
SPALDING

#000000 VIOLENCE

By

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ABSTRACT

#0**00000*** ***VIOLENCE*** is an exhibition that investigates the Black male body in contemporary culture and the (in)tangibility of Blackness through the exploration of athletics—specifically, the sport of basketball. The exhibition seeks to highlight racial and gender tensions in contemporary North American society. By staging symbolic rituals of confrontation referred to as performative violence, I seek to highlight differential power dynamics that ground relations between Blacks and non-Blacks. Through the use of industrial materials—dark, grey, heavy, strong—the exhibition aims to re-examine our contemporary understanding of Blackness and challenge the relationship of Blackness as a colour and shade, and Blackness as a societal or cultural construction of a group of people. The exhibition consists of a series of artworks that culminate in an installation that examines the Black male body's navigation within contemporary space. Utilizing the visual vernacular of basketball to delineate institutionalized violence, the works explore contemporary notions of Black masculinity. Through the process of repetition and the practice of multiplicity, the works highlight the contemporary struggles of the Black man in North American society.

Keywords: Violence, Black, Male, Body, Basketball, Multiplicity, Athletics, Race, Gender, Colour

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DEDICATION

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In Loving Memory of Richard Pryor…


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INTRODUCTION

#0000000 VIOLENCE is an exhibition that investigates the Black male body in contemporary culture and the (in)tangibility of Blackness through the material exploration of athletics—more specifically—the sport of basketball. The exhibition and thesis document explore issues of Black masculinity. The exhibition seeks to highlight racial and gender tensions by means of exploring the realm of athletics as a specific mode of communication through which I seek to produce social transformation, by staging symbolic rituals of confrontation known as performative violence. Through the use of industrial materials—dark, grey, heavy, strong—the exhibition aims to re-examine our contemporary understanding of Blackness and challenge the relationship of Blackness as a colour and shade, and Blackness as a societal or cultural construction of a group of people. The exhibition focuses on a binary of Blacks and Whites to accommodate the scope of this project. The pervasiveness of US imperialism and the ways it is circulated through media underscores the premise of the exhibition. Through the process of repetition and the practice of multiplicity, the works highlight the contemporary positioning of the Black man in contemporary society.

#000000 VIOLENCE is an exhibition that takes place at YYZ Gallery. The title of the exhibition, *#000000 VIOLENCE*, makes reference to the computer code #000000, which directly translates as the colour black. The title simultaneously reads as "black violence" while also reading as "zero violence" through the process of greying out all of the zeros except one. The exhibition consists of four components. The first, an installation —*Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams),* which consists of sixty solid concrete basketballs, weighing roughly about thirty pounds each. Each basketball is uniquely made to look deflated in its own way. The second, also an installation—*The Condition of The Black Man: I Am Series*, comprised of two human sized basketball nets made completely out of repurposed steel and rusted chain. The third, an installation—*99 Problems (By Default)*, which consists of the names of unarmed Black men in the United States, killed by police officers in the year 2015. The last, *Defence//Offence (Tension)*, is two industrial orange ratchets that have been woven into one another, that stretches horizontally from one end of the gallery to the other.

Background to the Exhibition

#000000 VIOLENCE provides a critical examination of Blackness in North American contemporary culture. The exhibition aims to highlight the ways in which the Black body is both present and absent in our contemporary culture through the use of performative violence. The violent processes involved with making the work, i.e. punching,

lifting, slamming, began as an by investigation into the internal conflicts I had with my racial identity, and the ways in which I present my identity to others. Much of this conflict stemmed from growing up in the predominately White suburban city of London Ontario. The demographics of London, Ontario consistently made me one of the only Black bodies in my classes for the majority of my adolescent life. It was extremely difficult to find myself and claim my own identity while constantly being reminded that I was other—that I did not belong. I turned to American pop and hip-hop culture to formulate my understanding of Blackness. My summers spent in Chicago also informed my understanding of Blackness. For this reason, I grounded my thesis within a North American context, with the understanding that I developed my Black identity under the influence of African-American culture.

This constant feeling of otherness I felt growing up in London, Ontario, fostered a gap in my understanding of who I was, and who people thought I was. The physical signifier of my skin colour has made me both a present body and absent in public spaces. I have understood my body both as visible and invisible, as a subject and an object. In turn, this has made me constantly consider my Black body in relation to other bodies within space. I have considered the ways in which my Black body causes other bodies in space to recognize themselves. I have become hyper-aware of the ways in which my Black body is perceived in particular settings. I have become hyper-aware of how my Black body can

lose its individuality—and become nothing more than the generic symbol of negativity known to some as *Blackness*. However, I believe that Blackness is not a fixed identity, but rather a collective of individual identities that cannot be predetermined, categorized, and or stereotyped as one—nor as *other*. In the 1992 text, *What is Black in Black Popular Culture*, cultural theorist Stuart Hall notes:

> The point is not simply that, since our racial differences do not constitute all of us, we are always different, negotiating different kinds of differences—of gender, of sexuality, of class. It is also that these antagonisms refuse to be neatly aligned; they are simply not reducible to one another; they refuse to coalesce around a single axis of differentiation. We are always in negotiation, not with a single set of oppositions that place us always in the same relation to others, but with a series of different positionalities. Each has for us its point of profound subjective identification. (Hall 476)

It is these collective shared experiences that inform my research and nurture my curiosity. My thesis proposes that social, political, and economic conditions shape our understanding of the experiences of others. By reproducing the experiences of others through art, we may negate strategies that directly avoid the engagement of racial discourse.

Method and Rational

My approach investigates performative violence as a method of reclaiming power for the Black body. To regain power, I construct representations of the Black body, only to then disentangle them. This disentanglement occurs through different methods that require the bodies of others. Some methods involve physically navigating one's body around

representational objects of Blackness (i.e. viewers navigating around *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)*), while others involve pairing the physical Black body with a representation of it —having the disentanglement happen from within the representational object (i.e. the performance involved with the piece *I Am Series*). Other methods include being no more than a bystander to performative violence (i.e. observers of the performance).

To construct these representations that stand in for the Black body, I use processes that involve repetition—such as weaving and casting—in order to mimic the generic representation of the Black body. I select these processes not only for their generic qualities, but also for their instances of difference. Casting concrete is a rather temperamental process. Despite similar variables involved in preparing a cast, there is always the possibility of dissimilarity with the outcome of each cast—*a chance for individuality*. This instance in the casting process, is reflexive in the conceptual concerns regarding the multiplicity of Blackness. When performing these repetitive tasks, I attempt to exert my entire body into the process to the point of complete fatigue. I attempt to engage in processes that investigate my own personal experiences of racism and racialization as a Black woman.

Questions

My line of questioning assumes that particular aspects of Blackness are tangible, while others are not. I began to question whether or not Blackness could be measured as a material? I questioned if Blackness carried any weight, like Whiteness did with privilege? This made me question what made a person or an object Blacker than something or someone else? It was vital for me to question the ways in which the Black body navigates both as an object, and as a body with agency. I ask:

1. What makes Blackness tangible or intangible?

2. How do I unhinge the negative associations accorded to the colour black from Black people?

3. How does the Black male subject exercise his agency?

4. How may I avoid strategies that disengage with issues of racial discourse?

"I think the only way we break down barriers, is to break them down in our own individual lives, to not self-segregate, and live in a polarized colony."

—Al Sharpton

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONDITION

The exhibition, *#000000 VIOLENCE* emerged out of a small body of work titled *The Assassination of My Character*, which I completed in my first year of study at OCAD University. This particular body of work focused on how my social surroundings slowly but surely, began to make me feel like my Blackness lacked dimensionality. Moreover, that Blackness in *general*, was not a multiplicity of individual experiences but rather a collective—*one*. One experience, one representation, one identity. I knew this could not be true, as my Blackness differed from the Blackness of my father, that of my brothers, and of my friends. As a Black woman, my experiences are not the same, yet somehow I am considered the same as another Black individual by non-Blacks. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall discusses the multivalent nature of Blackness in the following statement:

> What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category 'black'; that is, the recognition that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature. (Hall 444)

I questioned, what makes my Blackness *different* from the Blackness of others? Furthermore, how is my Black experience perceived by non-Blacks. Using the framework

of intersectionality—a sociological theory regarding how factors such as class, ability, race, gender, and sexual orientation overlap and are experienced simultaneously. I brought together both my internalized experiences as a woman and my experiences of Blackness, to bridge an understanding of how ability, class, gender, and race shape how we are perceived as Black people. Drawing on the social conditions that shape everyday relations between Blacks and non-Blacks, I have used this experience to assist me in developing my argument that seeks to formulate an understanding of each other and ourselves through experience. In many ways strategies that avoid dealing with issues of race and the fallacy of race are in opposition to what this project proposes. I advocate for direct engagement of these difficult issues as a way to bring awareness about race and racism. In the context of this thesis, I call this *The Condition Experience*.

In the chapter *Racial Inequality*—a part of the larger text *American Society: How It Really Works* (2011)— race is defined as "a social category, not a biological one. While racial classifications generally use inherited biological traits as criteria for classification, nevertheless how those traits are treated and how they are translated into the categories we call "races" is defined by social conventions, not by biology" (Rogers and Wright 1). Through my observations, I came to the understanding that a significant number of non-Blacks have difficulty comprehending the experiences of racism that Blacks encounter, mainly due to the weight of their white privilege, whether recognized, or unrecognized.

“White privilege is an institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions” (Kendall 1). I began to contemplate the lack of understanding of one another’s racial positions and the factors that contribute to this issue. The real issue, is the disconnect is between what Whites know about racism, and what Blacks actually experience. Much of the collective misinterpretation surrounding Black representation is due to the notions of ‘*white privilege*’ and ‘*black progress*.’ Black progress grounds itself in the belief that education is the key to the progression of class status and liberation for Blacks. In 1903, WEB Du Bois wrote a collection of essays, *The Souls of Black Folks*, in which he coined the terms “double consciousness” and “the veil”. In the text, Du Bois explains how African-Americans in the United States live with two conflicting identities that cannot amalgamate. He describes this notion as the Black experience and the Black identity. Working simultaneously with this notion of double consciousness is the veil. In the fourth essay, "Of the Meaning of Progress,” Du Bois speaks to his experience as a school teacher in the South and posits an important concept now known as Black progress. Du Bois believed that education was the key to uplift African-Americans from their disempowered position to one of collective empowerment and liberation.

In the text, *Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race*, consultant for organizational change Frances Kendall,

emphasizes the lack of understanding of each other's racial conditions. She states, "While people of colour understand the necessity of being able to read the White system, those of us who are White are able to live out our lives knowing very little of the experiences of people of colour" (Kendall 4). Du Bois makes a similar distinction in that while Blacks are able to understand what life is like for people outside of and within their group, it is difficult for Whites to fully understand the Black experience.

I believe that in order for Whites to comprehend the experiences of "people of colour", it is vital for them to experience these conditions first hand. Although empathy can be a strong response, action is needed in addition to empathy. Throughout her text, *Understanding White Privilege,* Kendall outlines the ways in which white privilege perpetuates racism, and proposes insightful methods of disarming one's own privilege. Kendall states, "What we can and must do is work daily to combat our privilege by bringing to consciousness others' and our own, the system in which we are living" (Kendall 4).

