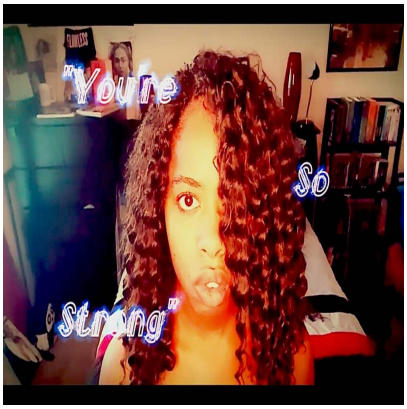


The Twerking Academic: â??Strong Black Womanâ?•, a Multimedia Autoethnography

Description

The AutoEthnographer

The Twerking Academic: â??Strong Black Womanâ?•, a Multimedia Autoethnography

Artistâ??s Memo

Some are born strong, some achieve strength, and some have strength thrust upon them. The more ego-driven side of me would love to declare that strength was and is an innate trait. My more honest and realistic self has to admit that my strength is the result of some rather aggressive thrusting upon my person.

But at what age does a Black woman learn that it is her job to be strong? At what age do we hear that our superpower is to endure? For me, the answer is seven years old when my own Mr. Freeman made himself known in my life. Now that is a subject for another day, another time, another column (maybe never), but I mention it to emphasize that I, and many others, have been carrying the weight of being the strong Black woman for longer than we have carried the official label of woman.

Life Lesson Alert: to occupy THIS body, strength is not an ask, it is a demand.

And what does it mean to be a strong Black woman beyond that tender age of seven? It has meant several things all at once. It means there isnâ??t a lot of room for me to be vulnerable in public spaces because vulnerable Black women leave themselves open to mockery and/or dismissal. I have learned to not expect empathy (e.g. Megan thee Stallion getting shot, Rihanna being abused).

It means that others disregard and minimize my physical and emotional pain. It means that I must be a tireless mouthpiece for injustice for everyone around me with little expectation of genuine reciprocity

(*stares pointedly at Black men and White feminists throughout history and current day*). And it means I must forever be bold, never shy or reserved. But alsoâ?¦not too bold because then I am aggressive and intimidating. It means when someone needs help, the expectation is that I answer the call in some form or fashion even when it comes at the expense of myself. I explore this last issue most prominently in the visual. But the video and this list just scrapes the surface of what it means to be a strong Black woman. Did it overwhelm you? Wellâ?¦me too.

MORE FROM
THE TWERKING ACADEMIC

The AutoEthnographer

The Twerking Academic: Visual Exploration of Being a Black Woman

The Twerking Academic explores the multilayered lived experience of Black womanhood using multimodal autoethnographic expression. Column installments include an audiovisual piece that focuses on exploring, processing, and communicating meaningful personal experiences that also offer a voice to the experiences of the wider cultural community. Audiences can view each audiovisual piece independently. A written memo supplements each piece explaining context and speaking to significant themes within the work. Themes explored include bodily autonomy, stereotypes, mental health, and the experience of the Black female academic.

The Twerking Academic seeks to probe and question the established idea of what constitutes an academic. It examines the prescriptive, limiting rules that often dictate terms of recognition as an academic by the community. The column title itself is a nod to this goal. It prompts audiences to reexamine preconceived notions surrounding respectability politics and scholarship. In addition, engaging with topics in an inclusive manner that transcends past barriers that have separated the academic and general population is fundamental to the columnâ??s working mission. I hope this column encourages members of the BIPOC community to build spaces that are authentically reflective of their personal style, culture, and preferred method of communication, and promote multimodal/audiovisual autoethnography as a viable investigative method.

References

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Category

1. All Content
2. Autoethnographic Art & Multimedia
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