

Project Description:

This project focused on inserting the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of black women in literary works. These works are primarily love poems where the black female body is often dismissed or erased and the white body is elevated. The first section, the poetry series, physically inserts the words and thoughts of black women or things that are said in response to the black female figure into these poems, basically rewriting the entire work. The second part, the list, is made up of the names of black women who were brutally murdered by police in the past couple of years. And the last section, the prose piece, is a compilation of what others think of the black female figure. Their words were then mashed together into a story, with any instance of the words 'black women' enlarged, bolded, then faded out to physically show what it feels like to have your existence erased.

Three writers that have influenced this project are Dodie Bellamy, David Buuck, and Vladimir Zykov. Dodie Bellamy's *Cunt Norton* inspired this entire piece. She rewrote the works of canon authors, who are often white males, and inserts sexuality—especially female sexuality—in these works. This is what was achieved in the poetry series. David Buuck served as inspiration for the blackout pieces, namely “Queen Anne’s Lace” and “Who is the Black Woman?” “Queen Anne’s Lace was done in a traditional blackout. The words blacked out were white and whiteness, and the corresponding “poem” were the words of Malcolm X. “Who is the Black Woman” is a different take of blackout poetry, since the words are not redacted entirely, but rather faded. Lastly, Vladimir Zykov gave the idea to employ strangers to write fifty words about any topic, this one being about the black female figure.

Drink to me only with thine eyes

Drink to me only with thine eyes,

You're so exotic looking

And I will pledge with mine;

I'd love a bit of that!

Or leave a kiss but in the cup,

And I'll not look for wine.

You're pretty for a black girl;

The thirst that from the soul doth rise

Doth ask a drink divine;

I'd LOVE a bit of that!

But might I of Jove's nectar sup,

I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,

I don't dance for any fucking body

Not so much honouring thee

I'm never allowed to be angry even when I deserve to be

As giving it a hope, that there

It could not withered be.

Don't dance for any fucking body

X Minus X

Even when your friend, the radio, is still; even when her dream, the magazine, is finished; even when his life, the ticker, is silent; even when their destiny, the boulevard, is bare;

And after that paradise, the dance-hall, is closed; after that theater, the clinic, is dark,

You are late, you nappy headed ho; what did you say? You nappy headed ho; did you really just say that? Is that what I think you said? What did you just say?

Still there will be your desire, and hers, and his hopes and theirs,

Your laughter, their laughter,

Your curse and his curse, her reward and their reward, their dismay and his dismay and her dismay and yours—

Neither her father, nor her mother, nor her sister, nor Jehovah her God, could shield her ultimately from people who felt her black body didn't belong never belonged wouldn't belong—

Even when your enemy, the collector, is dead; even when your counsellor, the salesman, is sleeping; even when your sweetheart, the movie queen, has spoken; even when your friend, the magnate, is gone, you hear

Black women are **NOT** your attack dogs.

Dreams

I

To dream of love, and, waking, to remember you:
As though, being dead, one dreamed of heaven, and woke
in hell.

At night my lovely dreams forget the old farewell:
Ah! wake not by his side, lest you remember too!

I (2)

We are fetishized and not taken seriously enough in the dating world;
I want to go on cute dates sometimes too!
I know I don't look good with my hair curled
The most unapologetically black thing you can do is be authentically you

II

I set all Rome between us: with what joy I set
The wonder of the world against my world's delight!
Rome, that hast conquered worlds, with intellectual might
Capture my heart, and teach my memory to forget!

II (2)

If yo girl got a fat ass

Niggas gone grab or slap her ass

No matter where she at

The Voice

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,

Saying that now you are not as you were

When you had changed from the one who was all to me,

But as at first, when our day was fair.

I tried to change

Closed my mouth more, tried to be softer, prettier, less awake.

I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet

I drank the blood and drank the wine

I bathed in bleach, and plugged my menses with pages from the holy book—

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,

Standing as when I drew near to the town

Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,

Even to the original air-blue gown!

If it's what you truly want, I can wear her skin over mine

Her hair over mine

Her hands as gloves

Her teeth as confetti

Her scalp, a cap

Her sternum, my bedazzled cane

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,
You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,
Heard no more again far or near?

We can pose for a picture, all three of us

Immortalized

You and your perfect girl

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
And the woman calling

Why can't you see me?

Why can't you see me?

Why can't you see me?

Queen-Anne's Lace

Her body is not so [redacted] as
anemony petals nor so smooth—nor
so remote a thing. It is a field
of the wild carrot taking
the field by force; the grass
does not raise above it.
Here is no question of [redacted],
[redacted] as can be, with a purple mole
at the center of each flower.
Each flower is a hand's span
of her [redacted]. Wherever
his hand has lain there is
a tiny purple blemish. Each part
is a blossom under his touch
to which the fibres of her being
stem one by one, each to its end,
until the whole field is a
[redacted] desire, empty, a single stem,
a cluster, flower by flower,
a pious wish to [redacted] gone over—
or nothing.

Who taught you to hate the texture of your
hair? Who taught you to hate the
colour of your skin? Who taught you
to hate the shape of your nose
and the shape of your lips? Who taught you to
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WHO IS THE BLACK WOMAN?

I think **black women** are under a tremendous amount of pressure and forced to work to overcome two marginalized positions in society. White people dehumanize the black body, and men (primarily cis straight men) dehumanize the female body, and since white, straight men run society, **black women** are consistently devalued. Yet the number of strong **black female** voices throughout history are a testament to a beauty and resilience that is inspiring.

As a white woman, I have so much respect for **black women**. It saddens me that they still have to fight against discriminations that comes from both their gender and their skin tone. Recently, I saw discrimination against a black writer who wanted to write a review on *Black Panther* for our program's magazine. It took multiple voices (of white women) to be heard when her plea to be published was ignored by others. Thankfully, in the end, we ended up getting her article published. No matter the role, **black women** are pigeon-holed. The black women I've known personally have all been very strong, thoughtful and complex ladies who deserve more recognition for their work. I think **black women** are some of the most overlooked, and underrepresented individuals in society.

Black women have contributed so much to history, science, and culture, and their contributions are, unfortunately, consistently ignored. I think **black females** are very resilient. They have to overcome racial biases and gender biases that constantly put them into boxes. Stereotypes tell them what they can and cannot do and if a **black woman** believes these stereotypes it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. To be a successful **black woman** you have to overcome these stereotypes even though society constantly tries to make them your reality.

Black women have to deal with a lot of shit and I have a lot of respect for them. Sometimes I feel like as a **black female** I have to work x100 harder for my community to accept me. Even though I got into university and I work hard, my parents still have this standard that as a female and as a **black female** from my culture I have to marry, know how to cook not because I am human but because I am female, and our culture says so. It is hard on me sometimes because they tell me they acknowledge my hard work, but it does not justify that they have this life built out for me that I am not sure if I want yet.

I am told to see a man as the head of the household, frankly I believe that is wrong and two people in a household should share joint responsibility. Sometimes I feel as if they force their religion and culture on me, and I am tired of the comments from not only my parents but from black males that if a **black woman** cannot be a mother, cook and take care of her family she is less of a woman. If she is too ambitious and wants much more in life than the basics she will scare men away because of how ambitious she is. It is a struggle that in my

community we have it though for being black and others in the community make it harder to be a female because they have these standards of how a **black female** should be because of her culture and practices.

BLACK WOMEN: They're human just like us.