its white gaze.

*Get Out* uses the voices of commodified Blackness to construct a type of archive of Black understandings contrary to hegemonic understandings of the world. When Dean gives Chris a tour of the house, he similarly commodifies and archives Blackness within his own white lexicon. When mentioning the antiques from Bali he
praises “the ability to experience someone else’s culture” (Peele 0:17:05). This perception, at least for Dean and white people within a world of white supremacy, assumes the same false neutrality, as it believes that one can shed their biases, violent inclinations, etc. when interacting with another’s culture. Dean’s neutrality hides an insidious agenda that drives him to not experience, but to consume another’s culture for his own gain. As already mentioned, the Armitage’s obsession with cultural and ethical reputation consumes Blackness as cultural and ethical capital. They only care about race insofar as it affirms their axiomatic understanding that Black people’s “inherent” athleticism and/or it can help them improve their image. This attitude leads to the very awkward and violent interracial engagement in the film. The film thus criticizes how white folks archive Blackness within their own ethical registers. As Peele joked on Stephen Colbert, “I have seen Get Out three times” replaced Dean’s famous line “I would have voted for Obama for a third term.” These quotes assume that participation within these microrepresentations of a race (e.g. Black politics, Black art) abdicate oneself of the responsibility for violent institutions, histories and engagement. Whiteness (and by extension White People) reveal the inherent consumptive exchange of race relations through their strategic forms of archiving and collecting. Get Out, inverses this trend and uses the archive of horror movies to explicate a reality of racial violence. While archival processes often frame themselves through the same neutral white gaze, but this categorization can serve a useful, revolutionary purpose. By presenting Black folk’s interpretation of white structures, the film acts to validate Black social hermeneutics and Black people’s experiences.

Get Out uses horror tropes to display a spectacle of terror grounded in real histories of racialized violence. The film uses this connection to express how racial hierarchies, antiblackness, and white supremacy are understood and represented within hegemonic discourses and hence, how Blackness is interpreted. Peele uses tropes of horror movies like the cult, the disjointed environment, and the alienation/racialization to express that race is a structural phenomenon that shapes the way people understand their relationship to others, and hence, their subjectivity. He argues that, within a “post-racial” world, white people consume Black folks for cultural/
ethical capital, and that consumption supports a deep and violent system of antiblackness. This assumption of a post-racial world leads to misinterpretation of Blackness both corporeal and textual. As such, *Get Out*, while criticizing the consumptive archival of white interpretation, evades these violent hermeneutics. It can only be fully understood in the context of a history and experience of race to fully understand its horror.

**WORKS CITED**


By Aaliyah Miles

The *First Purge* and *Get Out* are one of the first movies of their time to do extremely well in the box office and cause a social stir in conversation about the politics of the American existence. Each movie correlates in conveying racial violence through a spectacle of terror to show to their viewers but differ in how they go about conveying this theme to their audience. *The First Purge* written by James Demonaco is a contemporary movie that recognizes the often overlooked social injustices that exist in America today. This movie tests the viewer’s outlook on society by asking them to consider the effects of a theoretical world where the purge is brought upon a bustling city. It is particularly interesting that this specific movie puts the pieces together for all of the peculiar things that were executed in the three purge movies previous to this one. The plot of *The First Purge* starts as a government test for the people to get out (no pun intended) their anger and be free to kill. The justification the government gives for the cleansing of America is to create jobs, improve income, and get junkies off of the street. Later in the movie, the government, being an all-white government official group, reveals that the purge is just a façade to the American people to kill off the low income and minority people. The movie insinuates a deliberate whitewashing that is run by
the government. What is so important about the plot of the movie is the fact that it uses very real-world examples within its context. There are scenes of everyday people, dealing with everyday problems which are very relatable for the viewer. The cinematic effect of a movie that has no fictitious nature to it, plays a key role in having a deeper effect of meaning to the viewer. The movie displays a spectacle of terror that could possibly happen; this is considered a political thriller. In comparison to this film and its effects on its viewers, a spectacle of terror is introduced in the movie *Get Out* by Jordan Peele. Peele’s movie brings to light the similar injustices that exist in *The First Purge*, yet the movie is considered a social thriller. The way that the movie conveys its message is through relationships between the minority and its counterpart, the white race. Peele’s movie gives one specific series of events between a family and allows room for intimate thoughts about interracial sex and close interaction between different races to illuminate in the viewer’s mind. The plot of the movie consists of having a black man, Chris, dating a white woman, Rose. Rose displays a carefree spirit about being with a black man, while Chris displays his discomfort with being around Rose’s white family because he is aware of the history that has preceded America between white and black people. Rose soon exposes that her and her families are extremely racist people that conduct hypnotism and medical brain removal procedures that take the black psyche and inhibit it with the white psyche. Chris has to fight for his life by the end of the movie and prevails through the negative situation presented to him. Turbulent whitewashing is a reoccurring theme in both movies. Both of these realistic movies use racial violence as a basis to the plot of the movies, although the contemporary world would frown upon their actions and the outcomes of the actions. The real importance between the two movies lies in the message conveyed about racial violence. The rhetorical effects of movies are what makes the films thematic purpose stick with the viewers and understand why they compare the movies to the real world around them. Besides movies that depict natural disasters or alternative worlds, political and social films are forms of movies that have monumental effects on their viewers simply because of their conciseness of depicting a seemingly same world that the viewer lives in. Correlating in the
spectacle of terror, James DeMonaco’s, *The First Purge* and Jordan Peele’s, *Get Out*, utilize the key concept of racial violence to reveal that the “majority” of American society denies racial imbalances that signify white supremacy.

This film affects the reader in psychological ways and this could possibly be the reason why the spectacle of terror presented within both films works so well for the American society. In Vladimir Marchenkov’s book called *Arts and Terror*, he focuses on a keyword called an aesthetic. In his context, he is referring to underlying “persuasive dimension of objects” considering the real world. Although when an individual may think beauty when they hear the word aesthetic, it also depicts the good, the bad, and the ugly because the aesthetic is merely attention to detail. Aesthetic depends solely on perception. In a film, in which we consider art, the aesthetics are the key components in making sure that the plot gets across to the audience in the subtlest ways. In the film, the aesthetics include lighting, camera angle, music, scene duration, and even the intricate details chosen for a particular scene along with the characters actions within a film. Each film took its stance on how they would portray the importance of the aesthetic. *Get Out* is a lot less blatant on its message of racial violence and death than *The Purge*. Marchenkov’s conducts a study on how the theory of arts and terror effect human’s emotions, he mentions, “Experiences of the aesthetic offers not only the elevated and noble but the reprehensible, degrading, and destructive. This is so not as the result of an arbitrary decision to include them, but from actual experience and practice” (2) which asserts that even the ugly parts of life are as much a part of the human experience as the beautiful ones. Since the aesthetic in which a person may accept depends on their perception, Marchenkov asserts that what a person gets out of seeing a spectacle of terror in the arts depends on what their lived experience is most like. This directly points to the reason why the American audience takes so many stances on what each movies purpose was. Some audiences see *Get Out* and say that the thematic purpose of the movie is simply outrageous and there is no viable way that the white race has that much of a fetishization with black culture. However, some audiences see the same movie and agree that the spectacle of terror presented in the
movie is on target with its portrayal of the relationships that exist between black and white people. The mixed view of presuppositions that derive from *Get Out* is similar to *The Purge*. *The Purge* seems to have a more believable plotline to its audience because it is relatable to real life in America. The government hides the real motive behind their true purpose of the purge, similar to how in the real world endures governmental scandals and the public is always the last to know or the victim. This becomes more reasonable to the American viewer because who honestly does not believe the government has control over everything done in society? The theory of governmental control over everything in America is a timeless theory because of the information society knows they do not have access to versus the information the government actually does possess over everyone. Furthermore, Marchenkov includes in his studies, “Yet at the same time, separating the arts from daily life establishes an autonomy that, by philosophic decree, vitiates the force of the arts and ignores their power” (3). The external control of knowing that these are in fact just movies, destroys the entire inquiry that these themes could possibly even play out in life. So, the extreme depiction of violence in terror can be taken as something that could never happen in in the audience’s mind because of its blatant focus on terror and violence. Blatant notions are depending on the aesthetic of the film considering a particular human beings outlook. A smiling face may depict real genuine happiness, or it may depict a “poker face” for human sadness. Each movie offers the stance on a happy world flipped upside down by implying that American society hides deep-rooted issues behind the smiling faces and the kind words that keep society normative.

Racial violence is shown as a normal gesture in both films in order to depict a dystopian American societal norm. Hate crimes and violence are evident in American society today. In J.A. Tyner’s study of the post-racial America, he concludes, “consequently, an uncritical engagement with hate-crimes as actions of racist, bigoted persons may reify white supremacy through a silencing of more subtle but decriminalized forms of racism” (1063). His ideas focus on the factors that lead up to a violent spectacle of terror, being that it could be anything that leads up to the overwhelming moment of violence and those are the most important aspects to consider. To
put it into perspective, nothing is new about this concept because this is the foundation that America was built from. As many laws have been passed to actually change the way that society deals with its past, every individual who lives in this country must be cognizant of how the past still haunts the contemporary world. These are small factors that affect America’s people because laws govern the life in which US citizens are bound to. It has become harder and harder to be clear as to when a hate crime or violent act may be occurring in a person’s life. Every person is to be treated equal, but somehow the contemporary world faces the ambiguous threats to its seemingly peaceful abode. Guns violence, police brutality, and morally challenging subjects against race and sexuality still exist in an underlying way.

In the film, *The First Purge*, racial violence in America is used to present that white supremacy is inevitably intact. The film uses the aesthetic in their favor in order to ensure that the viewer can put the factors that lead up to the spectacle of terror together. In the scene where Dimitri encounters the white mercenaries for the first time, the aesthetic is critical to address. As Dimitri is an exact stereotype of a black gangster; he is a character that embodies strength that no other civilian has, being that he is a drug lord that has experience in executive decision making and violence with guns. In this scene, the aesthetic is that two seemingly indestructible black men are comfortable, and nothing could possibly go wrong. Camera angles are even so that each character can be seen on their ride to the car. The viewer should feel as though they are in the back seat of the car for the effect of realism. Dimitri’s character depicting the stereotype of a gangster black man desensitizes the viewer to thinking Dimitri and his gang is in as much danger as they are actually in. The scene depends on the normal conversation between the two to deflect the fact that the purge is, in fact, a dangerous situation. Their casual conversation then cuts away from a seemingly normal car scene to identify that a couple is having sex in public, which is significant because the couple that is having sex is interracial. Interracial sex in America is definitely something that can happen in post-racial America; in fact, the two black men in the car are condoning the act because they are amused by the idea. There seems to be no racial discrimina-
tion coming from the two because the common denominator is sex. Sex is a natural human quality, so it does not come across as a negative aesthetic to the film, yet it highlights the heterosexual stereotype of a man being a sexual being. The scene then cuts again to a sour realization that a flaming van is speeding toward the duo, T-boning the two gentlemen in their armored truck. The two that seemed to be invincible make the realization that they are no longer in charge of the situation that they thought they had complete control over. The quick-moving scene cuts depict the realism of life events happening in the blink of an eye, relatable to any individual in America living and breathing.

