The Twerking Academic: Bodily Autonomy & â??My Stuffâ?•, a Multimedia Performance

Description

The AutoEthnographer

The Twerking Academic: Bodily Autonomy & â??My Stuffâ?•, a Multimedia Performance

Artistâ??s Memo

Everything is bigger in Texas. That includes the misogynistic patriarchal values that seek to oppress women and subvert womenâ??s right to their bodies. Guess that tagline isnâ??t as catchy, huh? In light of the Texas Abortion Law, I had to confront that somebody did almost walk away with my stuff. And I am equal parts disgusted, exhausted, and pissed about it. At this point, these emotions are like an old familiar jacket that I don with alarming frequency. I thought it necessary that my daily donning of the emotions be evident in the visuals. This is why much of the the videoâ??s beginning is simply me moving through the start of the day. But then comes that special brand of rage and dejection that the patriarchy inspires by attempting to steal away with my bodily autonomy.

This topic does sound a collective alarm throughout the female community. But the blare has a particular strength to me as a Black woman considering the ugly history of enslaved women and enforced reproduction for commodification. As I behold my community, in all of our beautiful and diverse glory in terms of features and shades, I canâ??t help but wonder how many of us are here in our current forms as a result of someone elseâ??s imposed will upon a Black womanâ??s reproductive rights. Enslaved Black women were deliberately reduced to the level of breeding stock. Facing even a hint of that reduction in modern times just stirs a sharp and uncanny pain.

A Bodily Autonomy Choreopoem

So then, with my mind and heart resting on Americaâ??s long sordid history, I watch individuals attempting to walk away with the little stuff I have left to claim outright as my own: my body and my decisions. Ntozake Shangeâ??s words delivered by Loretta Devine speak to the jumble of feelings this whole Texas Law has unearthed within me. I considered speaking the words from Shangeâ??s choreopoem myself many times. However, I could never manage the right tenor of passion and pain that Devine delivers. And so, I let the expression of pain be the collaborative effort that it oftentimes is within the Black feminine community. It is, ultimately, symbolic of something very beautiful and very sad all at once.

MORE FROM
THE TWERKING ACADEMIC

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The Twerking Academic: Visual Exploration of Black Womanhood

The Twerking Academic is dedicated to exploring 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. They 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 how one is recognized 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.

Performed by Loretta Devine as Juanita, from *For Colored Girls â?? Original Soundtrack*, written by Ntozake Shange, Atlantic Music.

Category

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