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Blackness is Not a Monolith

Blackness is a way of being that transcends the narrow view of what white, hegemonic society believes it to be. It is complicated, transgressive, and is constantly evolving. Blackness is radical in its resistance as it overcomes the anti-Blackness inherited by Black bodies, ideas, and from mainstream society. For my essay, I will be focusing on this diversity of Blackness through the exploration of themes and a quote from our week five lessons. Furthermore, I will touch briefly on how Blackness, when it becomes solidarity allows for Black joy.

When Téa Mutonji says, “Blackness is really really not a monolith,” (00:25:51-00:25:53) in her guest lecture segment, it illustrates themes throughout the course. It is important to note that when applied on an international scale, Blackness is defined differently when viewed with a Western lens as opposed to other countries, such as Congo. However, Blackness as a monolith—a single way to be Black—needs to be debunked under the Western lens because, in its very nature, Blackness is versatile despite the restraints placed upon it by white supremacist systems. Blackness is radical in “doing [and being] something that scares” (Mutonji) both those who are actualizing it and those who oppress it, which means that it is a transgression against the norm.

Blackness should be explored through its versatility and diversity, which is everywhere in Western Black society. From the way that Black community is built around a hot comb (hooks 1), to the way that white supremacist ideals are internalized where “one Black woman

had looked into another Black woman's face and found her unacceptable" (Lorde 171), to the way Black motherhood is depicted, often under racist stereotypes.

However, white hegemonic ideas are challenged through the diversity of Blackness, which is seen within Beyonce's own work as both a Black feminist and a Black mother. While "the legacy of slavery...shapes the ongoing pathology of Black mothers" (Baade 44) as well as the very pathology of Blackness, Beyonce challenges that pathology and marks those experiences as more than a monolith of Black mothering. Through her Black motherwork, Beyonce showed not only her way of mothering, but her way of being mothered in her grammy performance and music—again, illustrating the diversity and celebration of Blackness.

Finally, it is important to understand that there is a versatility of Blackness for Black men as well, which is explored through the film *Moonlight* with Chiron's coming of age, the diversity of Black lives he touches and his own versatility when faced with barriers. In addition, the film emphasises that Blackness and "black life is about life touched and held" (Crawley) in the ways that are unique to the very core of what it means to be more than a monolith of Blackness.

Solidarity thrives through diversity of Blackness, and it is within that Blackness that Black joy can be actualized—not as a performative act of resistance, but as a way of being. Black joy is seen in Black relationships, Black motherwork, Black feminism, Black communities and within the many ways that Blackness is realized. By acknowledging this diversity, Blackness becomes a celebration that is, very much, not a resistance, nor a monolith, but is, instead, diverse, rich, and free of white supremacist hegemony and the constraints that hegemony places upon it.

Works Cited

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