To illustrate the psychological effects of racism, Jane Elliott, a teacher, lecturer, and diversity trainer, reveals the harsh truth regarding bigotry and prejudice in her psychological experiment, *Blue Eyes Brown Eyes* exercise. Developed shortly after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, Elliott created the controversial social exercise that defined participants as inferior or superior based upon their eye colour alone,

exposing them to the experience of being a minority. The exercise involved a group of volunteers from an array of ethnic backgrounds, ages, religions, genders, and sexual orientations. She divided the group in two sections: those that had blue eyes (the minority) and those that had brown eyes (the majority). She gave power to the brown eyed people, informing them that for the purpose of this experiment, they are to assume they are superior to the blue eyed group. The blue eyed group then entered the room and joined the brown eyed group, however, they are unaware that they had been labeled as inferior for the purpose of the experiment. Elliott's experiment sheds light on the macro issue of racism, making a connection between the systematic oppression of Blacks and the psychological effects it has on both groups. The experiment is described in the following way:

> Jane Elliott subjected students in her elementary class to systematic discrimination…After two days of this treatment, the blue-eyed group performed much more poorly on a simple math test than the advantaged group. The same experiment was conducted using adults with the same results. The experience of repeated social disrespect generates forms of stress, anxiety, and self-doubt that significantly undermine performance. (Rogers & Wright 16)

The results of Elliott's experiment mirror the results of the psychological effects that segregation and oppression have on Black people. Elliott's exercise is a step in the right direction in the discourse of racial politics, as the exercise negates strategies that avoid direct engagement with issues of racism. Confronting racial inequality, discrimination, and White privilege head on, Elliott's experiment simulates the condition lived by minorities, and applies this simulation to those who do not experience the condition. Throughout the

exercise, Elliott highlights and reveals the problematic issue of racial inequality and makes clear why White Privilege hinders the discussion surrounding race and racism.

The notion of white privilege has granted Whites societal advantages and entitlements beyond what is commonly experienced by non-Whites under the same social, political, and or economic circumstances. Complementing white privilege in the negation of racial equality is black progress. The notion of white privilege has emerged alongside the romanticized concept of black progress, devising a foundation for practices that grant majorities the ability to express pessimistic views regarding dominant groups. Minority groups are subjected to subtle racism because of the notion of progress, which emphasizes that Blacks should not complain about everyday racism, because they will eventually advance in society, allowing the privileged are able to express negative perspectives of minority groups without consequence. “Racism, of course, operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness” (Hall 446). It is the lack of acknowledgement of White privilege, alongside the charade postulation of Black progress, that aids in the practices of racism today.

As previously defined, White Privilege is a term used to describe societal advantages that benefit White people in Western society in ways that go beyond what is commonly experienced by non-Whites under the same social, political, or economic circumstances. “White people’s privileges are bestowed prenatally. We can’t *not* get them and we cannot give them away, no matter how much we do not want them” (Kendall 4). These privileges are unearned and are distributed based on values of the dominant group within society. According to American author, feminist and anti-racism activist Peggy McIntosh, Whites in a society considered culturally a part of the Western World, enjoy advantages that non-Whites do not experience. These may include cultural affirmations of one's own worth, presumed greater social status, and freedom to move, buy, work, play, and speak freely. McIntosh, discusses white privilege from her perspective as a White, middle-class American woman. McIntosh describes White Privilege as “an invisible weightless knapsack of assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks” (McIntosh 1).

The notion of white privilege also insinuates the right to assume the universality of one's own experiences, deeming others as different or exceptional while perceiving oneself as normal. Academic perspectives such as critical race theory and Whiteness studies utilize the notion of white privilege to analyze the ways in which racism and racialized societies affect the lives of White people.

> Nevertheless it is a mistake to think of racism as something that only affects the lives of African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and other racially defined "minorities". Racism has profoundly shaped American society and politics in ways that deeply affect the lives of White Americans as well, particularly the lives of working class and poor Whites, not just the lives of minorities. (Rogers & Wright 3)

Within the field of critical race theory, scholars such as Cheryl Harris and George Lipsitz have argued that "Whiteness" has historically been viewed as a form of property than as a racial characteristic. Moreover, it is an object which has intrinsic value that must be protected by social and legal institutions. Laws concerning race (from apartheid and Jim Crow constructions that legally separate different races to social prejudices against interracial relationships or mixed communities) serve the purpose of retaining certain advantages and privileges for Whites.

Although white privilege is hindering the possibility of equality, so is the contemporary notion of black progress. It is vital to provide a cursory history of black progress beginning with post-slavery, followed by W.E.B Du Bois, the Civil Rights movement, concluding with comedian Chris Rock's current notion of black progress in order to ground it contemporarily. Additionally, it is important to highlight the ways in which black progress currently debilitates the advancement of Blacks in North American contemporary society. The enslavement of Black people in the New World has hindered the full development of Black subjectivities and agency. Black progress is a concept that was

originally formulated by Blacks that suggested that education was the key to the progression of Blacks in society. Contemporarily, the notion of black progress has been adopted by non-Blacks to ironically suggest that Blacks are advancing forward towards equality—due to hip-hop culture, athleticism and over all fame—to negate contemporary practices of racism. It is crucial to note, however, that many Black athletes and hip-hop artists are holding wealth, but not holding power. Many Black celebrities receive fame and economic mobility, but they do not have power. They remain radicalized others, despite having wealth. Author Gamel Abdel-Shehid discusses the relationship between capitalism, race, and sports. He states, "Thinking of sports as a state of nature is not benign. It is often the mythical support for a whole host of foundational myths of capitalism—equal opportunity, the goodness of the state, racial hierarchy, gender separation, and heterosexuality." (Abdel-Shehid 17) It has been exceptionally difficult for African descendants to occupy positions of power, with a prominent exception being the triumphant inauguration of President Obama.

Hip-hop artist Ben Haggerty (commonly known as Macklemore) states in his 2016 single *White Privilege ii*—the follow up to his 2005 single *White Privilege*— "White supremacy isn't just a White dude in Idaho//White supremacy protects the privilege I hold// White supremacy is the soil, the foundation, the cement and the flag that flies outside of my home//White supremacy is our country's lineage, designed for us to be indifferent."

Throughout the song, Macklemore illustrates the ways in which White Privilege has grounded itself not only in hip-hop music—a genre deeply rooted in Black culture—but also in our day to day interactions. The song articulates his own internal conflict and how he is supposed to react and feel about racial injustices as a White man. Macklemore proceeds, "So what the fuck has happened to my voice if I stay silent when Black people are dying//Then I'm trying to be politically correct?" Moreover, he deliberates on his own position and how his privilege grants him a greater status in pop-culture in comparison to other, Black, hip-hop artists. He goes on to state in the song, "Where's my place in a music that's been taken by my race//Culturally appropriated by the White face?//And we don't want to admit that this is existing//So scared to acknowledge the benefits of our White Privilege." (Macklemore, 2005) White privilege allows White people to occupy positions of power, automatically gaining access to societal structures.

The notion of black progress can be traced back to the post-slavery period. The era of slavery was a traumatic period in the lives of Black people, as it broke down not only the Black body, but also the Black mind. The Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 changed the status of enslaved people from slave to free. The emancipation of slaves brought with it the opportunity to reconstruct Blackness in America —a rebuilding of people. Following the post-slavery era, was W.E.B Du Bois' contribution to both the Civil Rights era and the foundation of National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. Proceeding in his footsteps, was the Civil Rights movement beginning in 1954 with activists like Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Nina Simone, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and more. Throughout these times of hardships, battling inequality and the right to freedom, Blacks have constantly been asked to count their blessings as they progress.

In the current moment, black progress operates as an offensive mechanism deployed by non-Black that allows every day racism to occur. I have been in a number of situations in which I have responded that a remark or action made by a non-Black person was in fact racist, and in turn, have been told not to complain and reminded of my Black progression in society. The notion of black progress is now used as tool to negate instances of racism.

American actor, comedian, screenwriter, and television producer, Chris Rock states, "nicer White people are America's real racial progress, not Obama becoming president" (Rich). Rock proceeds to illustrate that, "the real steps forward on racial equality in America have been made among the shifting and more respectful attitudes of White people in the U.S., not the advancing social standing of Black Americans." (Rich) In an interview with Frank Rich of *Vulture*, Rock is asked to share his opinions regarding the progress of Black people. Rock states, "when we talk about race relations in America or racial progress, it's all nonsense. There are no race relations. White people were crazy. Now

they're not as crazy. To say that black people have made progress would be to say they deserve what happened to them before." (Rich) This attitude that Blacks are to be blamed for the existence of racism is not new. Abdel-Shehid in his notes John Hoberman, professor of Germanic languages within the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, in discussion of the existence of racism. He states, "Essentialist readings of race are the epistemological ground on which conservatives like Hoberman can continue to reproduce the fiction that race is real and binary, and moreover that black folks are to blame for the existence of racism." (Abdel-Shehid 22)

Chris Rock distinctly notes, "to say Obama is progress is saying that he's the first Black person that is qualified to be president. That's not black progress. That's *white* progress. There's been Black people qualified to be president for hundreds of years" (Rich). This statement made by Rock, although witty, is actually quantifiable. If President Obama had been born 50 years earlier, he would absolutely have no chance of becoming president. According to Gallup, in 1958, only 38% of Americans claimed they would vote for a Black presidential candidate; in 2012 however, the number increased to 96% (Newport et al). Rock's argument reasons that this increase of 58% of Americans who would vote for a Black presidential candidate did not happen because Blacks miraculously became smarter, and, consequently, more qualified in comparison to Whites. But rather, that many White

Americans abandoned their conspicuous prejudices that prevented intelligent, qualified Blacks in the past from getting ahead.

The concept of white privilege grants societal advantages that are unearned and are not extended to those outside of the White race. These unjust privileges make racial hierarchy inescapable, as Blacks are undoubtedly made aware of their racial inferiority. In the 1952 text, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Afro-Caribbean philosopher Frantz Fanon states that the Black man is faced daily by "…the White man who had woven him out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories..." (Fanon 111). Both notions of progress and privilege work in ways that ultimately oppress Blacks in society. These notions produce a platform for subtle expressions of racism, that employ covert rhetorical methods. "This includes a wide range of specific practices: employers not hiring or promoting someone on the basis of race; landlords only renting to people from certain racial groups; banks making it more difficult for racial minorities to get loans; salespeople in a store treating African-American customers differently from White customers; and so on" (Rogers & Wright 12). Rogers and Wright go on to explain that, "…often this kind of private discrimination is very difficult to detect because it occurs informally, behind the scene in the inter-personal encounters and decisions made in everyday life" (Rogers & Wright 12). These methods are embedded in our contemporary culture in ways that are furtive. To a degree, our society has become

immune to racial injustice, as Blacks, among many minority groups, have no other option than to comply with racial hierarchy, discrimination, and inequality.

"The essential tragedy of being Black and male is our inability, to define ourselves without the stereotypes the larger society imposes upon us, and through various institutional means perpetuates and permeates within our entire culture."

—Manning Marable

CHAPTER TWO

BLACKNESS:
CHARACTERISTICS & THE (IM)MATERIAL BLACK [MALE] BODY

The small body of work, *The Assassination of My Character*, from which *#000000 VIOLENCE* emerged, illuminates that the Black individual is often viewed as a single negative caricature. This led me to create the piece *Multiplicity, Muted*. (Fig. 1) *Multiplicity, Muted* examines the relationship between Blackness as a colour and shade, and Blackness as a societal and cultural representation of a group of people. It aims to separate and disentangle the negative stereotypes associated to the notion of Blackness, by removing the term from the group of people and by highlighting the various Black identities that exist within our contemporary understanding of Blackness. The installation was constructed using a four by eighteen foot piece of black cotton. I used assorted black fabrics—corduroy, silk, velvet, pleather—to construct a camouflage pattern upon one side of the black cotton fabric. The piece was installed so that the front of the work—nothing but a large piece of black cotton—faced the viewer first. (Fig. 2) It is not until the viewer moves towards the back of the artwork, that the assorted fabrics are revealed to them.