The character aesthetics of the scene turning badly after seeing interracial sex symbolizes that the racist ideas introduced by white supremacists about life are still resonating because interracial sex can only bring negativity in their eyes. The scene then cuts to a white screen—white symbolizing the color the white race, purity--- for dramatic effect to the car being flipped upside down in the next scene and the two men that seemed invincible are now hurt, signifying an evident danger to occur. The two men find themselves in a negative situation because they see a random white gang with bandana’s on shooting nonstop at an entire car of people that Dimitri associates himself with. The men are confused to find that a white gang has committed an act of terror toward them and must fight back. Dimitri then goes on to show his experience in the streets as a drug dealer has come to his aide when he pursues his aggressors, in which he kills each one of them with one shot each. Who are these strange, artillery trained white men? Where did they come from? And what is their motive behind killing these specific people? These questions are critical to the overall message of the scene because they explain how the aesthetic is working toward the theme of the movie. The couple that was having sex at the time is nowhere to be found, but one can assume that they were killed from the impact of the car accident or by the white mobsters that came to kill Dimitri and his crew. This means that, according to white supremacy, the abomination of interracial sex has been eliminated from the eye of America. The white mobsters seem to be completely armed, but no one has any recollection of who these trained killers could be. The all of
the sudden impact of the armed white gang coming to kill Dimitri and his crew implies that the white race is always in control of the situation and will prevail in their attempts to keep order amongst the minority people. Although this seems to just be normal killing in Loui of the purge, the scene foreshadows foul play not just by the government, but in the how the movies portray the true value of the American low income and minority citizen as inferior to the white race (*The First Purge*).

In *Get Out*, racial violence is shown in similar ways of showing that white supremacy is inevitably intact. Although the movie’s theme is deliberate in showing that the white race believes that minorities are inferior, the aesthetic in specific scenes show there is far more to be analyzed within the films meaning. The scene where Chris falls into the sunken place offers a perspective that helps the viewer understand how the aesthetic plays a key role in the message being displayed in this part. At the beginning of this scene, Chris walks in to see that Rose’s mother has been watching him for quite some time. The strained conversation between Chris and Rose’s mother call out to the unspoken anxieties that erupt between the two races when forced to find a common ground of conversation in a whitewashed society. The two make it clear that they are apprehensive of each other and must only talk about work and relationships, the most evident matter between both parties. Chris then proceeds to sit down in front of her mother in the two chairs that sit across from each other. The scene being set up this way insinuates a white inferiority because the distance between the two people seems so far away from each other, yet they are so close. Existing so closely with the oppressor yet having no real connectedness is true to the American existence because it depicts the fact of white people not having to acknowledge the black existence in their world, however, black people must consider white life in their everyday lives. In the scene to follow, Chris becomes a hypnotherapy patient and with Rose’s mom as the hypnotist. The scene inevitably depicts an all-knowing figure to the patient, the one that has less control, which is similar to the black body being seen as less than to the white body. The distance between the patient and the hypnotist become further and further representing the real social distance between the black body and the white body. The
distance being created is being inflicted by a white woman and her constant tapping of the teacup. The silver spoon Missy uses symbolizes the theory of white people never facing a struggle. There is no surprise the spoon triggers Chris’ deep-rooted pain from his life, as the privilege symbolized by the spoon displays how a black person cannot fathom the deep-rooted anguish their ancestors and possibly they are enduring. As the scene continues, the questions that make Chris fall deeper and deeper into the sunken place are a personal attack on his character about smoking and his emotional state that answers why he smokes in the first place. The viewer learns Chris smokes because he is negatively affected by his mother’s death. The attack of his character and emotional state is a direct reference to how the white race attacks the black psyche in the real world, thus keeping the black individual not psychically oppressed but mentally oppressed.

Racial violence depicted in the sunken place scene is vital because from slavery all the way to the contemporary world, black people have been swayed to believe that they were inferior to the white body by being told and treated as they are not equal. Chris is the patient, the critical part of the hypnotism craft, while Missy demonstrates the upper hand, thus leading him to believe that he is no longer in control of himself after being reminded of horrible memories that he wants to forget. As the scene now displays that Chris has fallen into the sunken place, a dark abyss that has no weight to it, the viewer conclude he is under the complete control of Missy, his white oppressor. The aesthetic has changed to Chris existing in nothingness and having only a direct view of Missy which symbolizes that the violence being inflicted upon Chris is an emotional attack that he has no control over. His mind no longer becomes his own. Chris repeats “I can’t move,” which indicates that the whitewashing of his own psyche has overcome him. The sunken place scene depicts that the white supremacy is still intact because Chris has been led to believe in hypnotism, an act that he did not believe in at first, is now an act that he is a victim too and no longer has control of his self, similar to the way that the white world has affected black people’s personal growth in America. Chris crying while being stuck indicates that he is not satisfied with the effects of this realization that is being made about his
personal power over his black body. By the end of this scene, the viewer learns that Chris wakes up and realizes that he was just in a “dream-like” state and what he thought occurred did not really happen. The dream that Chris had seemed real, yet was not according to the reality of his experience, indicating the denial of the majority race in their effects of the minority race (*Get Out*).

Racial violence can be physical and mental abuse. Between putting together all of the small aesthetics within specific scenes of the movie and making sense of them for the bigger picture, the viewer can easily get lost in thematic gestures toward solving the issue of racial imbalances that occur. *The First Purge* indicates that the spectacle of terror can act as a façade to the real racial imbalances that exist between the minority and the majority, however, the minority may still prevail from their negative circumstances. *Get Out* shows racial violence does not always have to depict blatant physical violence to affect the victim, however, the minority will still prevail from their abuse. Each movie is ambiguous in its attempt to depict a directly cynical world because the spectacle of terror seems all too real, yet impossible to occur in the real world due to its extremist outlooks on American society. The viewers are never exposed to the ultimate fate of the minority lives or whether they were able to advance from the majority attack to not be in that situation ever again; they just know that the black body is able to somehow prevail from the racially violent occurrences. The black body prevailing in each movie is the majority’s denial of the idea that the white race is in control, however, the black body prevailing from the spectacle of terror distract the viewers from understanding the continuation of the racial imbalances presented. The occurrence of the black body’s triumph in these movies glorifies white supremacy because there is no solution to the spectacle of terror toward minorities, only escape.

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Black women occupy a unique position within a white-supremacist patriarchy. Rejected for their racial and gender identity, they are, as bell hooks describes, “at the bottom of the . . . totem pole” (40). Through her representation of black women, Toni Morrison examines this sociocultural position in her novel Beloved, which details the story of Sethe, a fugitive slave haunted by the trauma of her past. Published in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and mainstream feminism, Morrison’s neo-slave narrative centralizes black women’s experience and therefore demands that such be addressed in contemporary antiracist, antisexist politics. Thirty years later, in his production Get Out, Jordan Peele likewise contributes to antiracist discourse, as he too shares Morrison’s concern with the experience of the black minority in a white-dominant culture. His satirical horror film chronicles the aftermath that results when Chris meets his white girlfriend’s family and, like Morrison’s narrative, provides representations of colored women. However, because Morrison provides positive depictions of not only black women but also the female-to-female bonds they share, Beloved empowers this marginalized group within a racist, sexist system. By contrast, Peele’s depiction of black women contributes to their subjection, and his
aims to challenge the racial hierarchy in *Get Out* are ultimately debilitated by his treatment of the film’s black female characters. An examination of these two texts, published three decades apart, therefore reveals the need for radical amendments, specifically a careful reconsideration of black women in feminist and antiracist movements, sociocultural revolutions that oftentimes relegate black women to victimhood.

Morrison uses Baby Suggs, Sethe’s mother-in-law, as an empowering representation of black women; the contrast between this character’s initial and post-slavery rendering speaks to Morison’s antiracist and antisexist intentions. Angela Davis’s assertion candidly describes Baby Suggs experience as a slave: “[W]hen it was profitable [for slaveholders] to exploit [female slaves] as if they were men, they were regarded, in effect, as genderless, but when they could be exploited, punished and repressed in ways suited only for women, they were locked into their exclusively female roles” (6). Prior to her arrival at Sweet Home, the slave system denied Baby Suggs the privilege of gender identity, for she labored in the field just as her male counterparts. Yet despite this supposed “genderlessness,” Baby Suggs suffered in ways unique to black female slaves because the slaveholders exploited her body and capitalized on her reproductive power. Hence, Baby Suggs’s plight at the intersections of race and gender appears hopeless initially.

Morrison indicates otherwise, however, as demonstrated by Baby Suggs’s resistance to self-identifying with “Jenny” (the name ascribed to her by the Whitlows and reinforced by the Garners). Mr. Garner suggests, “Well . . . if I was you I’d stick to Jenny Whitlow. Mrs. Baby Suggs ain’t no name for a freed negro” (Morrison 167). In response, Baby Suggs thinks her name “was all she had left of the ‘husband’ she claimed” (Morrison 168). Mr. Garner’s counsel here is tinged with paternalism. By denying the validity of Baby Suggs’s own name, a fundamental sense of self she has established and claimed within the confines of slavery, he attempts to undermine her identity and ultimately her freedom. While some feminist scholars may misunderstand Baby Suggs’s adaptation of her husband’s name, arguing that it represents a concession to patriarchal authority, such is not the case. Instead, by assuming his name, Baby Suggs expresses her agency: she chooses to honor her
husband’s memory as well as reclaim a sense of self denied to her by the slave system. Thus, her decision to self-identify with “Baby Suggs” is an act of resistance to the racial hierarchy, one she can afford within the minimal space available to her. By contrasting Baby Suggs’s resistance to a white-supremacist patriarchy against her oppression, Morrison revises problematic representations of black women, for she asserts that they are agents, that they are more than victimized objects.

Baby Suggs’s daughter-in-law, Sethe, also plays a key role in Morrison’s aim to provide empowering representations of black women. Unfortunately, previous scholarship that likewise seeks to discuss this character, especially in the context of feminist and Africana studies, has been limiting at best and essentializing at worst. Terry Paul Caesar, for instance reads Morrison’s narrative as an exploration of maternal subjectivity, and he treats motherhood and slavery as “convertible terms” (112). His argument exemplifies the limitations of contemporary feminism, namely how the interests of black women (and antiracist discourse at large) are subsumed under, if not ignored by, an antisexist agenda. Another example of reductive scholarship, Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu’s discussion of gender in Beloved, considers how Sethe embodies conventional feminine traits. Indeed, such an interpretation seems obvious because, as Beaulieu recognizes, Sethe’s role as nurturer figures largely into the narrative: “[I]n her post-slavery existence she [Sethe] is defined chiefly by means of her role as a mother” (11). Additionally, the text’s repeated emphasis on the milk that flows from Sethe’s breast further supports Beaulieu’s interpretation of this character as “feminine.”

