2015

You Should Call it Shaunadra or Lekeisha: Making Movies into Politics, Online Comments and Constrained Citizenship

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Twitter Account

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Discourses surrounding Black femininity and Black women's bodies often rely on historical narratives and intersectional ideologies—interwoven beliefs specific to groups, but not essentialized—that create patterned and controlled ways of thinking. The ontological construction of Black femininity, including existing ideologies surrounding Black women's bodies and Black femininities, defined through the gaze of white supremacy are distinctly hypercritical. [1] Narratives surrounding Black women and femininity, entangled with racist and sexist ideologies, construct Black women as immoral, adverse, angry, and hypersexual beings thereby excluding them from idealized forms of femininity, value, and respectability. [2]

The discursive effect of racist and sexist discourses restrict the opportunity for Black women to be seen as 'moral equals' worthy of equitable "social and political recognition," [3] and restrict access to social citizenship. When enacted, these discourses police the boundaries of acceptable femininity and control Black women's access to resources, positive recognition, and their sense of belonging. [4] Additionally, they define how to understand and interact with Black women even when they are fictional, or (re)presented in media. [5]

Complicating discussions and analyses of the discursive impacts of racism and sexism is the illusory belief that America is a post-racial society—race and racism have ceased to exist in tandem with the increasing rates of online engagement. [6] I argue, when enacted in digitally mediated platforms, post-racial or veiled racist and sexist comments create unremitting narratives of exclusion that negatively affect Black women's lives. [7] While scholarship explores mediated images, individuals' responses to images, and racist and sexist language, few works examine their interconnections, or the increasing use of digitally mediated platforms to discuss Black women, their bodies, and femininities in negative ways.

This study seeks to understand how veiled or overt racist and sexist discourses in digitally mediated platforms affect Black women's ability to belong and to have full access to social citizenship. To achieve this, I examined comments surrounding Quvenzhané Wallis playing the lead character in the 2014 remake of *Annie*. The analysis focused on comments made through two websites: the celebrity news

site, *E! Online*, and the newspaper, the *Guardian*. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of veiled racist and sexist discourses in digitally mediated platforms on conceptions of Black femininity, and possible tangible consequences for Black women who engage in digitally mediated platforms, or who are confronted with similar narratives.

Literature Review

Constructing Black Women: Race, Gender, and Citizenship

As scholars like Crenshaw, [8] Roberts, [9] Collins, [10] and Lee [11] argue, within the structure of representation in tandem with America's particular history, Black women encounter a distinctive set of social practices. The effects of intersectional structures create unique, yet shared experiences "grounded in interdependent concepts of binary thinking, oppositional difference, objectification, and social hierarchy." [12] The intersectional representation of Black women presents a pejorative structured representation that defines Black women as domineering, emasculating, angry, and hypersexual. Within the media, discursive representations operate through controlled images, which Collins characterizes as the Mammie, Matriarch, Jezebel, and Welfare Queen. [13]

The image of the mammie defines Black women as asexual beings who sacrifice their lives to create happy homes for the White children who grow up to oppress them. In contrast to the mammie, the matriarch

supports the belief in overt aggression, anger, and a lack of "true" femininity. Where the matriarch exemplified an unfeminine body, the Jezebel is a hypersexual, insatiable, lustful, and sexually aggressive woman. The image of the jezebel in the media objectifies Black women, relegating them to sexual aggressors only interested in one-night stands and sexual pleasure. The welfare queen, the apparent combination of the jezebel and matriarch, is a "highly materialistic, domineering, and manless" woman with multiple children. [14] The welfare queen, blamed for contemporary social and economic problems represents the downfall of American society. Irrespective of the controlled image, Black women's image remains constrained through negative constructions.

Within the context of racial and gender relations, the U.S. remains in a period that is "transitional and unsettled," where Black women's status is one of the least ascertainable, definitive, and yet most regularly controlled of all the groups. [15] I focus on aspects of exclusion and belonging, or social citizenship. Within the context of the United States, parameters of belonging—defined through an idealized White male citizen—creates an ideal type that forms boundaries or borders of acceptability, which all members of a community are measured against. My discussion of an "ideal type(s)" of citizen stems in part from Weber's concept of an ideal type used as a "one-sided measuring stick" [16] augmented by the social construction of race and gender through the lens of citizenship. In the contemporary moment, I argue the ideal citizen, constructed from historically racist and sexist ideologies that proscribed desired characteristics for individuals in

society, operates through the lens of Whiteness and maleness. These characteristics are used to provide or restrict access to goods and services. [17] Taking this into account, the measurement of ideal types positions Black women in opposition to White women and relies upon racist ideologies to justify the restriction of access to rights, the social experience of exclusion, and (un)belonging. [18] Within this material space, Black womanhood and femininity functions to "take on the burdens" of society through their superhuman strength, enabling continued engagement with a white supremacist, racist, and sexist structure. The ability to place the burden of racism, sexism, and the denial of respect and value stems from the discursive formation of strength through a white supremacist lens.