In this chapter, I further examine the relationship between blackness as a colour, and Blackness as a group of people. First, I look at the connotations and definitions associated with colours and the historic fear of colour—chromophobia. Next, I use hip-hop

culture to examine Black experiences in relation to the Black male body and its image in contemporary culture. Following this, I examine the ways in which the Black male body can be understood as a performative object. Lastly, I focus on how the Black male body is viewed in contemporary North American society, as a violent object by many non-Blacks. For the purpose of this paper, the capitalization of Black and White refers to the racial category of people, while the non-capitalization of black and white refers strictly to colour/ the pigment.

Blackness as a Colour vs. Blackness as a Group of People

In the 1997 text *Chromophobia*, artist and writer David Batchelor reasons that a chromophobic instinct is one that is a fear of fraudulence of contamination through colour. Applying Batchelor's theory of Chromophobia to race related issues of miscegenation and distinctions of colour representation, has allowed me to reconsider the representation of Blackness in contemporary culture. Batchelor states, "chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity." (Batchelor 22) This isolation of colour outlined in Batchelor's description of chromophobia is evident in society's isolation of Blackness and the Black male body. This is evident in the fear of the Black male in society. This is also evident in the historic fear of miscegenation. "Colour is made out to be the property of some foreign body—usually the feminine, the Oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the

vulgar, the queer or the pathological… colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic." (Batchelor 22-23) By making colour foreign or other, we denounce the value of colour to something tainting the purity of Whiteness.

> Heaven is white; that which gets closest to God - the Parthenon, the Idea, Purity, Cleanliness - also [that which] sheds its colour. But for Le Corbusier, ornament, clutter, glitter and colour were not so much signs [[of primitive 'degeneracy', as they had been for Loos, as they were the particularly modern form of degeneration that we now call kitsch. (Batchelor 45)

The notion of the superiority of the White race as espoused by ethnologist Arthur De Gobineau in the nineteenth century gained traction in European thought and was used to oppress non-Whites. Race and the lack of civility became coupled in the language used to describe 'other' peoples. We can see how language often shapes our understanding of racial difference in the 1992 film, *Malcolm X*—starring Denzel Washington—where the hierarchal distinction between White and Black was clearly defined in an early scene in the film. In the scene, Malcolm X sits down with another inmate at the prison to read the dictionary definition of Black and White. He reads the definition of Black: "destitute of light; enveloped in darkness; utterly dismal or gloomy; as the future looked *black*. Soiled with dirt; foul; sullen; hostile—forbidding as a dark day. Foully or outrageously wicked; black cruelty, indicating disgrace or dishonour, or culpability." (Webster's Dictionary) This definition was paired with representations of Black men. He reads the definition of White:

"of the colour of pure snow; reflecting all the rays of the spectrum; opposite of *black*. Free from spot or blemish; innocent; pure. Without evil intent. Harmless; honest; square-dealing; honourable." This distinction is extremely important, as the dictionary definition of Black and White has hardly changed since the early 1950s.

The current Webster's definitions of black and white are as follows:

black
adjective \ˈblak\
: having the very dark colour of coal or the night sky
: very dark because there is no light
: of or relating to a race of people who have dark skin and who come originally from
Africa
: dirty, soiled <hands *black* with grime>
: thoroughly sinister or evil : wicked <a *black* deed>
: indicative of condemnation or discredit <got a *black* mark for being late>
: the opposite of *white*

white
adjective \ˈhwīt, ˈwīt\
: having the colour of fresh snow or milk
: light or pale in colour
: of or relating to a race of people who have light-coloured skin and who come originally
from Europe
: free from colour
: free from spot or blemish
: not intended to cause harm <a *white* lie>
: the opposite of *black*

What is particularly troubling, is not the negative connotations associated with the *colour* black, but rather, the fact that the colour black and its negative connotations are then still

associated with Black *people* in 2016. The dictionary expresses a social reality that is constructed through language. This association negates both the individuality and agency of a Black person, as it clusters all Blacks into a negative image evocative of harm, dirt, and deceit. Given the dictionary's definition of terms like 'black' and 'white', singer Gil Scott-Heron questions what the definition of soul would be in the dictionary, in the lyrics, "What does Webster say about soul?" given that soul is a particular form of Black expressive culture. (Scott-Heron, "Comment #1") The power of language is so strong that it has the ability to construct our understanding of identity socially, culturally, and politically. The juxtaposition of the multiple definitions of black is alarming for a number of reasons, one of which I had to confront at an early age. The dictionary is an educational tool, and, so, as a 6 year old, I went to it when faced with the first questions about my Blackness. It was the first day of the 2nd grade and a boy in my class told me that I was going to hell for being Black. My first thought was confusion. It is strange to think of it now, but back then I did not know I was Black. My parents did not introduce the concept of race to me as a young child. This was my first instance of Black experience.

Granted, I had encountered instances in which my otherness was clearly presented to me—blonde-haired girls laughing at my curly black hair, or being called 'chocolate' or 'poop' coloured. I understood I was different from most of the children at school, but never was I classified as *Black*. The first time I read the definition of the word 'black', I found

that not only was it a colour—but it was a *bad* colour. A colour that defined me and people like me as *bad* people. I read all the negative connotations associated with my Blackness—deceitful, evil, dirt—and became intrigued by the last definition of black: the *opposite* of white. Naturally, I flipped to the back of the dictionary to read the definition of white, surprised to find the exact opposite of black. I read about how white is pure, innocent, free of harm. This experience stayed with me for a large part of my life. It generated a type of self-hatred. I was not mad that I am Black, I was mad that non-Blacks had a particular definition of black/Black.

It is problematic that the association of Blackness accompanies such negative connotations. The negative effects correlating between the colour black and Black people are evident in social constructions of Blackness such as minstrel shows. Jackson notes, "It was important for early filmmakers to show audiences that Black minstrel characters could never resemble Whites because, as their skin colour symbolically indicates, they were so distantly Black." (Jackson 77) The practice of minstrelsy positioned the Black body as an inferior object in relation to White bodies. "As countless studies of race films have already indicated, the darkening of the skin prior to minstrel shows was designed to psychologically affect the way audiences saw Blacks. The correlation between heinous criminal behaviour and dark skin complexion was made clear." (Jackson 77) These negative connotations are nearly inseparable from the Black body. Consequently, these

negative implications have made it difficult for Black individuals to have their own characteristics, their own personalities, as it is almost always understood as the *same* and as *other* in relation to the White body.

The Black Body

Using a number of scholarly texts, this section examines the ways in which the Black body is enunciated, represented, and identified through the examination of the work of performance artist Adrian Piper. I analyze the piece *Calling Card* performances (1986-1990) in relation to race, identity politics, and the triple person consciousness in order to uncover a new assertion of Blackness. More importantly, I look at the ways in which Piper's work debunks essentialist notions of Blackness. There has been a drastic adjustment in attitudes surrounding the celebration of negritude within Black culture. No longer is it the gaze of non-Blacks that remind Blacks of their Blackness, but Black people themselves who have taken pride in the richness of their skin tone. In the past, the Black man has been made hyper-aware of his Blackness in the most negative light, instilling in him the desire for a serum of denegrification, as theorized by Algerian-French philosopher Frantz Fanon in his text *Black Skin, White Masks*, in 1952. This hyper-awareness, however, has been eradicated and reborn in the foundation of Black culture. The hyper-awareness of Blackness now negates the dreadful consciousness of the Black body that once existed. Triumphantly, this irrefutable realization of Blackness has been reborn with dignity and

jubilance, as it no longer attempts to conceal its skin. Through the eyes of the Black individual, Blackness is no longer the physical metonymy of negativity.

From 1986 to 1990, Piper engaged in what could be considered a social intervention, with the work of her *Calling Card* performances. The guerrilla performances involved Piper handing cards to people she encountered who made racist remarks in front of her at social events, such as dinners and cocktail parties. *Calling Card #1* (Fig. 3) displays Piper's confrontational message.

Piper strategically uses the seemingly passive gesture of handing out cards, as a transmitter to confront and address the issue of everyday racism. The *Calling Card* texts speak with serene sensibility, allowing those receiving it to internally reflect upon their actions. Piper's *Calling Card* performances challenge and reject an assertion made by Fanon in his text *Black Skin, White Masks.* He asserts that the black individual experiences a complex psychological conflict and that the negative implications of Blackness are that Blackness is internalized as the physical metonymy of negativity. Piper's overt and proud statement of her Blackness negates the negative implication of the Black body. Fanon states in the chapter "The Negro and Psychopathology" that, "the Negro makes himself inferior. But the truth is that he is made inferior." (Fanon 115) We are to comprehend that the root of this inferiority begins with the White man's gaze. It is the experience of the White man's

gaze that makes it strenuous for the Black man to develop his identification, especially in relation to his body and mind. Fanon believes that it is the gaze of the White man that created within the Black man a distressing consciousness of his own Black body.

Fanon notes that the Black body is internalized negatively, both by the White man and consequently by the Black man. This causes the Black man to desire a serum for denegrification—to bleach the source of his Blackness, thereby relieving him of the burden of his Black body. By stating in her *Calling Card* that she is Black, Piper negates the notion of the Black body, as the physical metonymy of negativity. Moreover, by physically handing the *Calling Card* to people, she is embracing her Black body by making aware the presence of her Blackness. The importance of Piper's work is that it highlights the instability of phenotype/skin as a marker of race as she is White passing. Piper's physical gesture acknowledges that the viewer internalizes the Black body negatively, however, by stating firstly that she is Black, Piper is negating that she herself thinks her Blackness is bad. Moreover, she is negating the racist attitudes of the White man, that Fanon claims the Black man adopts until he recognizes the unreality of these beliefs. This relates to Fanon's assertion that the Black man is hyper-aware of his physicality, while at the same time aware of the gazer's definition of who he is, and who he must be. Piper revokes the gazer's definition of who she is and who she must be with her *Calling Card* performances. By

asserting her Blackness she is defines herself, rather than allowing the White man's gaze to define her.

In the chapter "The Fact of Blackness," Fanon speaks of the process of identity formation and the phases in which the self travels through to realize its existence. Fanon explicates that when the Black man becomes aware of his body in the third person, he has entered the phase of a triple person consciousness. He states, "I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other…and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared." (Fanon 84) He distinguishes here that like any substance, he as a body occupied space. Additionally, he illustrates that when he proceeded toward the other, he proceeded as a part of Blackness, not as an individual.

A more contemporary perspective on the Black body is found in the text, *Scripting the Black Masculine Body: Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics in Popular Media*, in which author Ronald L. Jackson illustrates the ways in which the Black body has circulated within the United States from blackface cinema, to contemporary hip-hop and film. He examines how Blackness has been socially constructed, governed and understood in relation to popular media. Jackson analyzes Black body stereotypes while providing possible solutions to liberate the Black body from its state of containment in the contemporary moment. Quoting feminist philosopher Susan Bordo, Jackson states, "'the

body is . . . a medium of culture.' That is, the body is a direct translation of a cultural negotiation between ourselves and others." (Jackson 75) Jackson claims that when the body is inscribed,

> A palimpsest script emerges based on several considerations such as how we see ourselves, how others see us, and how others' perceptions influence how we define ourselves. If others' perceptions are their own fantasies and projections, do we respond by acting out those fantasies and behaviourally confirming those projections? (Jackson 75)

These negative projections of the Black body illustrated by Jackson, isolate its existence and space of negotiation. Black feminist, bell hooks, also discusses the containment of the Black male in her book, *We Real Cool: Black men and Masculinity* (2004). She writes:

> Whether in an actual prison or not, practically every black male in the United States has been forced at some point in his life to hold back the self he wants to express, to repress and contain for fear of being attacked, slaughtered, destroyed. Black males often exist in a prison of the mind unable to find their way out. In patriarchal culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines. When race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then black males endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity. Seen as animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murderers, black men have had no real dramatic say when it comes to the way they are represented. (hooks ix-x)

The Black male body is entrapped as an object that is perceived socially as: "(1) exotic and strange, (2) violent, (3) incompetent and uneducated, (4) sexual, (5) exploitable, and (6) innately incapacitated" (Jackson 75). This state that the Black male body is contained

within is a dangerous one, as it hinders self-representation, due to the weight of the ascribed representations.