Ultimately, such readings of Sethe are ineffectual because they essentialize black women, particularly those who were slaves, in white feminist jargon -- terms that do not apply to women of color. As Davis notes when discussing gender identity in the context of slavery, “Judged by the evolving nineteenth century ideology of femininity, which emphasized women’s roles as nurturing mothers and gentle companions and housekeepers for their husbands, Black women were practically anomalies” (5). Davis points to the disjunction between femininity and black women, and it is this concept which reveals that Caesar and Beaulieu overlook the
privilege of motherhood and domesticity for black female slaves. Davis further notes that the terms ‘woman,’ ‘mother,’ and ‘housewife’ “bore the fatal mark of inferiority,” yet in the case of enslaved black women, these roles were ones to be coveted, not resisted (12). The question of representation for Sethe, Baby Suggs, and other black female characters therefore operates under circumstances different from those outlined by traditional feminist identity politics, a movement grounded in the experience of white women. When detailing Sethe’s past, Morrison explicitly draws attention to this difference; she writes that Sethe “had to bring a fistful of salsify into Mrs. Garner’s kitchen every day just to be able to work in it, feel like some part of it was hers, because she wanted to love the work she did, to take the ugly out of it” (27). In this instance, Morrison magnifies the intersections of race and gender which govern the experience of women of color. Though the racial hierarchy confines Sethe to labor in the kitchen as a slave, this same hierarchy denies Sethe access to the white feminine domestic sphere. Her seclusion from the domestic realm indicates that slavery offered white women a unique opportunity: the chance to exercise dominance over black women when the patriarchy otherwise denied white women any power. Thus, in the case of Sweet Home, as a gendered division of labor persists, so too does the racial hierarchy.

Morrison further emphasizes the interactions between racial and gender oppression in the language she uses to characterize Sethe. For example, the narrator reports that Sethe was “a timely present for Mrs. Garner who had lost Baby Suggs” (12, emphasis added). Morrison’s diction points to the objectification of black slave women, specifically Sethe’s (as well as Baby Suggs’s) treatment as chattel in an anti-black slave society. In other words, Morrison’s use of the word “present” indicates Sethe’s role as a “profitable labor-unit,” a commodity whose sole value was predicated on her purpose -- to serve the needs of her masters (Davis 5). As the institution of slavery objectifies Sethe, so too does the patriarchy: Paul D refers to her as “Halle’s girl” and “Halle’s woman” (Morrison 10). Similarly, the narrator claims, “[E]ach one [of the Sweet Home men] would have beaten the others to mush to have her” (12, emphasis added). Notwithstanding the agency Sethe exercised
by choosing to marry Halle, Paul D and the other Sweet Home men use language that renders Sethe as property, and by doing so, they invalidate her humanity. Morrison’s use of possessive diction, paired with Sethe’s condition as a slave, thus emphasizes the treatment of black women as non-human, as objects, at the hands of an anti-black, anti-woman slave culture. Morrison’s language describing Sethe therefore points to the duality of black women’s subjugation, for her oppressors construct this character as sexually submissive and racially lesser.

Yet despite such a grim initial rendering, Sethe defies the governing social systems which marginalize her and, consequently, she transcends the subject-object dyad. Her obtainment of “domestic commitments,” namely a marriage and family, even while under the ownership of the Garners attests to the power of her resistance. While the institution of slavery denied colored people these normative relationships, specifically refusing the enslaved black woman “rights to her own womb” (Watson 328), Sethe, a supposedly powerless object, claims both for herself: she marries Halle while at Sweet Home and bears as well as raises all four of his children. The fact that Sethe again chooses to flee Sweet Home after her rape speaks to the magnitude of her will and endurance, as this moment most powerfully communicates Sethe’s double subjugation. Rather than being an act of “sexual gratification or material gain” (Watson 315), her rape is an act of punishment, a means of exercising dominance over Sethe in an attempt to reinstitute her into subordination (Davis 23-24). Sethe, however, prevails; this ultimate trauma of objectification pushes her to action, to reclaim the agency denied to her as a slave. Not only does Sethe escape her enslavement twice, but she also rejects patriarchal authority -- remarkably at a time when doing either seemed inconceivable. Note that once she leaves Sweet Home, she becomes a property-owner with Baby Suggs, and that she acts as the sole source of income for herself and her family. Most importantly, Sethe achieves these feats of her own agency, without gaining “permission” from the Garners to leave (as with the case of Baby Suggs) and without the presence of men. Morrison’s protagonist therefore stands as a testament to the strength of black women, and she functions as an empowering representation of this marginalized group. By presenting the intersections of
racial and gender oppression, as well as Sethe’s defiance of and Baby Suggs’s resistance to a white-supremacist patriarchy, Morrison avoids essentializing black women as only passive objects and insists, rather, that they are multifaceted subjects.

By creating a female-dominated space within her narrative, Morrison advances her antisexist, antiracist intentions to empower black women. Audre Lorde argues, “For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered. It is this real connection which is so feared by a patriarchal world” (1). In Lorde’s view, female solidarity results when women nurture other women, and this “real connection” is the only way to displace patriarchy. Morrison’s narrative dramatizes Lorde’s concept, namely in its depiction of black female-to-female bonds. Though their literal relationship indicates otherwise, the bond between Sethe and Baby Suggs exemplifies feminist sisterhood. By nurturing each other, both women strengthen their solidarity in defiance of a white-supremacist patriarchy, an oppressive system that refused black slave women the maternal power Lorde recognizes. Morrison further underscores the value and power of black female solidarity at the concluding scene of her novel, when approximately thirty women band together to cast out the ghost in Sethe’s house. Only when these women unite, working as a community to aid Denver and Sethe, are they successful in exorcising the ghost. Similarly, the fact that Amy Denver, a white girl, helps Sethe survive speaks to Morrison’s antiracist, antisexist intentions. Amy’s harnessing of maternal power proves that interdependency between women of all races is the most powerful means to overthrow an anti-black, anti-woman culture. In this way Beloved exemplifies intersectional theory, as Morrison uses her work to participate in and contribute to the feminist and antiracist movement with a specific emphasis on black women.

Released only three decades after Morrison’s novel, Jordan Peele’s film Get Out also provides representations of black women in an effort to combat anti-black racism. However, his depictions conflict with this progressive aim; rather than empowering black women, he participates in their oppression. Peele’s portrayal of Georgina, a victim of the Coagula procedure, serves as a case in
point. Davis makes the following observation: “Proportionately, more Black women have always worked outside their homes than have their white sisters. The enormous space that work occupies in Black women’s lives today follows a pattern established during the very earliest days of slavery” (5). Peele’s depiction of Georgina closely adheres to the pattern Davis recognizes here, as the majority of scenes featuring this character show her engaging in domestic work for a house that is not her own (like cleaning, folding laundry, etc.). As a live-in servant to the Armitage family, Georgina’s experience parallels that of Morrison’s Sethe, for both characters paradoxically work in and are excluded from the (white feminine) domestic sphere. While Georgina’s exploitation differs in extremity, the same construction of the black woman as an inferior subordinate persists. This construction is evident in Missy’s exchange with Georgina after she accidentally overfills Chris’s drink. In response to Georgina’s blunder, Missy chides, “Georgina! . . . Why don’t you go lay down? Just get some rest” (21:27). Missy’s command, thought subtle and disguised as a polite suggestion, echoes that of the master-slave hierarchy. Despite Georgina’s later claim that she “doesn’t answer to anyone” (52:52), she heeds Missy’s directive, thereby performing and reinforcing her slave-like subordination. Unfortunately, because Peele does not offer any representations of Georgina outside of her “enslavement,” he perpetuates the image of the black woman as a subservient household worker. Though Peele’s antiracist film has the capacity to revise such an essentializing representation, it fails to do so and, consequently, limits black women to victimhood.

Some film viewers reject the notion that Peele renders Georgina an oppressed victim, citing instances where she appears to resist the double consciousness resulting from the Coagula. Educator Brittany Willis argues that “unlike Logan and Walter, who apparently needed a camera’s flash to ‘wake up,’ Georgina was the only one whose black consciousness broke through without an external trigger. She also seemed to have the greatest internal struggle when she was in close proximity to Chris.” Another interpretation similarly reads, “Georgina was constantly fighting her body’s host” (B.). Both readings of Georgina pose valid arguments, because her odd behavior indeed suggests an internal struggle against Marianne.
Armitage. While refilling drinks, for example, Georgina appears to lose focus, assuming a blank facial expression and empty stare. Additionally, when Chris confesses feeling nervous when surrounded by too many white people, Georgina eerily responds, “No, no, no, no,” with tears trickling down her face (51:50). As these scenes indicate, Georgina’s true consciousness and black identity has not fully succumbed to the Sunken Place. Peele thus seems to hint at black women’s resistance to oppression. However, this claim is voided by the fact that, time and time again, Marianne Armitage prevails, asserting control over Georgina’s body; she silences Georgina’s defiance at every turn and, in effect, so does Peele. By refusing to fully explore and expand on Georgina’s resistance, Peele depicts black women in a limited capacity, namely in a position of objectivity only. He therefore participates in the objectification of an already marginalized group despite his progressive antiracist intentions.

The film’s use of pejorative black female stereotypes, namely that black women are “angry” and “jealous,” attests to Peele’s mistreatment of black women. When telling Rose his suspicions that Georgina unplugged his phone, Chris says, “Maybe she [Georgina] doesn’t like the fact that I’m with you…. It’s a thing” (49:27). Chris’s statement here is tinged not only with egotism but also with sexism and racism. By including this stereotype in the film, Peele, through Chris, continues the patriarchal narrative of black women as defined by black men. For Chris makes an evidenceless assumption about Georgina based on her race and gender, using his authority as a black man to speak for black women. Additionally, Chris’s role as the “hero” in the film prompts viewers to align with him and trust (perhaps even adopt) his views. As such, Peele perpetuates both racist and sexist ideologies to all viewers, no matter what race or gender. Furthermore, because Chris “exposes” to Rose the supposed reality of black women’s disposition, he specifically encourages white women’s discrimination against women of color. By alluding to his participation in interracial dating, Chris also aligns himself with a multiracial progressiveness, a “revolutionary” attitude that, he suggests, Georgina opposes. The representation of black women resulting from this opposition is a harmful distortion. As Patricia Hill Collins notes, “Black women who roll their eyes
at interracial couples are not seen as sympathetic figures -- they become recast as familiar stereotypical Black bitches who stand in the way of progress” (qtd. in Childs 547). The establishment of this polarity concerning interracial relationships thereby denies viewers sympathy for not only Georgina but also black women at large. In fact, Chris’s seemingly innocuous statement actually paints this group as antagonists.

Peele further marginalizes black women by upholding patriarchal ideologies. His choice to use a male protagonist over a female one proves that he privileges the experiences of black men over black women. Similarly, the fact that Georgina plays such a minor role in the film suggests that, in the context of racial oppression and discrimination, black women’s experience holds less significance than that of black men’s. When Chris discovers Rose’s photo collection, he slowly flips through picture after picture, revealing the alarmingly high number of black male victims (like himself) she deceived. Only at the very end of the collection does Chris find a picture of Rose with Georgina. While the strategic placement of this photo acts as the capstone of Chris’s epiphany, alerting him to the danger he faces and building viewer suspense, it also betrays Peele’s sexist attitudes. Specifically, Georgina’s photo cinematically illustrates how Peele treats black women’s experience as an afterthought, as secondary, to black men’s. This scene clearly communicates Georgina’s role as a background character precisely because it is the only instance in the film where Peele intimates Georgina’s backstory and provides limited insight into her true identity. Though her sexuality and gender distinguish her experience from Rose’s male victims, Peele ultimately ignores such distinctions, nonetheless grouping her with the men on the basis of racial identity. Georgina then becomes merely another photo in Rose’s collection, losing all sense of individuality. By treating Georgina’s identity categories “as an either/or proposition,” Peele “relegates the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling” (Crenshaw 1). Put another way, Peele misrepresents Georgina’s oppression as one-sided. He considers her blackness in isolation from her sexuality and gender; in doing so, he prioritizes her belonging to the black community only to further his antiracist agenda. By ignoring how Georgina’s oppression differs from that
of black men in a white-supremacist patriarchy, Peele silences black women and reinforces male dominance.