The unique and regulated space of Black femininity remains *defined* by strength, which exists discursively "to defend and maintain a stratified social order by obscuring Black women's experiences of suffering, acts of desperation, and anger." [19] Additionally, Black women exist as

> [V]ictimizers in their own right, imbued with the force of a natural sexuality that could overcome civilization and restraint duplicitously claimed by white men, the image of Jezebel excused the sexual violations of the slave system… references to Black women as categorically whorish by nature, then, provided white men with an innocence and unquestionable authority with regard to their power over and abuse of Black women. [20]

Thus, the ontological construction of Black femininities imbued with racist and sexist discourses produce narratives that allow for the abuse and denigration of Black women, supported through the misperception of strength. Black women, through their hypersexual nature and inhuman strength defy common beliefs surrounding human possibility amidst adversity, which allows burdens to be placed on Black women's shoulders, enhances emphasized femininities for White women, and pits Black women against Black men. [21]

Harris-Perry's work, Sister Citizen, examines this discursive space through the metaphor of a crooked room, or the outcome of engagement with structures of oppression: white supremacy, racism, sexism, and interpersonally racist or microaggressive interactions. [22] This produces a general sense of discomfort or dis-ease, most likened to being in a crooked room. Citing psychological research, Harris-Perry argues that individuals, when placed in crooked rooms naturally attempt to find balance; while some are able to align themselves, others remain in a consistent state of imbalance. Black women's experiences mirror the crooked room, leaving them in a consistent state of imbalance or attempting a complex balancing act. Holland, in discussing the nature of racism argues it requires participation in a "project of belonging" that incorporates a set of relations, one seemingly real, or biological connection, while the other focuses on "the work of identifying with others, a belonging usually imposed by a community or by one's own choice." [23] When the project of racism intersects with sexism, it places Black women's

bodies on the margins and further restricts access to positive value and recognition, or social citizenship.

Social citizenship, generally, involves "the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society." [24] Social citizenship extends beyond a reciprocal relationship between an individual and the state. It involves "the right to have rights," which includes the right of positive social and moral recognition, to exist outside a binary in opposition to whiteness, and should provide the same level of dignity and respect afforded to 'acceptable' members of society. [25] The underlying notions and social practices that contribute to and confirm existing prejudices often stem from racist and sexist grammatical structures and the white racial frame. [26] It is important to note that while there is a relative level of permanency, the boundaries of citizenship are neither uniform nor immutable. Because the parameters that construct social citizenship are "clearly exclusionary and racist," [27] they remain constrained and unfailingly restrict Black women's bodies form belonging. Within the context of the United States, Black women—who have neither the idealized race, gender performance, body, nor sexuality—remain inextricably linked, and defined by a binary relationship to Whiteness and White femininities. The structure of oppression through the politics of belonging within everyday narratives ensures individuals and groups remind Black women that they do not belong.

(New) Mediated Citizenship: Racism, Sexism and Online Comments

Racist and sexist events organize our social world, both online and offline shaping how individuals act, interpret their surroundings, and engage with others in society. These events are distinctive, and often recur and "reveal the larger forces of the centuries-old racial hierarchy of this society." [28] Applying Goffman's [29] theory of the front and backstage, Picca and Feagin found, through analysis of their White students' journals, that while in the backstage, students engaged in conversations and jokes that normalized racist belief patterns and increased their cultural capital. [30] For instance, one student recalled hearing the word "nigger 27 times" in one day. [31] During front stage interactions, individuals call upon and enact racial discourse scripts, and, with contemporary engagement with colorblindness, attempt to prove racial tolerance through behaviors—veiled racism. Through processes of socialization, similar to Picca and Feagin's findings, continued engagement with media and the hyper-speed of social media, individuals encounter multiple racial events daily. [32] These interactions, in addition to the hyper-speed and potential virality, provide continued and unremitting denigration and exclusion of Black women and girls, recreating imbalance. [33]

Daniels in her review of research on race and the Internet demonstrated that "people use the Internet to both form and reaffirm individual racial identity and seek out communities based on race and racial understandings of the world." [34] Current engagements with

colorblind (I do not see race) or postracial (race as a structure no longer disproportionately impacts social groups in positive/negative ways) discourses obscure racism and sexism. Further, as Daniels argues, through a 'rebranding of racial truths,' calls into question what constitutes the truth of racism and its intersection with gender, class, and sexuality. [35] Often these conversations engage code words (urban, welfare queen, or angry), subtly racist and sexist (not innocent), and subtly racist yet overtly sexist (cunt) language. [36] The discursive inversion, embodied within the white racial frame, reframes conversations surrounding racial inequity to the shoulders of those oppressed, obscures the effects of racist behavior, and "maintains ongoing racial privilege and inequality." [37]