Both the Black male and female body have been viewed as spectacles, exhibited and paraded around for their exotic features. Abdel-Shehid states, “Black bodies are seen as primitive, hypersexualized and licentious; moreover, white bodies in the state of nature are not represented as organic. White bodies are assumed to have outgrown the state of nature." (Abdel-Shehid 18) This containment of the Black body operates differently for the male and female body in contemporary popular culture. For the female body, we have seen this in the hyper-sexualization of feminine Black features in film, music and fashion predominantly in contemporary culture. This is particularly evident in current images in hip-hop culture, that emphasizes over-sized surgically altered body parts (such as breasts, buttocks, and lips) to mimic the Hottentot Venus. The Black male body, however, has been compacted into a characterization that fits a hyper-athletic stereotype. This is not to say that the Black male body is not hyper-sexualized as well, as it has a long history of fetishization. Jackson states, “Instead, his naked body appears as an athletic specimen, an iconographic spectacle, an idealized Other aesthetically codifying the hegemonic subconscious proclivity to see the Black body as exotic or strange.” (Jackson 76) This athletic stereotype limits more than just the physical potential for the Black male body—it

limits the psyche. Dr. Darnell Hunt, media and race expert for the NAACP and chair of Sociology at UCLA, notes in a discussion regarding racial stereotypes that:

> Stereotypes are created for a purpose, they don't fall from the sky, they always are attached to a political agenda. Its about certain groups being able to dominate other groups. So, when African-Americans are good at basketball, it means that they are not good at mental things. It means they aren't suited for other types of work that involve intellect and other types of abilities more aligned with being affluent in society. (Dr. Hunt, "Chelsea Does")

If a body is placed within a box and is not granted any opportunity to break out of this box, as a result, the mind too becomes captured and is forced to become an object upon which others can project upon. Not only will the body become complicit, so will the mind. In the 1961 text, *The Wretched of The Earth*—Fanon refers to decolonization as the process of reversing power relationships. Fanon notes that the process of colonization was more than simply the physical domination of Africa. Instead, the physical domination was combined with the psychological depreciation of the African's self-worth and of the African's culture and history. Therefore, the process of decolonization is both physical and psychological.

Despite the hyper-athleticism associated with the Black male body, the alternative, more common and typically complimentary representation of the Black male in North America, is a one dimensional negative portrayal that depicts all Black men as a criminals. Hip-hop artist Andre 3000 comments on the complex mindset of many Black males that revolves around the thinking that it is not the fault of the Black individual who becomes

complicit with criminal behaviour, but rather the system that has not offered the Black man any other ways to become successful. He states, “She yelling that selling’s a sin, well so is telling young men//That selling is a sin, if you don’t offer new ways to win.” (3000, “Sixteen”) Hip-hop artist Kendrick Lamar counters Andre 3000’s thought process in his song *The Blacker The Berry*, by stating:

> So don't matter how much I say I like to preach with the Panthers// Or tell Georgia State "Marcus Garvey got all the answers"//Or try to celebrate February like it's my B-Day//Or eat watermelon, chicken, and Kool-Aid on weekdays//Or jump high enough to get Michael Jordan endorsements//Or watch BET cause urban support is important//So why did I weep when Trayvon Martin was in the street when gang banging make me kill a nigga blacker than me?// Hypocrite! (Lamar, “Blacker The Berry”)

Here, Kendrick states that despite the condition in which he was brought up in, it is hypocritical for him to complain about his circumstances and seek liberation for Black culture, if he is perpetuating the negative stereotypes that he, and many Blacks alike, attempt to combat i.e. gang violence or Black on Black crime. In order to escape this overarching demonizing identity, the Black man is believed to have only three lucrative options: become an athlete, musician, or an actor/comedian. Hip-hop artist Kanye West speaks to this notion in his song *Gorgeous,* as he states, “I need a happy ending and a new beginning//And a new fitted, and some job opportunities that's lucrative.” (West, “Gorgeous”) The Black male body is viewed by contemporary society as a performative object, that serves no greater purpose than to perform. Abdel-Shehid speaks to the bind that the Black male body is caught in when he states, “It also has a doubled resonance,

which is to narrate blackness as more physical and therefore somehow athletically superior." (Abdel-Shehid 18) He goes on to state, "Reading blackness as a meta-human category corresponds or is somehow linked to reading blackness as physicality within the state of nature." (Abdel-Shehid 24) He proceeds to note, "The two most common ways of reading blackness in the racist imagination is either through a meta-person like Owens or Louis, or through the use of stereotypes of blackness as it is found in the state of nature. Often, the everyday lives of black folks go missing in this construct." (Abdel-Shehid 24) Hip-hop artist Kanye West makes a similar comment to Abdel-Shehid in his song, *Gorgeous*, as he states, "As long as I'm in Polo smiling, they think they got me//But they would try to crack me if they ever see a black me//I thought I chose a field where they couldn't sack me//If a nigga ain't shootin' a jump shot, running a track meet" (West, "Gorgeous") When the Black body is strictly seen as a performative object, it loses its agency.

The Black Male Body as a Performative Object

This section seeks to utilize the work of American artist Glenn Ligon, to speak to issues of agency and subjectivity. I analyze the work *Untitled (I Am a Man)* (1988), by Glenn Ligon in relation to the Black experience, Black masculinity and representation. The Black male body generally has three sites in which to perform its subjectivity: athletics, music, comedy/acting. For the purpose of this thesis however, I focus most heavily on the

performative site of athletics in relation to the Black male body. In 1988 American conceptual artist Glenn Ligon created the piece *Untitled (I Am a Man)*, (Fig. 4) a painting that makes reference to the placards carried by striking African-American sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee in the spring of 1968 (Fig. 5). The African-American strikers protested low wages and unsafe working conditions which resulted in the death of two coworkers due to faulty equipment. The workers used the slogan “I Am A Man” as an adaptation of the first line of Ralph Ellison’s book *Invisible Man.* The first line in the book is “I am an invisible man.” “By deleting the word "invisible," the Memphis strikers asserted their presence, making themselves visible in standing up for their rights.” (National Gallery of Art) An important distinction to make between the adapted text of the sanitation workers and Ligon’s work is his choice of materials and composition. Compositionally, the quote is divided on the canvas into three lines reading “I Am//A// Man”. This gesture “widens the discursive rift, and we are left to consider the subject for whom this phrase has hauntingly returned.” (Coburn 4) Ligon carefully distinguished his painting from the signs carried by the striking sanitation workers by “painting the black letters in eye-catching enamel calls attention to a black figure ("Man") as a text that replaces the human form in figurative painting.” (National Gallery of Art) The work speaks to issues of representation and the collective Black experience. In this piece, Ligon reinserts agency for not only himself, but for Black men collectively. Art writer Tyler Coburn states that the work’s, “assertion of a seemingly evident fact calls attention to the

very condition of social invisibility that necessitated it, while its circulation through collective action risks inscribing a group of individuals with still another set of norms." (Coburn 4) Ligon's work on Blackness has focused on collective Black experiences, replacing "I" with "we" in consideration of the Black subject.

The Black Male Image

The complexity and multiplicity of Blackness is reduced to a one dimensional representation depicted by the media, that conflates *all* Black identities into a number of stereotypes that include that of the criminal. This representation is plastered onto all Black bodies as a veneer, concealing true individuality. In the text "*Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*" African-American cultural historian, Harvey Young discusses the ways in which the Black body is represented within space. Young explains that the Black body does not actually represent any person or group of people. He illustrates rather, that, "The mystery of blackness, which manages to become a *fact* through repeated deployment across a range of bodies, encourages the (mis)identification of individuated bodies (a body) as the black body." (Young 7)

The Black male body is both present and invisible within the cultural sphere. Young states, "The black body, whether on the auction block, the American plantation, hanged from a light pole...or staged as a criminal body by contemporary law-enforcement judicial

systems, is a body that has been forced into the public spotlight and given a compulsory visibility." (Young 12) Despite the visibility of the Black body in these areas, the Black body is also ironically absent in others. Author Ralph Ellison describes this condition in his novel, *The Invisible Man*, he writes,

> I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves or figments of their imagination, indeed, everything and anything except me. (Ellison, Invisible Man)

What is actually visible in relation to the Black body are the stereotypes, the dominant constructions of Blackness. The Black body navigates between the space of visibility and invisibility. The Black body has to both fight to be seen, and hide from being persecuted.

Despite the positive representations each individual Black male chooses to put forth for himself, it is counteracted by the "racialized images of Black men presented by the media, that are synonymous with poverty, crime, and a number of other social ills." (Jackson 91) Manning Marable, professor of public affairs, history, and African-American Studies at Columbia University (2001) makes an important statement that is highlighted by Jackson as he states, "Black masculine identity development is impossible without acknowledging and countering the stereotypes that threaten the survival of Black masculinity." (Jackson 80)

In the song, *The Blacker The Berry,* hip-hop artist Kendrick Lamar illustrates the ways in which Blackness—and the Black male body—are interpreted in contemporary culture. He confirms this realization of Blackness that negates Blackness as the physical metonymy of negativity for the Black individual. In particular, he emphasizes a sense of pride in his Black male physiology in the song *The Blacker The Berry.* Lamar states, "…my hair is nappy, my dick is big, my nose is round and wide..." to further depict how the contemporary Black male representation does not change who he is as a Black man. (Lamar, "The Blacker The Berry") Lamar engages in an internal dialogue regarding his own Blackness as he states, "You hate me don't you?//You hate my people, your plan is to terminate my culture//You're fuckin' evil I want you to recognize that I'm a proud monkey// You vandalize my perception but can't take style from me." (Lamar, "The Blacker The Berry") Throughout the song, he illustrates how the Black (male) body is valued. He clearly defines a distaste for Black male representation in contemporary North American culture when he states, "I mean, it's evident that I'm irrelevant to society//That's what you're telling me, penitentiary would only hire me." (Lamar, "The Blacker The Berry") In the song *New Slaves*, hip-hop artist Kanye West shares a similar viewpoint as he states, "Meanwhile the DEA//Teamed up with the CCA//They tryna lock niggas up//They tryna make new slaves." (West, "New Slaves") The criminal figure is not a new association to the Black male body.