Detective Latoya and Mrs. Washington’s insignificance in the film further exhibits Peele’s mistreatment of black women. While he grants Georgina, at most, fifteen minutes of screen-time in a nearly two-hour movie, Latoya only has approximately three minutes, and Chris’s mother, none. Thus, in his critique of anti-black racism, Peele’s representation of black women is literally as well as figuratively limited. In regards to Latoya specifically, Peele presents her as the token “sassy” black woman and thereby perpetuates stereotypes against women of color. In his discussion of Get Out, Robert Jones, Jr., asserts that, with Latoya, “There was an opportunity . . . for a black woman to be heroic [for Chris and Rod] . . . and she was, instead, indifferent, of no assistance, mocking, aligned with the establishment.” As Jones observes, Peele certainly characterizes Latoya in a less-than-flattering light. In doing so, he again treats black women, who are supposedly unwilling to save their male counterparts, as “the enemy” to black men. To counter the argument that Peele disenfranchises black women, some may refer to Mrs. Washington, claiming that because her death maintains a lifelong impact on Chris, her role in the film is actually invaluable. This claim proves false precisely because Mrs. Washington’s seeming significance is predicated on her absence. Only in a state of nonexistence does her character matter, a fact that reveals the flaws inherent in Peele’s male-driven narrative.

Reading Morrison’s Beloved in relation to Peele’s Get Out exposes not only the conflict between feminism and antiracism but also the limitations within each progressive movement. As Lorde writes, “Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression” (2). Through her female-dominated narrative, which provides positive representations of black women, Morrison actively works to build this sense of community with readers by empowering black women. Her portrayal of female-to-female bonds, not only among women of color but also between black women and white women, proves that sisterhood is indeed powerful. Peele, by contrast, fails to build community. He weakens his antiracist message by misrepresenting and essentializing black women as victims and
by upholding patriarchal tradition; he also fails to represent feminist sisterhood, as his female characters never encounter each other. By participating in black women’s marginalization, Peele undermines the intent of his own work: to combat anti-black racism. As the dialogue between his film and Morrison’s novel indicates, the overthrow of a white-supremacist patriarchy can be achieved only when black men and white women divest of their problematic ideologies. Furthermore, in order to breach the gap between feminist and antiracist discourse, black women’s presence and experience must be accurately represented as well as addressed within both.

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In 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, using ideologies strongly associated to Malcolm X, formed the Black Panther Party. And though mainstream society in 1966, and in present day, view the Black Panther Party as an extremist organization that only promotes violence, their start paints another picture. The Black Panther Party’s original name was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. The party’s purpose was to protect African American from acts of police brutality as a result of them losing countless people of color at the hands of the police and other systematic groups. With the police, those sworn to protect, acting more as offenders than defenders, people of color in American were put in a corner and saw no other choice than to fight back; but instead of attempting to understand the means behind the action, mainstream society quickly demonized the group, warping the Black Panther Party’s image. However, when it pertains to white mainstream America in times of war, some cases of self-defense, and various sporting events, society views violence heroically; yet, society tends to have opposing views when it pertains to violent black resistance to white oppression. Mainstream American culture demonizes and penalizes black resistance movements who even suggest or hint towards violence. In attempting to silence people and groups like Malcolm

*Concerning nonviolence, it is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks.*

—Malcolm X
X, the Black Panthers, Black Lives Matter movement, and other movements that aim to resist, mainstream society creates, within the culture, a narrative that refuses to permit minorities exertions of heroism through defiance. The narrative echoes throughout society, music, and films. Even in horror, a genre brimming with licensed violence, minority characters are generally permitted to use violence only when working in parallel with white characters. Jordan Peele’s film Get Out, on the other hand, discusses and expunges society’s narrative through the characters Andre, Chris, and Walter. While in reality the dominant narrative regarding black resistance to white oppression paints people of color as the agitators and radicals, Get Out emphasizes Andre, Chris, and Walter’s struggles to remain calm and survive as they face mortal danger, and displays feeling of catharsis and approval when they subsequently resort to violence. Jordan Peele’s film Get Out displays violent black resistance as a necessity born of desperation as way to challenge mainstream society’s views of real-life violent black resistance and protest like the actions discussed in Malcolm X’s philosophy.

Malcolm X was a realist and knew that the issues African Americans were facing in the 1950s, through the present day, would not be resolved by utilizing only nonviolent neutral nuances. The obstacles people of color faced (Jim Crow Laws, lynchings, beatings, etc.), were appearing to get worse and people of color were not certain of what to do, due to the fact that their oppressors were the majority. Malcolm felt that people of color had reached the point where they would have to fight for their right to exist or be destroyed. Malcolm’s campaign focused on restoring dignity within the black community. He felt that if African Americans had confidence within themselves, they would in-turn have the confidence to demand their God given rights and their freedom. In one of his speeches in the Street Corner Rallies, Malcolm states, “we are black first and everything else second” (Atwal). Rather than just accepting the hands being dealt to them, Malcolm would continuously promote pride in one’s African heritage and armed self-defense, to sever the chains of white domination “by any means necessary.” Yes, Malcolm’s views, in some cases are extreme, but they are a product of his environment, an environment where one can either fight back or lay down and die. In “The Autobiogra-
phy of Malcolm X’ (1965), Malcolm states, “The black race here in North America is in extremely bad condition. You show me a black man who isn’t an extremist, he argued, and I will show you one who needs psychiatric attention” (X).

Jordan Peele begins his film with imagery of racial violence and black resistance when Jeremy Armitage attacks Andre. Andre is a black man walking down the street at night in a white suburb. He is aware that he is out of place and “stick[s] out like a sore thumb”; however, Andre remains calm (00:1:20-00:1:30). Even when Jeremy begins to follow Andre in his white car, Andre tells himself to not “do nothing stupid” but just to “keep going,” displaying his calm nature in times of fear (00:2:14-00:2:16). When the car continues to follow him, he turns and begins to walk the other way, or in the words of Martin Luther King “turns the other cheek,” attempting to avoid drama and chaos as much as he can. Andre, in this moment, symbolizes the “nonviolent resistor.” He knows he is in a dangerous situation and yet he endures it calmly passively combating the issue in hopes that it will go away, but it does not. Nothing he does sways Jeremy from pursuing him and Jeremy eventually kidnaps Andre and places him in the back of his car as the song “Run Rabbit Run” blares from the radio. In the scene, Peele paints a symbolic image of what happens when people of color face white oppression and violence with nonviolent resistance; they do not stand a chance. Jeremy, his white car, and his aggression symbolize the powerful white oppressive culture people of color, like Andre, face constantly. Just like most black resisters and protesters, Andre does everything he possibly can to prevent an altercation with Jeremy, but all of his efforts fail. In an untitled speech given in the 1960s, Malcolm X discusses people of color similarly to how Peele portrays Andre and Jeremy’s first encounter. X states how African Americans are peaceful, loving, and nonviolent people who “love everybody who loves us.” He continues by stating that people of color are only “not nonviolent with anyone who is violent with [them].” The nonviolent temperament Andre equips to avoid Jeremy acts as evidence supporting Malcolm’s philosophy. It is also evident by the fact that Andre does not result to violence until Jeremy begins his assault. In Malcolm’s philosophy and Peele’s films, the audience witnesses how violent
black resistance occurs. People of color are not simply violent, but when violence is thrust upon them, like in the case of Andre, they become violent.

Music is another symbol used to signify the oppression and danger Andre is in. Peele uses the “Run Rabbit Run” to confront race relations in mainstream American politics. According to Deen Ray at CUNY, the song “Run Rabbit Run” was made popular during World War II, due to the fact it “likely tailored towards British optimism,” and was used “as assurance of Germans weakness.” Inciting political propaganda solely based off race, Britain associated themselves with power and resilience, and Germans with fragility and impotence. Though neither characters are German nor British, they are fighting a war for survival and they are further connected to Jeremy and Andre through the fact that both instances use race for political and social gains. Moreover, on a more literal level, Andre is the rabbit in the song “Run Rabbit Run” and just like the rabbit, a harvester, Jeremy, is attempting to make him his prey and will not stop unless Andre finds a “rabbit-hole.” The farmer holds all the power and the gun, making it seem impossible for the rabbit, Andre, to survive. It is only when Jeremy seizes Andre that he resorts to violence to protect himself, but Jeremy overpowers him and Andre loses his black body as a result.

And as Jeremy drags a black body away, Chris enters and introduces another instance of racial violence and black resistance in *Get Out*: the party at the Armitage Estate. What starts as micro-aggressions towards Chris quickly escalates to violence. While walking around the house mingling with the Armitage’s guests and Rose, the guest bombard Chris with micro-aggressive phrases like “is it better” in regards to sex with black men, “black is in fashion” and “I love Tiger” as ways to relate to his blackness, and is groped and asked to “show his form” like a slave on the auction block by the white guests at the party (00:42:36-00:44:28). Chris faces all these micro-aggressions and yet, keeps a level head. Even when he comes in contact with Andre, who is referred to as Logan, and quickly notices that something is off, he remains nonviolent and calm. Through his facial expressions and body language, however, the audience is able to see that Chris knows something is not right, though he does not act rashly; instead, Chris contextualizes
the escalating situation. Malcolm X on Afro-American History discusses the micro-aggressions people of color endure and refers to them as “the trap of racism”. In the 1960s, people of color were being lynched, oppressed, and verbally and physically abused, similar to the people of color in Get Out. Malcolm argues that white people place people of color in corners and use “tricks” to trap them into a slave mindset, akin to how the guest prod Chris at the party and how Missy hypnotizes him the night before. Malcolm continues by stating that if people of color decide to “speak in an angry way about what has happened to our people and what is happening to our people,” whites refer to them as being emotional or practicing emotionalism. Society tells people of color that they are supposed to be respectful and responsible and or silent in response to their oppressors, which explains why Chris initially stays silent. However, X suggest that in order to free oneself from the trap he or she must “let [whites] know you’re irresponsible and you’ll blow his irresponsible head off, which is ironic because that’s what Chris does at the end of the film. People of color constantly face beratement, micro and macro aggression, and racism at the hands of white people, but the expectation is for them to be silent. In Malcolm’s explanation of the “traps of racism,” he reveal the real reasoning behind Chris’ silence. Chris has fallen into the trap of racism and must become violent in order to escape.

Moreover, the presence of Andre/Logan acts as another form of black resistance. Andre learned too late that in order to save his blackbody from whiteness, he cannot be passive and nonviolent, which the audience sees in his reaction to Chris after the picture is take. Andre frantically grabs for Chris screaming “Get out, get outta here, get the fuck outta here” while fighting against the white guests and Jeremy who attempt to recapture his body (00:55:25-00:56:50). Andre knows it is too late for him, but it is not too late for Chris. In addition, the imagery of the white guests attempting to silence Andre acts as another correlation to the philosophy of Malcolm X. In another speech given in the 60s, Malcolm X discuss how white people react when black men stand up and speak on matters that white people do not like. Malcolm argues, that white people will “try and find somebody to say something to offset what has just been said” attempting to undermined the
black voice, which is exactly what Dean Armitage does after Andre warns Chris. Dean attempts to convince Chris that the outburst was caused by a seizure brought on by the anxiety of the camera flash. The film then shows Andre/Logan apologizing for his outburst stating he’s “much better now,” while Logan’s wife states that he “should not have been drinking” in an effort to disarm Chris (00:56:00-00:57:32). Referring back to the incident itself, what makes this scene even more powerful is that the warning Andre gives to Chris comes during a conversation regarding advantages and disadvantages of African Americans in America. Peele has the questions asked and instead of speaking on the disadvantages, he shows the audience what is hindering the advancement of people of color: white manipulative culture. Again, the audience sees Peele’s narrative opposing the dominant narrative of people of color as the dangerous agitators and instead focuses on people of color’s struggle to coexist in mainstream white America.

When Chris realizes that the Armitage Family, including Rose, are tricking him in order to steal his body, the reader finds the fourth example of black resistance to racial violence in *Get Out* and another correlation to the philosophy of Malcolm X. In the speech “The Race Problem” Malcolm X, when discusses the Uncle Tom’s versus the new type of Negroes, states the Toms “thinks his friend is his enemy and his enemy is his friend. And he usually ends up loving his enemy.” Examples of this can be observed in Chris, Andre, and Walter due to the fact that they all fall for the Armitage’s trap. Though most would not completely consider any of the characters to be Uncle Toms, they do share characteristics with X’s definition. However, as the film progresses the audience watches as all of them have moments when they become what Malcolm defines as the ‘new type’ of Negro. For Chris, the transition from displaying characteristics of an ‘Uncle Tom’ to the new type occurs when he makes an attempt to leave the Armitage Estate with Rose, but fails due to her betrayal. Chris initially attempts to fight them off but Missy hypnotizes Chris again and he is captured. The Armitage’s then strap Chris to a chair patiently waiting for him to regain consciousness to begin the Coagula procedure. Chris has no other option but to use violence if he wants to survive, it is his only way of leaving the Armitage Estate alive.
and thus, Chris become what Malcolm X defines as the ‘new type’ of Negro. Chris has always possessed the ‘new type’ inside him. Malcolm defines the “new type” as one who follows the law and respects others and believes in treating others as he himself would like to be treated, which describes Chris in his dealings with the Armitage Family and their guest up to his point of capture in the film. Malcolm continues by saying that he is respectful, “but at the same time, if anybody attacks him, he believes in retaliating if it costs him his life.” The audience observes as Chris peacefully and nonviolently tries to handle his surroundings, but when his life is placed in danger, he has only one thought: survival by any means necessary. Fascinatingly, in the same passage in which Malcolm defines the ‘new type,’ he also states how whites should learn that not all “negroes endorse this old turn-the-other-cheek” philosophy because “whites are going to make the mistake of putting their hands on some Black man,” expecting nonviolence, “and he’ll end up losing his hand and losing his life in the try” which is literally what happens in the film. Chris, knowing his time is limited, places cotton in his ears to avoid hearing the hypnotic sound, waits for Jeremy Armitage to come take him to surgery, and hits him over the head.

Interestingly on YouTube, the scene of Chris using violent black resistance is referred to as “Chris’s Revenge Scene,” but how is it revenge if he is only attempting to live? Both the scene itself and the YouTube title are examples of how violent black resistance is born out of necessity and desperation and how mainstream society refuses to see black resistance as a survival mechanism, tool of justice, or anything else except meaningless violence. During his fights with the Armitage Family, Chris remains quiet. He does not gloat or curse them. He silently maneuvers through the house only fighting when he must. When he first encounters Jeremy, he does not kill him. It is only when Chris attempts to leave the house and Jeremy climbs on his back attacking him, refusing to let him leave, that Chris delivers deathly blows to him. Furthermore, in the case of Rose, the woman who betrays him and leaves him for dead, his feelings for her would not even allow him to deeply harm her. Chris shows Rose compassion, even though she does not deserve it, which displays the loving peaceful nature of
Chris in opposition of that to the Armitage Family. Chris acts as a representation of black resistance in America, the ‘new type’, only violent in times of desperation. Society tends to ignore the oppressor and focus on the violent actions of the oppressed rarely discussing the actions that brought them to that point, like in the case of Chris or historically the Black Panther and BLM. As stated previously, the Black Panthers were originally created to protect African Americans from acts of police brutality as a result of the losing countless people of color at the hands of the police and other systematic groups. The Black Lives Matter movement’s “mission is to build local power and to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes,” but society has painted both groups as extreme terroristic groups (BLM). However, in *Get Out*, Peele displays the overt nature of the oppressor and displays that sometimes violent black resistance is the only way to survive for people of color; but, by also having Chris show compassion to Rose, Peele is also showing a different side to African Americans who are usually portrayed as violent with little self-control.

*Get Out’s* last example of violent black resistance is probably one of the most powerful examples in the movie, and that is when Chris awakens Walter and Walter takes his own life. From the pictures and stories told by the Armitage Family earlier in the film, it is not farfetched to assume that Walter was one of the first people of color captured by them. He dwells in the Sunken Place for years, a passenger in his own body; however, when Christ awakes him, Walter realizes it will not be long before he is a passenger once more and decides he would rather take his own life than be a slave in his own body. The concept of liberty or death is not uncommon in the black community. In the 1960s Malcolm X decides to focus on “the Negroes revolution” instead of “the black revolution” due to its international scope. Malcolm then cultivates a philosophy that is not only political but cultural as well: Black Nationalism. Black Nationalism “sought to acquire economic power and to infuse among blacks a sense of community and group feeling (*Britannica*).” In the 1960s, similar to *Get Out* and present day America, people of color frequently feel the suppressive of white culture but instead of removing black cultural by surgery, whites use assimilation. In both examples, *Get Out* and
historical America, people of color realize what is happening and fight back against the white oppressive power. In the speech “The Ballot or the Bullet” Malcolm X discusses the importance of voting and being heard is in the black community. He also references those facing suppression in the line “half of the people in the South can’t even vote.” Though whites at the time are not trying to steal African Americans bodies to perform Coagula experiments, they were stealing black lives and voices by way of lynchings, beatings, and voter suppression. Black communities were being destroyed and the only time politicians would appear would be to ‘jive’ people of color for their vote (X). Malcolm states that “the white political crooks will be right back in your and my community with their false promises, building up our hopes for a letdown,” using tricks and traps. Malcolm, just like Walter at the end of film, is aware of just how little the white politicians, Armitage Family and their society, care about black life and so they must take matters into their own hands. Malcolm writes “it’ll be the ballot or the bullet. It’ll be liberty or it’ll be death.” Of course Malcolm is referring to the right to vote when he says the word ballot, but on a larger scale, “by ballot [Malcolm] only mean[s] freedom.” The freedom to vote, the freedom to live, the freedom to not be a passenger in one’s own body. Just like Malcolm, Walter is also searching and fighting for that freedom and once he possess it, he intends to keep it. After Chris awakens Walter and he acquires freedom, he waits for his chance to act, to maintain the freedom. The only words the audience hears Walter say is “let me do it” when attempting to get the gun from Rose (1:35:39-1:36:45). For Walter, “it” is ending the life of Rose and the cycle of black oppression at the hands of the Armitage Family. “It” also means ending the hold whiteness has over his own body, and in-turn, freedom. The one tear that falls from Walter’s eye before he pulls the trigger on himself speaks volumes to his mental state and level of desperation. Peele shows and explains the Coagula procedure the Armitage Family forces Walter to endure along with his desperation at the end of the film, to allow the audience to understand why he makes the decision to commit suicide. If given the choice between slavery and freedom wouldn’t one also choose the latter? Peele shows the cause and effect, unlike mainstream society that will quickly show the
aftermath or violent black resistance, but not an explanation of the situation that left them no other choice.

Jordan Peele’s film *Get Out* speaks of not only the violence people of color face because of a corrupt mainstream society, but it also speaks to violent black resistance. Peele challenges the notion of people of color being hot tempered, unable to be level headed, and violent for no reason. Where mainstream America only see people of color as members of a violent race constantly playing victims in a post-race society, Peele challenges these notions and shows society what they refuse to acknowledge: people of color, just as other races tend to only become violent when necessity calls for it. In reality, society deems groups like the Black Panthers and BLM as violent aggressors, but just like Andre, Walter, and Chris, they just want society to acknowledge that they are people just like everyone else and that their black lives matter.

**WORK CITED**


By Kadijah Smith

Horror intends to frighten, scare, or disgust viewers through terrifying imagery or supernatural malicious figures. Ryan Murphy’s *American Horror Story Cult* and Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* uses the horror genre to create a more subtle monster: white liberals. *American Horror Story* is the first major television show to broadcast the paranoia and fear surrounding Trump’s presidency. Because Trump gains such a large following based on racist and sexist rhetoric, minorities became a heighten threat again. *Get Out* resembles a “post-racial” American society adopted after President Obama’s election. Both productions exaggerate modern-day societal norms like elections and social interactions into horrific outcomes plaguing minorities. *Get Out* shows viewers that white liberals seem to only connect with minorities through racial micro-aggression. *Cult* draws on the contemporary political divide: conservative versus liberal. White liberals fail to acknowledge the effect their presumed assumptions and biases have on how they perceive the actions of minorities. South African Student Organisation addresses white liberal institutions in their policy manifesto. They explain how white liberals disguise their ideas as progressive, but the inclusion only comes with white approval: “the Progressive Party and other White Liberal institutions — are not

You know I’m mad at you because you never take my advice...like don’t go to a white girl parents’ house.

—Rod, *Get Out*
working for the kind of integration that would be acceptable to the Black man. Their attempts are directed merely at relaxing certain oppressive legislations and to allow Blacks into a White-type society” (SATO). This entrenched system of bias prevents white liberals from recognizing their progressiveness focus on white progress. SASO outlines that white involvement is the only way for minorities to gain acceptance from white liberals. *Cult* and *Get Out* examine white liberals who have integration agendas aimed at reshaping minorities into their ideals of acceptable. Instead of overtly displaying racist interactions, both productions emphasize the danger that silent racism poses for minorities.