Black Body as Violent

The Black male body is one of the most endangered species in North America. "There are more Black males born than Black females. But by the time the two reach the age of 18 and you factor in homicide, suicide, and incarceration; Black females outweigh Black males 7:1. That means the Black male is dying at the rate of an endangered species."(Hot 97, "Justice Or Else") These startling statistics causes me to question, *what is the life expectancy for the Black man?* The Black male body has become is a signifier of danger—a cause for alert. Abdel-Shehid states that, "the black body, which has been inscribed throughout Enlightenment/colonialism the body of the outsider, is read unconsciously as both outside and hostile. In other words, this logic engenders blackness as the nation's worst nightmare" (Abdel-Shehid 3-4) Later in the text Abdel-Shehid notes, "The white deployment of blackness, or specifically black masculinity as the embodiment of masculine aggression can be traced to Enlightenment notions that read Africa as the place of unbridled strength, sexuality and aggression." (Abdel-Shehid 18) In particular the Black *male* figure has been depicted as a non-human and without rationality. This containment is yet another way that the Black body is governed in contemporary space. "One way to maintain dominion over bodies is to police them and treat them as separate; to determine patterns of behaviour, then assess penalties that only apply to certain populations that exhibit that most severe violative behaviour." (Jackson 80) We see this clearly in the

often unjust treatment of African-Americans by police enforcement and the American judicial system. As stated by the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), African Americans make up nearly 1 million of the total 2.3 million incarcerated population in America, and have approximately six times the incarceration rate of Whites.

The problematic issue with containing the Black male body as a representation of danger, is that it denies the subjectivity and agency of each Black subject. This form of containment causes a Black male doctor or lawyer for example, to be seen no differently than a convicted felon. Kanye West states, “Even if you’re in a Benz, you’re still a nigga in a coupe.” (West, “All Falls Down”) Here, West illustrates that despite one’s economic standing, the Black person is still viewed in society as a ‘nigga’. “Kanye plays on the “coupe/coop” homophone here, as coupe refers to a two door car, but “coop” is another word for a cage, hearkening back to slave times. This conveys that black men are still “trapped” by racism no matter how successful they get.” (Hip-hop Genius) It is vital to note, that the Black male body in particular, has difficulty existing outside of the trope of criminality. “Unlike the uncontaminated White body, even when a Black body has not been criminalized, he is suspect.” (Jackson 80) Education, class status, sexualities, and other characteristics are less of a factor that contribute to the personal representation of the Black male body. “*I may be black but I also am so much more than merely black*. They note that

embodied experiences are influenced not only by racial visibility but also by sexuality, class status, physical condition (health), religion/spirituality, and education among a variety of other factors." (Young 10) He states, "it is theses other factors that determine individual outlook and experience." (Young 10) The classification of the Black male body as a symbol of danger has caused great alarm. In North America, we are consistently bombarded by tragic altercations that result in the death of Black men such as Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and many more. These devastating occurrences leads me to conclude that the common denominator in these tragic instances is their *Blackness*.

In 2015, I created the piece *By Default* (Fig. 6). This piece memorializes the unarmed Blacks killed by police officers from 1999-2014. The names of each individual along with their date of birth and date of death, was printed onto black paper with black ink. From afar, the names of the individuals are illegible, each black paper appears blank, as they all look the same. Upon closer viewing of the papers, the viewer beings to notice the names of each individual. I believe it is vital to examine the ways in which Blackness and the Black body are being represented. "He [the Black male] is cosmically guilty. His guilt is existential." (Jackson 83) The representation of Blackness and the Black male body in contemporary media are of negative portrayals of the Black male body as a one dimensional, criminalized figure. This is especially visible in the news. "As critical observers of the media, we have noticed that when the media reports crimes perpetrated by

Black males, negative projections are revealed in the language of the report." When describing Black male assailants, Jackson states that the media commonly uses terms like "juvenile" and "delinquent" (Jackson 80). In contrast, "media reports of White male criminals are neutral to positive in their use of language." (Jackson 80) Language is extremely important in regard to the representation of Blackness and Black culture.

The only way out the ghetto, you know the stereotype
Shooting hoops or live on the stereo like top 40
And shortly, I got discouraged
Like every time I walked to the corner had them guns bursting
Nigga, I was rehearsing in repetition the phrase
That only one in a million will ever see better days.

—Kendrick Lamar

CHAPTER THREE

EXAMINATION & REFLECTION OF THE WORK

This section examines the challenges, materiality, and development of each of the four works in the *#000000 VIOLENCE* exhibition, namely, *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)* and *The Condition of The Black Man: I Am Series, By Default Pt.II,* and *Defence//Offence*. In this chapter, I will highlight influential artists who have impacted my art practice. I will illustrate the ways in which violence and the Black body are embedded within my art practice.

Influential Artists

As a Black woman growing up in North America, I have always been hyper-aware of my Blackness. I am conscious of my body in relation to society's perception of my Blackness when I am in public spaces. I am conscious of making my body visible when in public spaces, mainly for the purpose of disrupting negative stereotypes associated with my race and my body. The first time I realized how my own Black body is perceived within public space was at the age of 18. I distinctly remember the incident that made me recognize that my Black body navigates differently within public space. My mother sent me to Walmart to pick up AA batteries. From the time I entered the store, a man began to follow me. He lurked behind every aisle I navigated through. Although I was suspicious of

this man, I ignored him and continued to shop. I would later find out that the man was an undercover security guard meant to apprehend shoplifters. After I paid, went through the doors of Walmart and made it outside, this man grabbed me by the arm and forced me to show him my receipt and the contents of my bag and purse. I was beyond mortified as I stood outside being searched and treated like a criminal when I had not committed a crime. Everything in me felt that if I was not Black, I would not have been stopped. This incident made me realize that I cannot shop in a store like everyone else. It made me aware that I am Black. Moreover, I became aware that other people are aware that I am Black. Since this incident, I have been stopped four more times in different stores at random throughout my life. I have conditioned myself that when in a store, I am to hold objects in front of me where they can be seen at all times, to avoid people thinking that I am shoplifting. This awareness has been fundamental in my art making process.

One of the most influential artist to my practice is American minimalist sculptor—Richard Serra. Serra has noted that within his practice he is interested in revealing everything. He believes that whatever it is that you do, should be revealed to the viewer. The work of Richard Serra has influenced my comprehension of my body as well as a consciousness of space. I have been more so influenced by Serra's concepts of the spatial relationships between the artwork and the viewer/public, than I have been with emulating, or evoking his minimalist forms. Many of Serra's works are concerned with the viewer

becoming aware of himself and of his movement in relation to the piece. “What you really want to do is try to engage the viewer’s body relation to his thinking and walking and looking, without being overly heavy-handed about it.” (Serra, “ART 21”) Like Richard Serra, I consider the physical body in relation to space, however, I map race onto this relationship to specifically consider how the Black body navigates within contemporary space. Another artist that influences my work is American conceptual artist, Glenn Ligon. What influences me most about Ligon’s practice is his use of intertextuality to reinsert agency. I admire the ways in which Ligon considers race, language, desire, sexuality, and identity. Ligon’s work has influenced my understanding of agency and the difference between “I” and “we”. His work has encouraged me to consider the collective experience of Blackness and not just my own. Both artists influence me in regard to understanding my body and my Blackness in relation to space, the public, others, Whiteness, myself etc. Much of their work has helped me formulate my ideas of Blackness in relation to Frantz Fanon’s notion of the Black body, negritude, and denegrification.

#0000000 VIOLENCE Exhibition

Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)

Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams) (Fig. 7), a piece inspired by the 1994 documentary *Hoop Dreams*, is an installation of sixty solid concrete basketballs, each weighing approximately 30 pounds. The basketballs are all uniformly placed upon a square, black

glossy platform, elevated just slightly above the ground. The basketballs, each made to look deflated in their own individual way, represent the struggles of the Black man in North American culture, as hoop dreams often deflate and leave the dreamer hopeless. Hip-hop artist Jay-z states in his song *H to the IZZO*, "I've seen Hoop Dreams deflate like a true fiend's weight." (Jay z, "H to the IZZO") This installation highlights the Black man's battle and relationship with the sport of basketball in a way that interrupts space by questioning the devotion of the Black man's life to the sport. Contemporarily, basketball has become what is believed to be one of the few lucrative options for the Black man. However, many Black men do not make it to the NBA, and their hoop dreams are deflated—as they are forced to exercise other, less lucrative options to survive. Some turn to unsavoury activities such as crime related activities. This installation is a direct engagement with the reality many Black men face growing up. It seeks to activate public space and confront the viewer with this reality. As a part of a larger discussion about racial politics through the language of basketball, this work brings into question the absence of the Black body within public space, as it seeks to challenge our contemporary understanding of Black male identity as constructed through athletics.

Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams): Materiality

The works in *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)* were produced using the following method and materials: mould making, to create concrete basketballs using rubber, silicone,

plaster, and concrete. Working with one mould was important, as I wanted the process of mould making to reflect the content of the artwork. The NBA is similar to the single mould I made. Many Black men are moulded into this one ideal form of an NBA player, and despite the mould being the same, the outcome of each man is slightly different. This is reflected in the mould making process. Despite the mould being the same every time I created a basketball, each ball came out differently. Another aspect of the work that was important to me was the intimacy of the process. As such, I deliberately chose only material processes that directly involve my physical body. From the start to finish of this installation, my body has been inserted into the creation.

One of the processes within the creation of *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)* felt more dependent upon my body—the process of mixing the concrete for each basketball. I did not use an electric mixer to mix the concrete to pour the basketball. Instead, I elected to hand-mix the concrete for each pour. This was done for a number of reasons. Mixing the concrete by hand required a lot of strength, patience and time. The human skin is hypersensitive to many chemicals, and concrete was no exception. Hydration is a chemical reaction in which the major compounds in cement form chemical bonds with water molecules and become hydrates or hydration products. Like a basketball player in training, with the creation of each basketball, I slowly became more immune to the exertion asserted upon my body by the process of creating the basketballs.

Concrete is a material that requires time and attentiveness. I have come to understand the nature of concrete, and how it can be both a predictable and unpredictable material. I have also become content with particular mishaps with the result of each casted basketball, like a player who just missed a jump shot, I move on to the next pour in the casting process. I wanted to use concrete for two reasons. First, concrete is a very strong and heavy material. It is also an important material in the building of the modern world. I wanted to use this characteristic of concrete to speak to the social structures that keep the Black man in a state of containment and to illustrate the state of oppression felt by many Blacks. It was important to use casts from an actual basketball as a symbolic object to stand in for the Black male body, to further push the notion of the Black body as a performative object. In addition, I wanted the weight of objectification as a process to be embedded in the work, and have a real presence of weight within the space. It was not enough to just make 60 basketballs look heavy; they needed to actually *be* heavy. For this reason, I elected to cast basketballs out of pure concrete. Together, the sixty basketballs that comprise the installation weigh roughly 1800 lbs. It was important for the work to *be* heavy, rather than to *appear* heavy. The second reason for why I chose to use concrete was for its characteristic of fragility. Despite being such a strong material, the nature of concrete is to crack. Cracks in concrete are a result of the concrete shrinking. A low water to cement ratio would also increase the chance of concrete cracking (Fig. 8). However, sealing the moisture

for a long duration of time, may help reduce this issue. For me, the cracking symbolized rebirth and consequently, liberation.

Mapping the Black male body symbolically onto basketballs, then further pairing the imagery of cracking onto the basketball was of great importance. With this work—and many of my works—I attempt to stay true to the material. By this, I mean I avoid manipulating the material in any way that is not true to the nature of the material such as painting or, tinting the material. With this in mind, I opted to allow the cracks in the concrete to occur naturally. After I removed each basketball from the mould, I exposed the concrete basketball to the air without sealing the moisture of the basketball. By doing this, I sped up the process of cracking, as sealing the concrete and its moisture immediately after it was removed from the mould would have delayed the process of cracking.

Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams): Development & Iterations of the Work

The piece *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)* came about after watching the 1994 documentary *Hoop Dreams*. This documentary moved me particularly because of the dedication I had seen my older brother put into basketball throughout his life. This piece originally began with a sketch of a concrete basketball wall. After deliberating the safety of this structure, I elected to change the installation of the piece. Building a wall of concrete basketballs posed complications for the safety of viewers and stability of the wall. I did not

feel that I was compromising the work by installing the basketballs flat on the ground rather than stacking them one on top of another. It was important for me that the viewer is confronted with this installation because of it's mass, and essentially confronted with the reality many Black males are faced with. In the future, I imagine this piece being developed as a wall structure that stands outside in a public space. I want the piece to interrupt people in their daily lives by this piece, by having them consider their bodies in relation to the work the basketball wall. This wall acts both as a protection and as a barrier. Just the way signing up for tryouts in the NBA can be a safety net for survival or if you don't make it to stardom, the time spent in the tryouts can become an impediment to succeeding in other fields.

The Condition of The Black Man: I Am Series

The *I Am Series,* (Fig. 9) speaks to similar notions as *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)*. It consists of large metal hoops with metal chains suspending from them. This series of sculptures speaks to Black culture's glorification of the sport of basketball and the belief that it is one of the only lucrative options for the Black man. Many Black men try to emulate NBA players, *"I wanna be like Mike"*, which made me consider the ways in which men physically emulate professional athletes by wearing jerseys that indicate the player's name—a type of branding. Each sculpture is titled after the name of an NBA player. The two sculptures from this series in the exhibition are titled, *"I AM MICHAEL JORDAN"* and

"I AM SCOTTIE PIPPEN". The act of standing in the nets serves as a portal into the experience of the Black man in North American culture— many Blacks are trapped by the reality that basketball has become what is believed to be one of the few lucrative options available. I want viewers to experience their own body in relation to the net and the feeling of being trapped within the chains. There is a difference between what the viewer will feel and the condition of the Black male that is addressed in my work. The viewer can freely walk out of the chains while the Black man is *actually* trapped. For the Black man to become successful in North American society, he has to fulfill the role of one of three occupations, all of which operate in the field of entertainment: an athlete, a musician, or a comedian/actor. Black bodies are trapped and cannot get out, as opposed to non-Blacks who view Black culture from the outside and do not really experience the hardships of the condition of being a Black man (or Black in general) in North America, until they step into the net. Even then, I do not believe that the viewer can fully comprehend the hardships of navigating through life as a Black person in North America. However, my aim is that the viewer grasps an understanding of the physical feeling of entrapment and is able to empathize with the issue of the containment of the Black body addressed in the work.

The Condition of The Black Man: I Am Series: Materiality

The two most important aspects of this piece are: creating an effective simulation of the feeling of being trapped as a Black man, and creating a productive discourse that would

then bridge an understanding of the condition of physical entrapment. The concern with the first aspect, was that I did not want to cluster the identities that constitute Blackness into one category—as I have come to understand Blackness as a collective, multiplicity of different identities—rather than a single identity. Therefore, I decided to place my focus within the realm of athletics, more specifically—basketball. I wanted to focus on the relationship Black men have to the sport of basketball and the identity they formulate through the sport. It was vital that I used the visual vernacular of basketball to simulate this experience.

With the *I Am Series*, I wanted to simulate a feeling of an initial attraction, much like the fascination with Black culture and the exoticism of Blackness that would draw the viewer in. As soon as the viewer is inside the net, I wanted him to become uncomfortable and uneasy with his body in relation to the sculpture, as well as in relation to other bodies. I wanted the viewer to consider his freedom in relation to the physical experience of being in the net. The difficulty is that I cannot accurately predict how viewers will feel inside the sculptures. Based upon the reactions of viewers during the first exhibition of the work at the opening of the YTB Gallery in Toronto (Fig. 10), I believe I was partially successful in simulating a sense of discomfort. Viewers of the exhibition discussed their discomfort in ways that made them begin to comprehend part of the struggles of being a Black man in North America.

The materiality of the sculptures was one of the most important aspects of the work. The first iteration of the piece, was a sculptural model made out of orange rope. (Fig. 11) Originally, I had proposed to make the sculptures out of black, polyanchor rope. After working with the rope and building two net sculptures, I found that the nets resonated more towards domestic notions of captivity. This conflicted with my intentions, as I wanted to utilize a material that would evoke the feeling of a blockade. For this reason, I resorted to a primary material of mine—chains. The choice of chains was also critical to evolution of the piece from rope to metal. Although I enjoy the aesthetic appeal of rusted chains, the next version of the sculptures will be made with newer, more polished chains. I want to push the notion that, from the outside, Black culture often looks appealing and attractive to those who are not Black. I will play with both rusted chains and polished chains for the future iterations of this series.

I Am Series: Development & Iterations of the Work

The piece *The Condition of The Black Man: I Am Series,* was created after a shift in the course of my independent project this past summer. After taking the thesis proposal course this past summer, I felt that my focus on athletics in relation to Blackness and the Black male body was more relevant to the broader context of my thesis. I felt that making the work I originally produced was not as central to my thesis. Therefore, I shifted my focus onto this series. Originally, I intended to have six nets placed in a uniform line. I

envisioned a group of six Black men who wore black basketball shorts and black basketball jerseys with no logos, no teams, no names, or indication of any sort, standing inside the nets. Due to the space of the gallery, I have limited that number from six to two and placed the nets on opposite sides of the gallery. There is also a performance that accompanies the piece. For the performance component of the installation, a Black man will stand inside one of the nets and unweave the chains from the net, and eventually dismantle the chains. The man performs the opposite gesture I originally performed in weaving each net together. The gesture performed by the man similarly mimics the tradition performed by basketball players after winning a championship, which involves cutting the mesh of the net off of the rim of the basketball net.

I originally was conflicted with the performance aspect of this installation. The reason being that I did not want to further objectify the Black male body. I did not want to make the Black male body solely an object. I was determined to give the body *agency*. The way in which I empower the Black male body in this performance is through the act of unweaving the chains to completely dismantle the structure. In the original mock up of this performance, I wanted Black men to stand inside the nets for six minutes. After contemplating the implications of placing a Black male body in captivation with no liberation, I came to this iteration of the performance.

99 Problems (By Default)

99 Problems (By Default) (Fig. 12) is a piece inspired by my precursory piece *By Default* (2015) and the violence inflicted upon the Black male body in contemporary media. Much like *By Default*, this piece aims to highlight the names of unarmed Black males killed by police officers in 2015. The names of each individual along with their date of death are printed on black paper with black ink. From afar, the names of the individuals are illegible, each black paper appears blank, as they all look the same. Upon coming closer to the papers, the viewer beings to notice the names of each individual (Fig. 13). This work was extremely important for me to create, as the Black male body has continuously become a figure of controversy in North America and we have more consistently seen it in relation to death. This work in particular made me focus more on the violence associated with Blackness and the Black body. In 2015 alone, over 100 unarmed Black men were killed by police officers.

99 Problems (By Default): Materiality

After hearing the verdict of the Tamir Rice, a 12 -year-old African-American boy shot and killed in November 2014 for playing with a plastic-pellet gun, I felt compelled to create this piece. The Grand Jury decided not to indict Cleveland police officer Timothy Loehmann for the death of Tamir Rice. As soon as I heard the verdict, I became enraged and deeply saddened. I felt a type of mourning for a human being that I did not even know.

This feeling was similar to the feeling I had when George Zimmerman was not charged in the death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. I did not understand how these injustices continued to happen. I began to review the piece *By Default*, reading the stories of unarmed Blacks killed by police officers from 1999-2014. I was curious to see the statistics of unarmed Black males killed by police officers in 2015 in America. I was shocked to see that the number of unarmed Black men killed was nearly 100 people in 2015 alone.

The materiality of this work was already familiar to me, as I had used the same materials—black ink on black paper—as *By Default*. Although similar, I felt that this piece was differed from *By Default*. For the installation of the piece, I did not want to replicate the grid form I used in the past, as it felt more like a memorial piece. Despite wanting to honour the memories of those killed, I wanted to push back against violence against the Black body. For this reason, I wanted to install the work in one singular line that began outside of the gallery, continuing along the inside of the gallery, as a way to unify the names. I wanted the viewer to walk alongside the walls and read the names of the men killed. I wanted the notion of repetition, institutionalized violence, and the Black male body to merge with this piece. However, this was difficult to do in the gallery space, as I was uninformed that someone else's work would interrupt the space. Adapting to this change, I reverted back to my original installation layout. Unlike the original layout I did with the piece *By Default*, which involved placing the piece chronologically in 3 rows, I chose to cover the entire wall. I also brought the papers much closer to one another. I did this to

bridge the violence of this piece with the violence of *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)*, as the piece utilized many black plexiglass sheets together to form a platform. This location was also more ideal for this piece as the glass wall in front of the work created a barrier for the viewer. From one side of the glass wall, the names are illegible. From the other side of the glass wall, the names are legible as this space forces the viewer to become intimate with the work.

99 Problems (By Default): Development of The Work & Iterations

This is not a piece that I wish to add to, as it brings me tremendous sadness to see the lives of unarmed Blacks taken so frequently. However, I see great importance in exhibiting this piece to bring awareness of the effects of institutionalized violence. I would like to further research the names of unarmed Black Canadians who were killed by police officers.

Defence//Offence (Tension)

The installation *Defence//Offence (Tension)* (Fig. 14), is a simple installation involving nothing more than two industrial orange ratchets woven into one another. The piece works to divide the gallery space horizontally into two equal parts, similarly marking the half court line on a basketball court. The ratchets are raised above the viewers heads at seven feet, beginning at one end of the gallery and continues through to the other end of the

gallery. This piece was the last piece created for the exhibition. The piece originally emerged from a piece I wanted to create titled, *The Court (Tension)*. With this piece I wanted to divide public space and question the ways in which the Black body circulates within contemporary space. Using orange polypropylene rope, I wanted to create the lines of a basketball court that hovered just slightly above the ground. Unfortunately, I could not find a suitable outdoor public location for my exhibition, therefore this piece did not come to fruition, as it needed a large amount of space and could not be converted into the gallery.

Defence//Offence (Tension): Materiality

Outside of mould making, this material is not a material I have frequently used in my art practice. I battled between the use of orange duct tape and orange polypropylene rope to create the piece *Defence//Offence (Tension)*, but ultimately chose orange ratchets for their industrial quality and cohesiveness with the aesthetics of the other works in the exhibition (Fig. 15).

Reflections

I want to clarify that my critique is not an indictment of basketball or the NBA itself. The NBA is filled with positive role models for youth in the Black community and its programs that encourage reading and social responsibility have been incredibly important and rewarding. *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)* and the *I Am Series* aim to critique the larger

culture and system that restrains the opportunities available to young Black men. Basketball is an important part of Black North American society, but there is more to life than basketball and it is dangerous for the Black youth as a whole when the NBA—an organization that employs no more than 500 players at a time—becomes not just the only profession that youth dream about, but the only one available to them as well. It is unconscionable that there exist communities in which the likelihood of prosperity through the educational system is so bleak that the Black youth see their only path to success as the one-in-a-million chance of being a professional basketball player. I aim to confront this reality. The pieces within the *#000000 VIOLENCE* exhibition seek to challenge our contemporary understanding of the Black male body and identity in association to athletics.

“It ain’t about Black or White because we’re human.”