*Cult* follows main characters Kai Anderson and Ally Mayfair-Richard and paints them as the ideal representation of white liberalism and white supremacy. In fact, the show focuses on a facade that associates liberalism with whiteness. Trump supporter Kai portrays the white supremacist antagonist obsessed with exploiting the fears of others and gaining power and control. He utilizes the paranoia surrounding America’s current social climate and fear of minorities to manipulate white liberals into trusting his intentions. Though Kai believes in the opposite of liberal views, the show reveals how white privilege allows them an opportunity to participate in the white supremacy agenda while identifying as a liberal. Peele draws on a similar concept but focuses more on the aversive racism liberals project onto minorities. Aversive racism is a contemporary form of racism displaying subtle racial behaviors and social engagement based on stereotypes. *Get Out* delves into the complexities of white liberalism and the hidden ways racism manifests in our modern society. Main character Chris takes audience members through the perspective of a black man in a “post-race” America clinging to racial bias. Ryan Murphy’s *American Horror Story Cult* and Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* depict white liberals masquerading as progressive and inclusive while conforming to aversive racism and adopting “post-racial” ideologies that covertly oppress minorities in contemporary society. An examination of these two productions reveals how white liberalism and white supremacy have aligning ideals that promote white progression.

*Cult* performs a facade assigning Kai and Ally to society’s association with white liberals and conservatives. “Election Night”
opens with Kai alone in his basement as Fox news announces Trump’s victory in the background. Kai chants, “The revolution has begun. FREEDOM! USA, USA!” (00:1:40-00:02:12) as he humps the television and smears Cheeto powder onto his face. Murphy reveals a conservative stereotype by including the over-the-shoulder shot of Kai watching Fox News. His dialogue resembles patriotism rhetoric and nationalist ideologies declaring vigorous support for America. The liberal viewing party consists of an Asian American, a lesbian couple, and one black woman watching MSNBC awaiting the presidential results. This diverse viewing party reflects the inclusive acceptance associated with white liberals. Though after the election announcements, these diverse liberals become hostile with their different choices. Thom, the Asian-American, scolds his wife for not voting and blames Jill Stein supporters for their direct cause in Trump’s elections. He mentions the risk of losing legalized same-sex marriage, a political view dividing conservatives and white liberals for decades. Thom exposes to the audience that this room adopts the typical moral views of the left-wingers. Ally represents the pinnacle liberal woman as she proclaims, “I won’t believe anything until I hear Rachel Maddow say it. She’s the only one I trust,” connecting herself to famous self-proclaimed liberal activist and “Oh, go to hell, Huffington Post! F–ck you, Nate Silver! Oh, my God, how could they have been so wrong about this?” (00:1:51-00:2:40). The music switches to an obnoxious shrieking noise as Ally screams and has a panic attack. Murphy presents the manifested narrative that society creates for political opposites. He exaggerates the roles into an extreme white nationalist versus a terrified panicking liberal. This characterization sets up a certain imagery of Ally and Kai that forces audience to associate every action they perform in the show to their political opinions.

Peele uses Rose’s post-racial ideology of colorblindness to portray the racial hero narrative white liberals falsely paint about themselves. When Chris asks, “Do they know I’m black?” Rose pretends that Chris’s race is not an important factor. She shrugs it off with, “No, should they?” (00:06:58-00:07:23). As he addresses his concerns with her white parents being blindsided by his race, she fakes transparency by dismissing the issues and by sarcastically
repeating black man. She uses the famous line, “My dad would have voted for Obama a third time if he could have,” (00:08:00) assuming Chris voted for Obama because he is black. As a white person with white friends, a white family, living in a white community, whiteness becomes so normalized that race tends to fade; but, for someone who is non-white and who lives in a society that favors whiteness, race does matter. Rose turn his concerns into a direct attack on her and suggests a type of defense that allows whites to deflect from the issue. This type of defensiveness intends to end the discussion and absolve herself from racist association and acquisitions. Richard Turner’s “Black Consciousness and White Liberal” describes her behavior as “paternalism because it treats blacks as being incapable of listening to criticism and engaging in rational argument” (2). Rose furthers this notion by using sarcasm to dismiss Chris’s concerns, thereby exposing her colorblindness. White liberals believe ideas such as color blindness help promote racial equality; however, it does the opposite. Monnica Williams defines color blindness in *Psychology Today* as, “colorblindness is the racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity.” Colorblindness perpetuates racism because it allows minorities and racial issues to become invisible while centralizing the white experiences. This microinvalidation results in the denial of racially-motivated action and phrases like “I don’t see color” deny the experiences of people of color and promotes the racial purity of whiteness. The next scene, Rose contradicts her ideologies by assuming the police officers’ interactions with Chris are racially motivated. Rose uses her white privilege here to attack the officer, blurt out, “this is bullshit” (00:13:45) causing the officer to eventually give up. White liberals tend to dismiss race from their personal agendas while assigning them to other people. This action mirrors liberals’ attempt to be extremely progressive by avoiding the label of “racist.”

In *Cult*, Ally’s phobias symbolize the guilt white liberals’ have about their race and their position within white supremacy. Her character represents a white guilt formed from the political and social climate of society. Viewers learn details of her mental status at her psychiatrist session. She relives her phobia outbreak experi-
ence during 9/11 compared to those during Obama’s election. She says, “Since election night, everything is so much worse. This is just like what happened to me after 9/11… I was willing to white-knuckle it but then I didn’t have to because Barack was elected. And, it was as if the universe righted itself” (00:19:28-00:19:38).

From the conversation, viewers learn that the current political climate tends to effect Ally’s anxiety. The spectacle of terror surrounding 9/11 caused many Americans to feel a personal connection with this terrorist attack. 9/11 symbolized a direct attack on patriotism. White liberals reject nationalism or patriotism because of its direct link to white supremacy. However, Ally’s reaction to 9/11 reveals a sort of patriotism she harbors subconsciously. 9/11 and the 2016 President election created paranoia in society and fear from Americans regarding what might happen next. Ally allows for the comparison of these two traumatic events by showing where white liberals stand in this discourse. The guilt Ally possess thrives from the direct attack on whiteness. Her anxiety reveals that white liberals hold white supremacist ideologies like patriotism. Though the issues never require the harming or involvement of the white liberal, the presumed status of whiteness obstructs the norm. Steven Provost details the process of white guilt and its effects on true progress in contemporary society. One of those reasons are, “The real problem with white guilt over white privilege is it puts the focus … on white people. Shouldn’t the focus be on the people who are getting beaten up by police or bypassed for jobs?” (“White Guilt is a Distraction”). In fact, Ally reveals that people of color rising to power only conceals her guilt until whiteness is once again threaten. Get Out and Cult take place after Obama’s two terms. A big reason why Obama represents to liberals a move towards integration but not acceptance. The post-race ideology heightens because society finally acknowledge an assumed acceptance of minorities. White liberals must do more than acknowledge because there is no progression without acceptance.

Ally’s character is an allegory for how white women benefit from racial privilege and help to perpetuate white supremacy. Episode two, “Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark,” begins to shift Ally’s narrative. Ally goes from statement liberal women to being named “the lesbian George Zimmerman” after killing her immigrant worker,
Pedro. During Kai’s campaign, he questions Ally’s motives and beliefs. He exposes her hypocrisy for saying, “I’m interested in reaching out to people, making human contact and building bridges not walls” (00:31:27-00:32:30) while answer the door with a knife behind her back. This intense encounter leads up to Ally “accidently” shooting Pedro. The aftermath of Pedro’s murder exposes white women’s complicity in institutional racism. Immediately, Ally receives victim treatment. Detective Samuel reminds her of Michigan’s “stand your ground” law to expunge her from punishment. He begins justifying Pedro’s murder by painting him as a villain. He reassures her that because Pedro was under investigation for another employee’s death, there is no surprise that she saw him as a threat. Samuel uses the criminal stereotype to relieve Ally of guilt and assign reason for the killing. Together this invokes their shared privilege and racial authority over a person of color. Collectively, this scene uncovers the bias projected onto minorities through judicial systems and portrays the problem in villainizing the victim. Unlike Samuel, Ally knew Pedro was not a violent criminal, but she allows his narrative to be tarnish in order to protect herself. Statistics show that Trump won 52% of white women votes in his election (“Trump Celebrates Winning”). Though white women choose not to attach themselves to Trump, privately over half cosigned his victory. White liberal women, much like feminist, work overtime to prove their alliance with suppression. Yet, when it was time to support another minority victory, white women failed oppressed Americans by siding with the oppressor.

In episode three, Ally accepts white male protection over her own expression. In the next scene, she and her wife Ivy encounter a group of Latino protesters. Kia appears justifying her actions against Pedro as true patriotism and relieving her guilt again. In a later scene, Ally decides to try reasoning with the protesters screaming, “I am not the enemy, I am one of you!” (00:20:59) the facade of ally-ship fades shortly after the protesters refuse to crumble as she yells, “Move, motherfuckers!” (00:21:05). Kai appears again and simply says “enough” and the crowd disappears. In that moment when Ally tried to portray herself as equal to the minorities, she also tries victimizing herself. Rebecca describes this as, “Ally continues to play the victim, saying: “Do you understand
the specific pain of someone like me being accused of [racism]?” This type of self-victimization and inability to see oneself as a beneficiary, and even perpetrator, of white privilege.” (“American Horror Story”). Ally adopts the racist attitude of Detective Samuel by excluding her actions and focusing on being associated with racism. While denying her actions, she creates this victim narrative. When the crowd does not accept Ally’s assertion of being allies, they challenge her white privilege not allowing her to play both sides of the racial tension. This scene still fails to properly represent minorities. Instead, the scene paints the people of color as belligerent and outrageous and the only tamable by the white man. Once again, the white man becomes a savior for this white liberal woman.

Rose weaponizes the presumption of innocence that white liberals place on white womanhood to stand secretly against minorities. Peele does not assume that white women who befriend or date Black people are exempt from participation in racist ideologies. Instead, “Rose was never going to be an innocent bystander, a millennial guilty only of being nestled so deep inside that precious bubble of wokeness that she couldn’t recognize her own complicity in systemic racism.” (Harris). White liberal women complicit in everything from microaggressions to overt discrimination. However, he does allow first-time viewers to see Rose, from beginning to almost the end, as an innocent bystander to her racist family. While the male members of the Armitage family display aggression and hostility from the beginning, Rose and her mother Missy are sinisterly sweet. Rose and Missy pretend to be concern and disguise their true intentions as helpful while the Armitage men are irrationally violent. By the end of the film, Peele reveals that their delicate white femininity is a mask hiding hateful monsters. America’s past is rife with kind white women who exploited, abused, or accused minorities for their own benefit. Because white supremacy is rooted in patriarchy, it’s often too easy to overlook white women under the notion that they too are oppressed. But it is important to remember that though oppressed, the status of white women continues to be higher than both black men and women. Even though society considers white women the white man’s inferior, they are still the white man’s counterpart. Rose seduces Chris and viewer
with her toxic combination of charming racial innocence. Viewers first meet Rose biting her lip and picking out white pastries. Later, she expresses an apparent embarrassment at her brother’s racial comments and sexual stories. Directly followed by a scene of her in underwear brushing her teeth and professing horror at her parents’ micro-aggressions. Rose milks the image of pure, protected and innocent white women. She continuously offers apologizes for the racist actions but never stand-up for Chris or against racism. She only expresses disappointment through facial gestures and body language. Rose remains silent when her brother went on about Chris’s genetic make-up and this suggest the type of silence white liberals have towards their allies when confronting race. For white liberals, “allie-ship” means equal-ness and the disregard of systematic racism suppressing the white psyche. Though some white liberals are genuine, the significances of the word “some” exposes that other have different agendas. Her silence reflects the silence of white liberals when standing up for minorities threatens the alliance of their inner group.

*Cult* efface minorities to portray the absence of people of color within white liberal spaces and reveal the overpopulation of the majority. White liberals push for equality but not an accurate representation of minorities in media. Viewers see the minorities in *Cult* become toys for the pretend liberals. The show comes off very “white only” because it eliminates the few minorities by murdering or making jokes out of them. When we first meet Pedro, the lead cook ostracizes him for speaking Spanish with other native speakers. Ally only decides to step in when the conversation becomes combative. She dismisses Pedro by saying, “Get back to work, Pedro” and telling the lead cook, “I’m not about to fire an immigrant in this climate” (00:11:07). After Pedro is killed by Ally, the show use this as a parody of the Black Lives Matter movement. His death is also an opportunity to broadcast how fast society moves past wrongful deaths and racism. *Cult* treats him as a symbol for white liberals to agree or disagree with Ally’s innocence. The last minority to turn into the butt of the joke is Thom. After Thom stands up to Kai for promoting extremist ideas in order to control the town, Kai and his liberal murder him. Thom is the only minority who stands publicly against Kai and *Cult* silences his
voice by eliminating him directly after. Subliminally, the erasure of minorities represents the lack of them in white liberal spaces. Like Get Out, the small number of minorities and the silence of their voice mirrors contemporary society’s treatment of them as disposable.

Get Out presents the white liberal males need for validation of non-racist ideologies. The film portrays white liberal man through Dean Armitage and several men in the party scene. Dean engages in a code switching to portray Chris and he are equals. The slang language he uses suggest a racial cue associated with blackness. He uses phrase like, “my man” and “this thang” and even throws in a “you feel me” during the house tour. Then, white liberal men continue to connect Chris with famous black men in order to gain validation into the black experience. First, Dean reveals a bitterness lingering between his Armitage legacy and black people. He tells Chris, “My dads claim to fame was being beat by Jessie Owens for the qualifying round of the Berlin Olympics in 1936... He almost got over it.” (00:17:04-00:17:28). Dean’s story presents a famous black person at the center of racial tension and still focus on the victimizing of whiteness. By introducing his father centered on humiliation, he forces the conversation towards sympathy for whiteness. White male liberals calling on well-known black men becomes a cue for racial micro-aggression. Turner’s perspective about this linking is, “the idea that one must go along with the policy /strategy of any particular black leader...A political strategy has to be rooted in the needs of a particular group, but it is also something which can be argued about in terms of objective criteria” (2). He alludes that white liberals align all black people together based solely from race and objectify and denounce blackness. During the party scene, George Green engages in the same rhetoric by perpetrating stereotypes of black men association with sports. He code-switches, mirroring Dean, and says, “I do know Tigga!” (00:42:57). He uses his knowledge of mainstream black entertainers to validate his place next to Chris in contemporary society. White liberals assigning racial connects is objective because this ideology only engages race and not humanity. Each man proudly confesses how they feel about famous black men as if acknowledging black leaders suggests that they are indeed not
This confession suggest that they are racist because they put themselves at the center of racial issues while ignoring the experience of the minority.

In *Get Out* and *Cult*, the white liberals embody hypocrisy and publicly having good intentions but privately creating the problem as we see in contemporary society. The white female leads use their white femininity to masquerade as allies and this disguise promotes the questioning of the true intentions of white women. Both productions expose the complexity of a minority group, white liberal women, who privileges outweigh their suffrage. Murphy and Peele draw on Trump era America to exaggerate the tension his presidency places on minority lives, the perception of white liberals and how white liberals’ rhetoric escalate into dangerous terrorism. Though white liberals fight hard to portray themselves as minorities allies, and not enemies, Murphy shows how easily this ideology vanish when society perceive liberals as the villains; while, Peele reveals a sinister side to white liberal. Both productions eliminate the progressive attitude white liberal attempt to embody while exposing the racism entrenched in systems oppressing minorities.

**WORK CITED**


Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* and the Wayans brothers’ *White Chicks* are films that satirize society in the ways that they explore the stereotypes, stigmas, and struggles of being a black man in America. However, the films diverge significantly in their approaches to these subjects. *White Chicks*, a comedy that pokes fun at stereotypes that have both black and white targets, upends the “black-face” performance in order to caricaturize the white woman. *Get Out*, by contrast, is a horror film which depicts white society’s continuous objectification of the black body in a way that is anything but lighthearted. In these ways, each film addresses prevalent social issues regarding race either by subverting or even reinforcing them. The films converge on a few premises: they each involve significant interactions between black men and white society; the white people within the films express entitlement through their attitudes and behaviors toward people of color as well as toward members of social classes below their own; and each film portrays the tendency of society to objectify the black male body. Because the comedy’s approach to the “deficiencies, foibles, and frustrations of life” involves eliciting laughter from the audience while the horror genre aims to “frighten and panic” by focusing on the darkest aspects of society, *Get Out* and *White Chicks* ad-
dress the issues of objectification and white privilege in drastically different ways (“Comedy Films”). The former film—one of the horror variety—seeks to expose the faults of society by depicting a world in which racism, the objectification of black bodies, and white privilege coalesce to form a terrifying reality for the protagonist. The latter, a comedy, seeks to acknowledge these faults and, rather than illustrating the dark facets of society in a serious manner, induces laughter from viewers by satirizing society and expressing the irrationality of forming stereotypes.

Throughout both films, the audience observes black men socializing in affluent white neighborhoods. In the case of Get Out, Chris’s girlfriend brings him to her family’s estate, which becomes the setting for a party of primarily older white people. In White Chicks, FBI agents Kevin and Marcus—in a desperate attempt to keep their jobs after their last assignments do not go as planned—go undercover as the white female socialites that the bureau has assigned them to protect. This task requires them to socialize in the manner of white women amongst the nation’s most wealthy people, who have gathered at a hotel in the Hamptons for “the last weekend of the social season”; this wealthy population is, of course, comprised overwhelmingly of white people, with the exception of two notable black characters (Wayans). Although similar in atmosphere, the films distinguish themselves from each other in the ways they convey characters’ reactions to their surroundings. While Chris and Andre—the latter specifically in the opening scene—each express some apprehension toward being in a suburban atmosphere, Kevin and Marcus exhibit minimal anxiety about their predicament. This contrast is significant; because Get Out is a horror movie, it portrays characters’ concerns in a serious manner. Moreover, the black characters within the film are arguably more vulnerable to the dangers of the world around them, simply because their dark skin serves as a target for those who wish them harm. The comedic White Chicks brothers, however, approach their situation under the protection of their white masks—and female, at that. In other words, any anxiety that the two may feel about the necessity of fraternizing with so many white people is suppressed by the comforting awareness that those white people accept them as their own. In this way, White Chicks
establishes a level of security for its protagonists that *Get Out* does not, and viewers are therefore able to assume that characters Kevin and Marcus will be free from the acts of discrimination and other products of racial tension that Peele’s film entails. Because of this understanding, audiences may begin to perceive the film as a comedic exploration of race from the perspective of the minority.

A principal theme throughout both movies is the objectification of the black male form and the issues concomitant to the characters’ experiences with it. In *Get Out*, the Armitage family and their guests’ obsession with youth, athletic ability, and “fashionable” dark skin lead them to auction off the black bodies of their victims (Peele). Throughout the party scene, in which Chris is socially obligated to interact with white men and women, there are many references to his blackness as well as his physicality. One man—who attempts to establish a connection by stating, “I know Tiger”—encourages Chris to demonstrate his golf form (Peele). A woman asks of Rose, “Is it better?” referring to his sexual capabilities and reinforcing the use of a common stereotype (Peele). A less-obvious addition to these inspections of Chris’s body is the insistence that he quit smoking, a request that Rose’s parents make continuously (Peele). After becoming aware of the family’s malicious intent, these subjects help to elicit further understanding of the party’s purpose; that is, the Armitage’s guests have gathered in order to interview Chris, to gain information about his physical ability, and to ultimately reduce him to a young male body. While the audience looks on in horror at this realization when watching the film, *White Chicks* raises the same issue in a way that elicits laughter from the audience. One character in particular, professional basketball player Latrell Spencer, embodies the theme of objectification. Upon his appearance in the film, at the first social gathering that the agents experience while dressed as white women, a fan approaches Latrell with the commendation, “Great game last night, Latrell” to which he responds, “That’s what I do, baby” (Wayans). At this point, he suggests that his strength lies in performing well athletically. Another instance of the film supports this claim; when Kevin introduces himself as Latrell to an attractive reporter in order to score a date with her, he echoes this statement, suggesting that it is a sort of catchphrase associated with
the basketball player. Latrell’s athletic qualities ultimately inspire white society to objectify him, and his response to the fan reifies the stereotype that black men are inherently more able-bodied. At the same time, this affirmation of objectification does not yield the same response as Chris’s predicament in *Get Out*. On the contrary, critics of *African American Review* maintain, “the Wayans brothers complicate the stereotypes precisely through their filmic exaggerations” (Yancy and Ryser 731). In other words, because Latrell is an intentional exaggeration of “the big, buff, bald dude” whom white society accepts because of his status as a professional athlete, he is not a stereotype intended to offend black viewers (Wayans). Rather, he serves as a way for the Wayans brothers to address racial objectification within society. Furthermore, placing the use of this stereotype in the hands of a director and actors who understand its implications and utilize it to the advantage of the minority subverts its typical use as an oppressor and establishes black hegemony.

Another commonality between the films is the theme of white entitlement. Throughout *Get Out*, the theme presents itself through characters such as the Armitages and their wealthy guests, who feel entitled to possess Chris and Andre’s bodies. The instances where the characters reveal these malicious intentions also expose their expression of white privilege; there are, however, many less-conspicuous examples throughout the film. The party scene is of particular interest; the Armitages’ guests confront Chris with their seemingly harmless conversation topics—which all relate to his race in some way—and attempt to gather information about his body and physical abilities while leaving him oblivious to their intentions. By assuming the tell-tale signs of white liberals—people who claim to be progressive yet cultivate racism through their ignorance and perceived irreproachability—the Armitages and their visitors are able to advance their scheme while remaining undetected by their targets. However, malicious intentions aside, the fact that these people feel as if they are qualified to establish commonalities with Chris based on his race reveals their perceived level of entitlement over his status as a minority.

In *White Chicks*, the agents’ first encounter with the Wilson sisters displays the socialites’ perception of their own entitlement.
As they are stepping off their private plane, the agents—whom the FBI has tasked with escorting the sisters to their hotel in the Hamptons—walk up to them to introduce themselves; before they can, one of the sisters, Tiffany, interrupts by stating contemptuously, “We already gave to the United Negro Fund” (Wayans). When Kevin explains, “We’re actually here to escort you ladies to the Hamptons,” their demeanor changes into one of relief, and they begin to treat the agents like servants; one tells Kevin where to pick up their bags, and the other demands Marcus to clean up after their dog, who has relieved himself in a carrying bag. As if their attitude toward the brothers was not evident, Marcus must sit in the back of the SUV with the luggage so that the Pomeranian can sit in the front passenger seat. Again, all of this is performed humorously; the sisters are exaggerations of the “young, white, upper-class female” stereotype. Kevin is entertained by the fact that his brother—whose comfort is evidently less important to the women than their dog’s—must sit in the back. While in the back of the car, before being thrust face-first into the rear windshield, Marcus declares “This ain’t right,” expressing the insensitivity of the situation by referencing a time when white people forced black people to sit in the back of the vehicle. Because the two women do not appear to see the fault in their entitled behavior, the film further emphasizes their ignorance. In fact, because they are so obviously ignorant—and throughout the remainder of the film, the extent of their simple-mindedness and their reification of the “dumb blonde” stereotype becomes apparent—viewers find themselves laughing at this scene, which would not be amusing in any other context.