—Tupac

EPILOGUE

Summary

Throughout the text, *#0000000 VIOLENCE*, I have examined the Black (male) body in relation to representation and violence through athletics. In chapter one, I questioned what made my Blackness *different* from the Blackness of others by examining how my Black experience is perceived by non-Blacks. Using the framework of intersectionality, I brought together both my internalized experiences as a woman and my experiences of Blackness, to bridge an understanding of how ability, class, gender, and race shape how we are perceived as Black people. Drawing on the social conditions that shape everyday relations between Blacks and non-Blacks, I have used this experience to assist me in developing my argument that seeks to formulate an understanding of each other and ourselves through experience. In chapter two, I explore the relationship between Blackness as a group of people and blackness as a colour. I look at the connotations and definitions associated with colours and a historic fear of colour—chromophobia. I utilized hip-hop culture to examine the Black experience in relation to the Black male body and its image in contemporary culture. I examined the ways in which the Black male body can be understood as both a performative and violent object. I illustrated a Black perspective of enunciation, representation, and identification through the examination of Adrian Piper's *Calling Card* (1986-1990). I examined this work in relation to race and identity politics in

order to uncover an assertion of Blackness. I also examined Glenn Ligon's piece *Untitled (I Am a Man)* (1988) in relation to the Black experience, Black masculinity and representation. In chapter three, I reflected and examined the challenges, materiality, and development of each of the four works in the *#000000 VIOLENCE* exhibition. I highlight influential artists who have impacted my art practice. I illustrated the ways in which violence and the Black body are imbedded within my art practice and navigate within contemporary space.

New Conclusions

Throughout the exploration of *#0000000 VIOLENCE*, I have come to better understand the Black North American condition not as one single shared experience, but rather, as a condition that produces a variety of experiences. Through experimentation and practice, I have come to better understand my own Blackness and the navigation of my own Black body within contemporary space. Through the investigation of *#000000 VIOLENCE*, I have gained a more thorough understanding of Black representation in contemporary culture. Moreover, I have come to understand the ways in which the Black male body may function both as a performative object as well as a violent object simultaneously. My research in the field of Black masculinity has assisted me in further comprehending my own Black *female* body. I believe this advancement in understanding my own female body is crucial to the preferment of my art practice and research.

Future Trajectories

In exploring *#000000 VIOLENCE*, I encountered questions that fell outside of the scope of my research, but would be useful for future research on the topic of Black body politics. The questions are as follows:

1. How is the Black male body perceived outside of the realm of athletics?
2. Is the Black female body also seen as performative object?
3. What distinctions and overlaps are there between the navigation of Black female and male bodies in contemporary space?
4. How does the Black female body navigate within contemporary space?

As I continue to further my research regarding the Black body, I want to focus more heavily upon the navigation of the Black male body outside of the realm of athletics. In addition to this exploration, I would like to investigate the Black female body and its navigation in contemporary space. As a Black woman, I think it is important to address my concerns regarding the standard of beauty in popular culture. I believe Black body politics will be a central focus of mine as I continue to develop my art practice. As a result, I want to reignite my interest in performance art. I intend to investigate the use of my Black female body to speak to issues of representation, and navigation of Black bodies in contemporary public space.

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Figures

Fig. 1. Esmaa Mohamoud, *Multiplicity, Muted*. 2015, assorted black fabrics on black cotton, 4 x 18 ft

Fig. 2. Esmaa Mohamoud, *Multiplicity, Muted*. (Front View) 2015, assorted black fabrics on black cotton, 4 x 18 ft

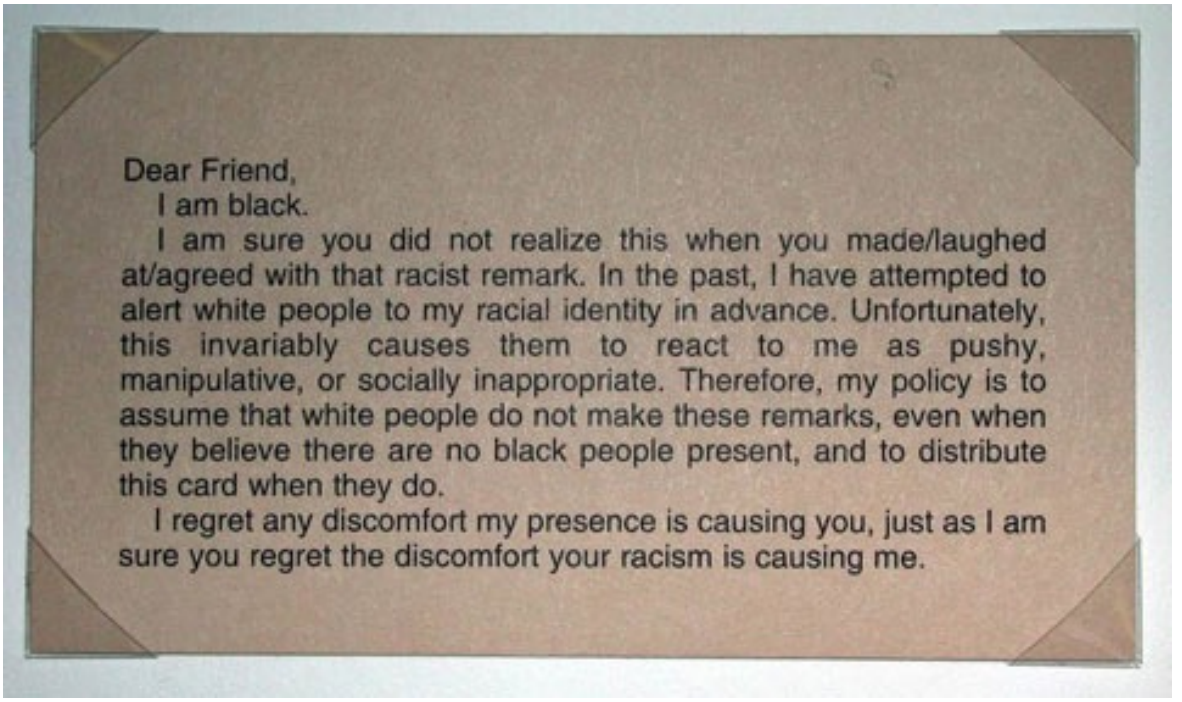

Fig. 3. Adrian Piper, *Calling Card # 1*. 1986, black ink on brown paper, 2 x 3 ½”

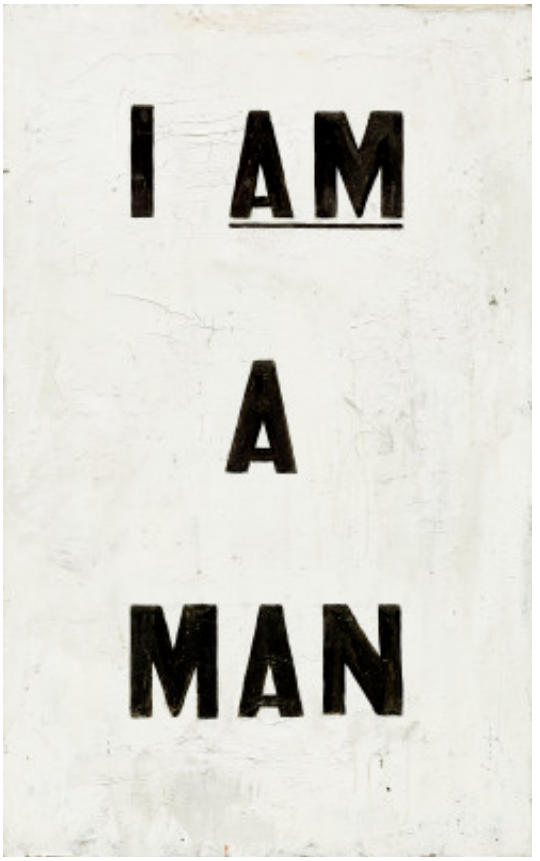

Fig. 4. Glenn Ligon, *Untitled (I Am a Man)*. 1986, oil and enamel on canvas, 40 x 25”

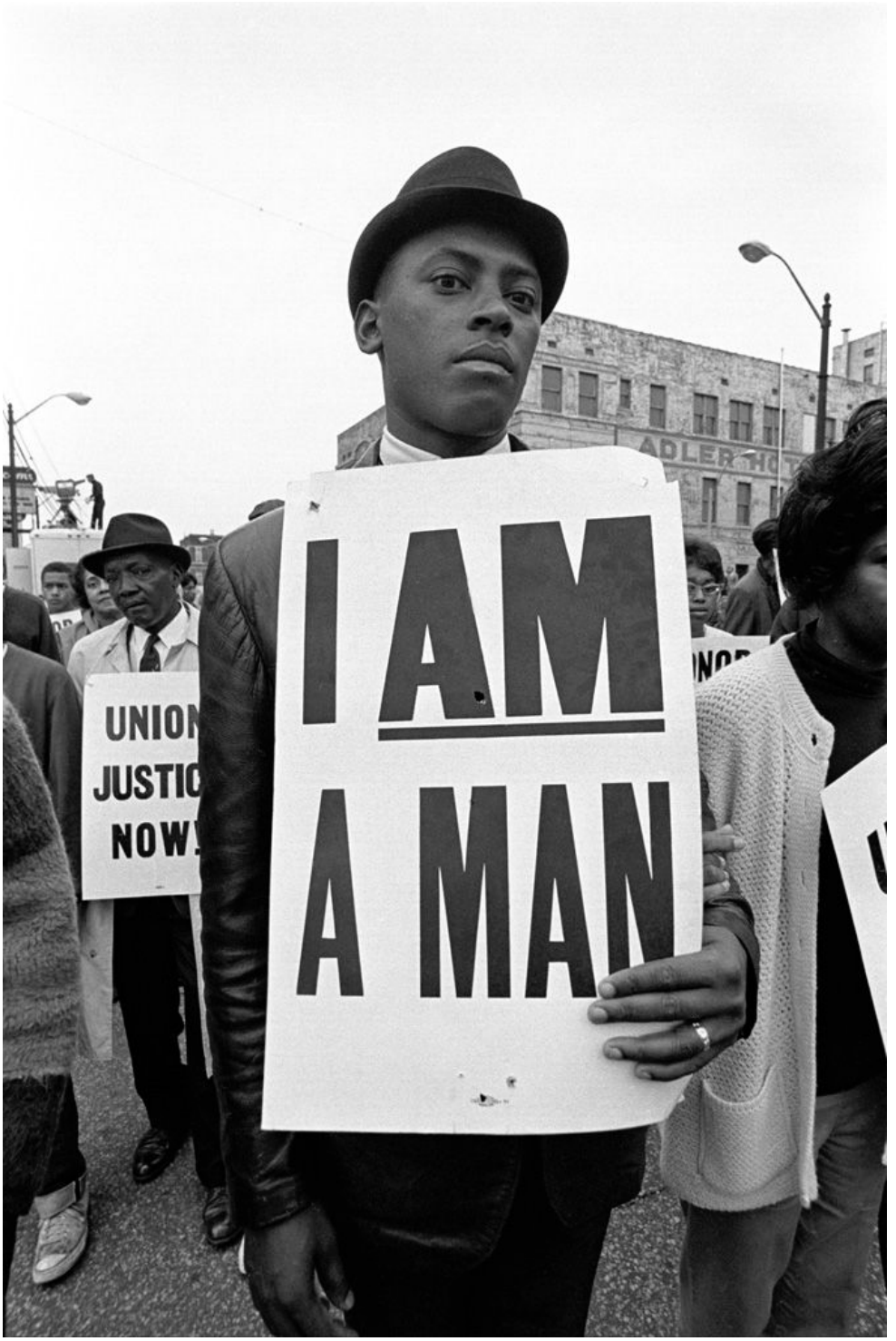

Fig. 5. Memphis, Tennessee Strikers, Spring of 1968
https://www.pinterest.com/pin/276971445808433373/