While they appear only in a few scenes of White Chicks, the Wilson sisters serve as a fitting example of white entitlement within the film. Other than the scenes in which the actual characters appear, Kevin and Marcus portray their entitlement—or privilege—through their imitations of the sisters. In the first scene that the brothers emerge as the “white chicks” in public, they arrive at the Royal Hamptons Hotel, where a fellow FBI agent—undercover as a hotel employee—greets them. Because they consider this particular agent an unpleasant person whom they do not enjoy working with, they take advantage of their white masks and the privilege that they access through wearing them. Instead of acknowl-
edging the agent’s greeting with a response, Kevin says, “The bags are in the car, José” (Wayans). From this simple statement, Kevin—through Brittany’s likeness—places a racial stereotype on the Latino agent by assigning him a common Spanish name. The man attempts to correct them by telling them that his name is Gomez, to which one responds “Whatever” and the other thrusts a bag with the sisters’ dog into his arms and demands him to clean up the mess. In this way, the two reflect the first scene in which the Wilson sisters appear, where they express both their contempt toward Kevin and Marcus as well as their white privilege. In order to prolong their enjoyment in punishing their fellow agent, they refer to him both as “Rico suave” and “Julio” and ask him to teach the dog how to say “Quiero Taco Bell,” essentially likening him to the talking chihuahua from the chain’s commercials (Wayans). As Yancy and Ryser state regarding the matter, “In each case, the man of color is misnamed, relegated to insignificance, and reduced to a stereotype” (737). While the situation is problematic, Kevin and Marcus are, in the end, embodying the Wilson sisters and the women’s entitled attitudes toward the minority and the middle class. This demonstration also addresses the inability of the brothers to enact this type of behavior toward someone they consider a nuisance while in their own skin, without the protection of their white masks. As the subsequent scene indicates, white women can get away with these behaviors, which others—including people of color—cannot.

Once the two have entered the hotel, they approach the front desk, where they inform an employee—another FBI agent—of the successes of one sister’s breast enhancement procedure. The man asks for identification in the form of a credit card and a driver’s license. Once Kevin opens a wallet to reveal to the audience that they do not have fake IDs for their whiteface getup, he improvises by going on a tirade. “Credit card? ID?” he questions hysterically (Wayans). He continues: “I’m so frickin’ pissed”—reflecting a previous instance with the Wilson sisters where Brittany seethes over what she deems “the worst day of her life”—and, after another beauty enhancement anecdote, blames the man for causing her emotional distress (Wayans). When the agent attempts to recover the situation, she interrupts by announcing “I’m going to have a
BF” and her sister interjects “Oh my god, she’s going to have a bitch fit” (Wayans). She declares she will write a letter to the man’s superior, beginning it with “I am a white woman in America”; at this, the agent’s boss appears, and the women go on with their day without having to show identification, a process that all people would normally go through. From the brothers’ behavior in this scene—which is a flawless imitation of the actual Wilson sisters’ behavior earlier in the film—the two black men reap the benefits of a white woman’s privilege. At the same time, the Wayans brothers humorously stereotype the young women by discussing their extensive cosmetic surgical procedures, including the enhancement of their breasts, lips, and eyebrows. By doing this, the brothers depict the women as vain and wealthy enough to indulge their vanity. This illustration also reveals elite white society’s frivolous nature; by putting so much care into their appearances, the implication is that white people have nothing serious to worry about. Because the creators of the film typecast the film’s white characters as often as its black characters, the two groups are equalized.

Other significant examples of white privilege include the three women with whom the brothers establish relationships throughout their time undercover. These women—generically named Tori, Karen, and Lisa in order to convey their representation of the general “young, white, rich, and female” population—convey naivety and entitlement; yet, through the friendships they develop with Kevin and Marcus, they prove to be endearing characters. For this reason, viewers may excuse some of their behaviors while still acknowledging them as problematic. In one particularly problematic scene, the five women—the three friends, Kevin as Brittany, and Marcus as Tiffany—are riding in a car as one woman transitions the radio to a random station, where the song “The Realest Niggas” plays. Excited to hear a song they know after the women have played an unfamiliar tune—“A Thousand Miles,” a song that popular culture labels as “one of the whitest songs ever”—the brothers rap along. Forgetting that they are undercover in their white masks, the two use the colloquial language of the song, to the surprise of the white women around them. Karen interrupts them by hastily turning off the radio, turning around to them, and rebuking them with “Guys! I can’t believe that you just said that,” to which
Marcus responds in confusion, “Said what?” (Wayans). Realizing their mistake once Karen says matter-of-factly, “The n-word,” Kevin recovers the faux pas by remarking, “So? Nobody’s around” (Wayans). At this point, the other women look at one another, and Karen turns the radio on uncertainly. The women begin to rap along excitedly with no convictions about using the titular colloquialism. Through Kevin’s observation, he normalizes the once-offensive word, and the women feel as if they are allowed to use it.

The idea that a white person feels free to use the idioms and slang that belong to Black American culture once someone gives them permission reveals another aspect of white entitlement; that is, as *White Chicks* alludes, the white population often feels entitled to partake in cultures to which they do not belong, or to appropriate them. For instance, the three friends—all upper-class white women—know all the lyrics to the rap song “The Realest Niggas,” suggesting each of them have listened to it many times before, likely unbeknownst to their friends. This realization contradicts Karen’s disapproval of Kevin and Marcus’s use of “the n-word,” indicating that they typically listen to the song when alone and require condonation to rap to it amongst others (Wayans). Because of this recognition that each woman knows the words to the song yet does not acknowledge it publicly, the secret desire of these women to partake in black culture becomes evident. In fact, one explanation for this secrecy is that the women do not face association with the minority. By simply listening to rap music and styling their hair into cornrows—as Marcus does to Karen’s hair at a sleepover—the women can enjoy aspects of the culture that they favor without relinquishing their entitlement. A similar theme occurs in *Get Out*, where the Armitage family and their guests believe that they are entitled to treat their black victims’ bodies as hosts for their own consciousness. In this way, they desire the aspects of blackness that they perceive as beneficial—strength, speed, and other physical abilities—without the repercussions; because these people are members of upper-class society and all their friends and family are aware of the bodily transition, they do not face social isolation or other institutionalized disadvantages, such as poverty, nor do people associate them with the minority, a population group that they detest.
Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* and the Wayans brothers’ *White Chicks* are distinctly different films that establish a few commonalities about the subject of race. Both films acknowledge the presence of social issues such as white privilege and the objectification of the black body, though they address these topics by way of different genres. While Peele’s horror film depicts white entitlement as the precursor to a future of racial objectification in which elite white society targets the black race in order to perpetuate its own survival, the Wayans’ comedy employs the concept of white privilege as a means of satirizing elite society. The latter film does this by portraying white people as frivolous, egocentric, and ignorant. Not only this, *White Chicks* equates the two racial groups by targeting both in a series of jokes and stereotypes; viewers see this, for instance, when the character of Latrell refers to his physical superiority, or when Kevin and Marcus take advantage of their white masks in order to obtain special privileges. While some may view the film as problematic in that it appears to reify certain stereotypes that society uses to harm the minority, the goal of the Wayans brothers in utilizing these stereotypes is not to persecute or torment but rather to acknowledge society’s faults and address these faults while making audience members—that is, white women, black men, and everyone in between—laugh at themselves in the process.

**WORKS CITED**


Notes on Contributors

Vanesa Blanks is an English major and history minor from Covington, Georgia. She loves to read, write, play games, and enjoy the company of the people she cares most about. After graduation, she will continue her education as she pursues a master’s degree in history with a concentration in public history. After graduation, she hopes to work in the public history field to help record overlooked histories and bring those histories to life for the world to appreciate.

Hannah Brooks is an English major with a concentration in education. After graduating, she hopes to pursue a career teaching literature to high schoolers. She would like to continue her education by getting a Masters in Educational Leadership, and continue onwards for a doctorate degree. She hopes to one day become a principal and positively impact the lives of many students.

Remetria Aeriel Brooks, pictured with her family, is originally from Woodbury, Georgia but relocated to Fayette County while she was still young. In Spring 2019, she will be graduating with a B.A. in English while also minoring in Psychology. She has a passion for kids, helping the community and also fishing. After she graduates, she would like to continue her education in Counseling. She would like to thank Jesus Christ, her parents, and also Dr. Stacy Boyd for providing her with this opportunity.
Raven Holmes is an English Education major with a minor in Business Administration originally born in Kansas City, KS. After receiving her undergraduate degree, she will continue to work with special needs students at a private school centrally located within Buckhead, Atlanta, GA. In August of 2019, she will be attending The University of Kansas in hopes of receiving a M.S.E. in Secondary Special Education and Transitioning. Along with teaching, Raven plans to own a franchise business, travel the world, and start her own special needs tutoring service. She would like to thank God, her parents, as well as her family and friends for encouraging her throughout her college career.

Marina Jackson is an English major and education minor from Marietta, Ga. She loves to write, read, and run in her spare time. After graduating, she hopes to teach 6th and 7th grade English at her home middle school, Dickerson. She hopes to obtain her master’s degree in either the English or education area. She will be working as an intern in her final block of student teaching and is ready to make an impact on the 8th graders that she will instruct.

Thomas Jordan is an English major and Philosophy minor from Carrollton, Ga. He is the head coach of debate at Riverwood International Charter School and has the privilege of working with some of the brightest students in the state. He would like to thank Saya, Julia, and the rest of his students for always keeping him in check. He hopes to work in education
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Aaliyah Miles is an English Major with a minor focus in education. After undergraduate school she hopes to first work in schools to help educate the youth. She then hopes to go to graduate school for Mass Communications and further her career by later working in Public Relations. She is very open-minded about where the future takes her with her studies and worldly experience.

Marisa Sorensen Mount is an English major and education minor from Temple, GA. She loves to read, write, learn, and teach. After graduating, she hopes to work in a public school system, teaching American Literature and/or a writing course to high schoolers. She aims to pursue a Masters and possibly a doctorate degree. She is very excited to share with her students what she has learned during undergraduate studies.

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Alissa Wall is from Rockmart, Georgia. She graduates Fall 2018 with a B.A. in English. Although she has a passion for literature and loves to read and write, she plans to pursue a graduate degree in speech-language pathology in order to help young boys and girls with speech impairments. In the future, she also hopes to continue her study of other languages so that she can explore the globe with her future husband. She would like to thank her younger siblings for keeping her inner child alive and her fiancé, who has always encouraged her writing and motivated her to pursue her ambitions.