Fig. 6. Esmaa Mohamoud, *By Default.* 2015, black ink on black paper, 4 x 28 ft

Fig. 7. Esmaa Mohamoud, *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams).* 2016, solid concrete on black plexiglass, 10 x 10 ft

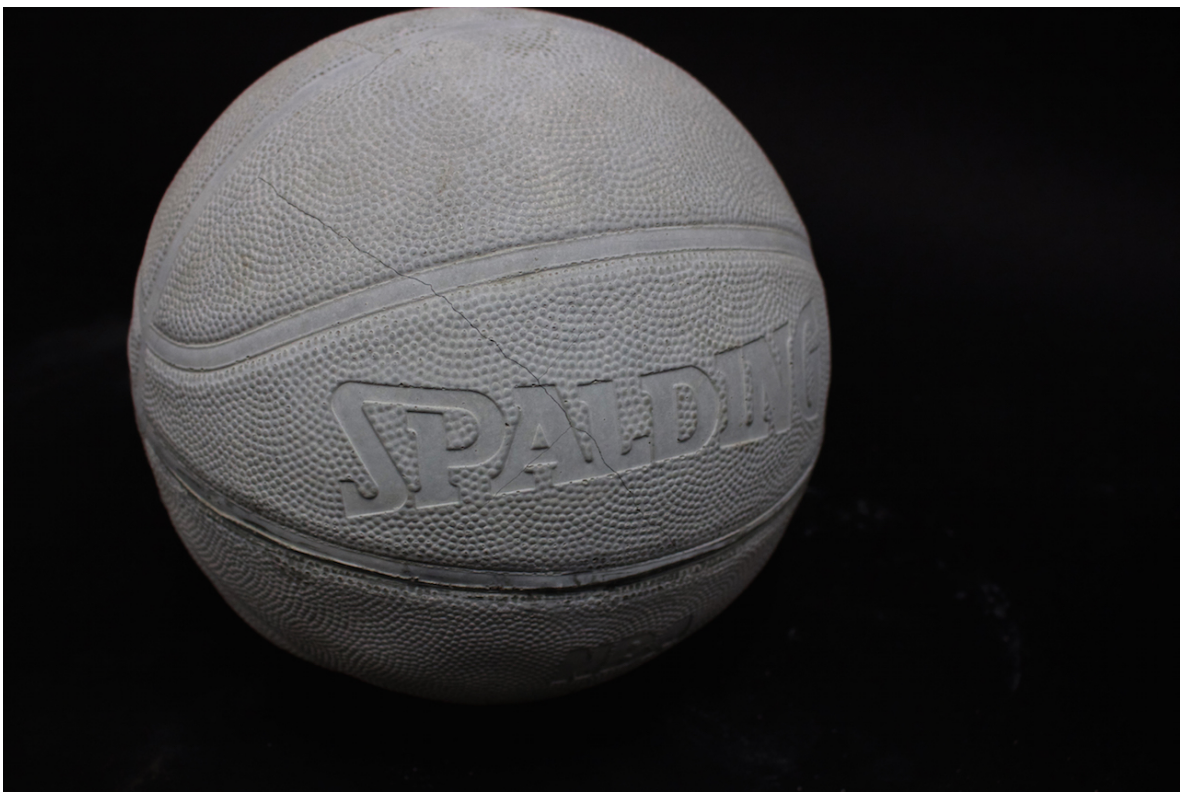

Fig. 8. Esmaa Mohamoud, *Heavy, Heavy (Hoop Dreams)*. 2016, solid concrete, 30 lbs x 60

Fig. 9. Esmaa Mohamoud, *The Condition of The Black Man: I Am Series.* 2015, repurposed chain and steel, 3 x 10 ft

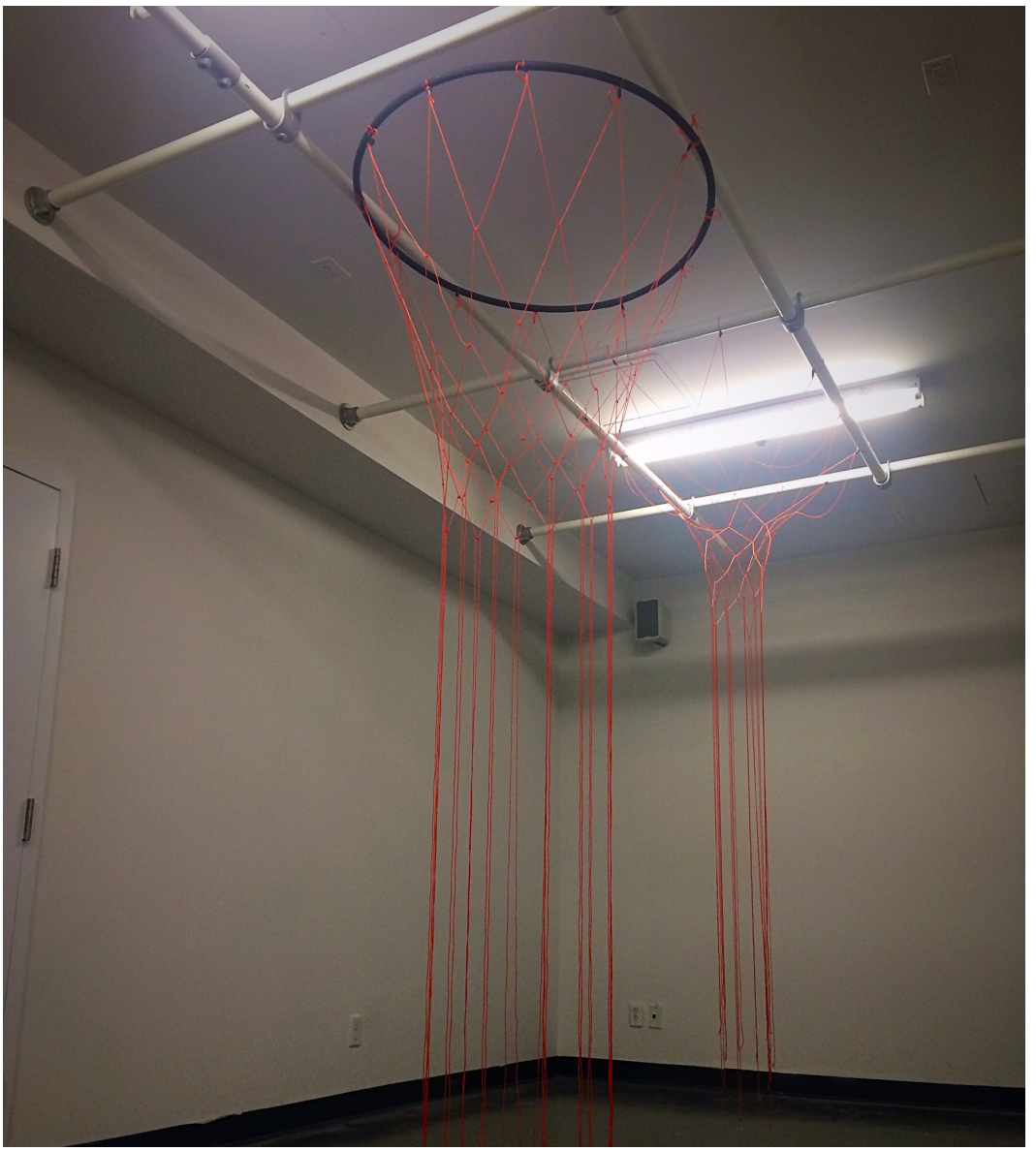

Fig. 10. Esmaa Mohamoud, *I Am Series.* (Sculpture Model) 2015, orange rope, 3 x 10 ft

Fig. 11. Esmaa Mohamoud, *99 Problems (By Default).* 2016, black ink on black paper, 6 x 12 ft

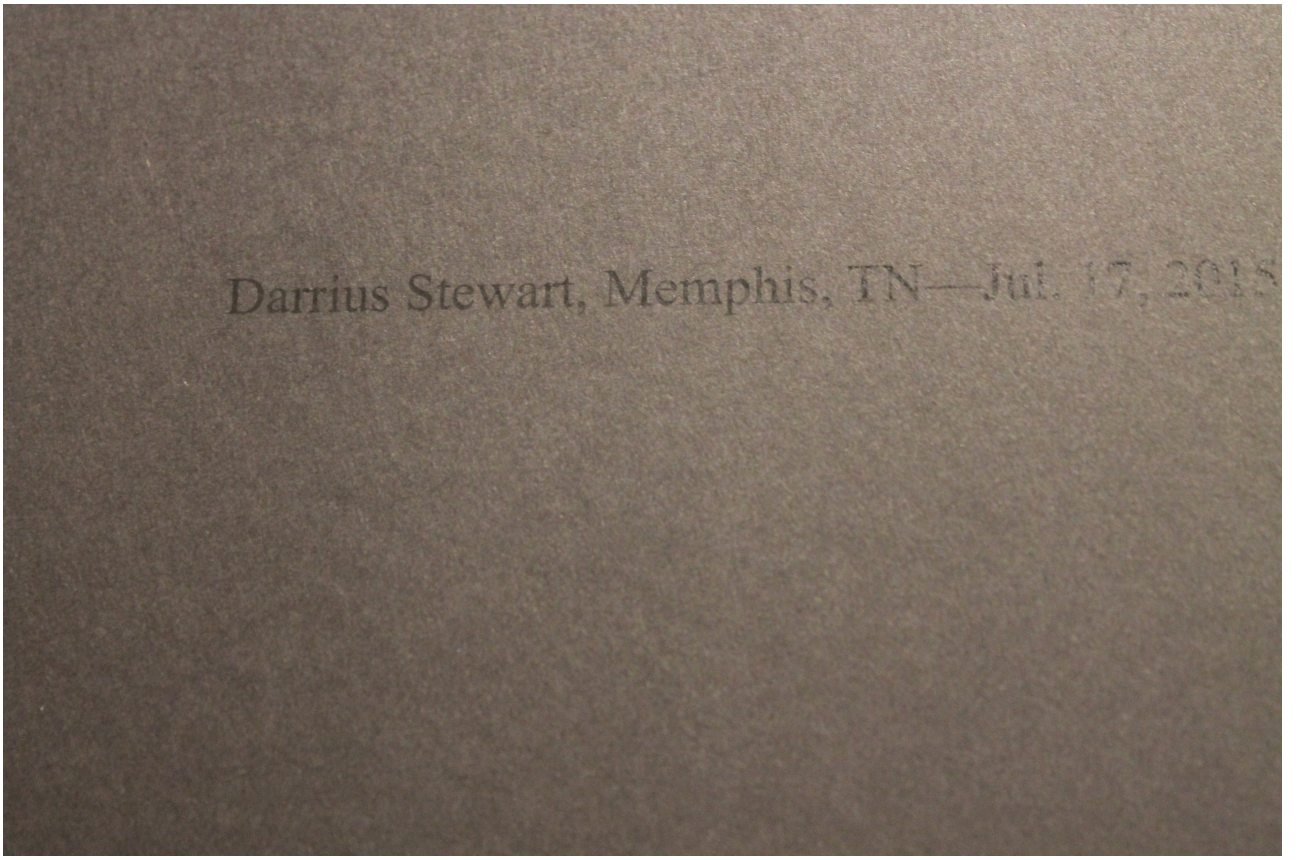

Fig. 12. Esmaa Mohamoud, *99 Problems (By Default).* (Detail) 2016, black ink on black paper, 8 x 11”

Fig. 13. Esmaa Mohamoud, *Defence//Offence (Tension)*. 2016, orange ratchets, 18 ft


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