With the rise of Web 2.0, or blogs (weblogs) vlogs (video weblogs) and social media (Twitter, Facebook), scholars like Antony and Thomas address the potential for citizens "to set the agenda themselves, subverting the traditional model of the press as the primary arbiters of the public agenda." [38] Their examination of online engagement surrounding the release of Oscar Grant's killing [39] video to YouTube represents citizen journalism, and demonstrates the impact Web 2.0 has on information dissemination and journalism in the modern era. Within this form of journalism, citizens with little power and access can use Web 2.0 to move from passive consumption to an active and engaged production "of their own media," that provides "continuous feedback and responses via online postings and user comments." [40] The Internet provides spaces for individuals to practice their racism and sexism in the comfort of the backstage—conversations within

GroupMe, Facebook, or other online threads only open to specific individuals—then providing spaces for frontstage interactions.

Although Web 2.0 provides the possibility for the restructuring of power and control, it also maintains structures that limit possibilities and constrain representations. This is the double-edged nature of the Internet and Web 2.0, which results from racist and sexist narratives presented in digitally mediated platforms. As Sassen argues, the relationships between "cyberspace and individuals—whether as social, political, or economic actors—are constituted in terms of mediating cultures; it is not simply a question of access and understanding how to use the hardware…" [41] It is also the question of what is the relative impact engagements in digitally mediated spaces, like non mediated spaces, have on perceptions of self and access to positive recognition and value, or social citizenship. Though the effects of digitally mediated spaces are not separate from non-digitally mediated (colloquially 'off line') spaces, the levels of engagement and potential impacts may be distinct.

When individuals post to digitally mediated platforms they may believe their comments are in the backstage, only present to their friends and followers, or those whom they believe share similar belief systems. In non-digitally mediated spaces, the number of audience members who rupture the backstage is low (often less than 20 people), with potentially small effects. As Gross and Acquisti find, sharing information on digitally mediated platforms has greater consequences than in-person sharing. [42] This results from increased

numbers of impersonal interpersonal connections or friends of friends who have access to personal information. Individuals have "hundreds of thousands of additional friends within just three degrees of separation" [43] when taking into account networks on digitally mediated platforms, like Facebook.

Although many believe their digital engagement is private, or with like others, increases in both information shared and the size of networks individuals share posts with removes the possibility for backstage performances. Berger and Milkman examined New York Times articles over a three-month period to ascertain what features produce virality. [44] They found that while "positive content is more viral," virality "is driven by more than just valence. Sadness, anger, and anxiety are all negative emotions, but while sadder content is less viral, content that evokes more anxiety or anger is actually more viral." [45] Racist and sexist comments though prevalent in the backstage, when presented in the frontstage rupture notions of acceptability. Racist and sexist comments disrupt expected frontstage performances and increase the likelihood of virality as they evoke anger and anxiety.

Gross and Acquisti (2005), Bonilla Silva (2003; 2009), Picca and Feagin (2007), Brock (2012), Antoni and Thomas (2012), Berger and Milkman (2012), and van Dijk (2013) demonstrate the importance of studying the impacts of racism on culture and communication, including their usage in digitally mediated platforms. Despite the importance of these works, they pay little attention to the specific ways gender and

race intersect to influence discussions of Black women in digitally mediated platforms, or the relative effects this has on positive value and recognition. In this study, I examine the ways individuals share potentially viral racist and sexist comments surrounding a young Black actress portraying Annie the Orphan.

The Study

Background: Why Quvenzhané

Comments made through the Internet have wide ranging impacts; it is important to theorize the content of the messages, name the hegemonic discourses they embody, and discuss potential—and incalculable—consequences for Black girls, women and Black femininities. Within this study, I examine the structure of comments made in response to Quvenzhané Wallis playing Orphan Annie to begin to theorize the potential discursive impact on Black girls' and women's abilities to access positive social recognition or social citizenship. I chose this image and associated body, as Quvenzhané, slotted to play Annie, is no stranger to negative comments in new media.

Quvenzhané Wallis, after her starring role in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, became a household name. Her performance was strong and in some ways breathtaking. Her character, Hushpuppy a young 6-year old girl in southern Louisiana, was forced to deal with adult situations and an abusive father. Although she was only six, she led a band of children across the county, navigated the muddy waters in search of

her mother, and stood unafraid of the imminent storm. Throughout her adventures, the camera follows Hushpuppy wearing only an old undershirt and underpants. The camera's gaze consistently focused on Hushpuppy's backside, followed her trials and tribulations as she ran through desolate and depressed areas. As some like hooks argue, this gaze and construction stripped Hushpuppy's character, and Quvenzhané's body, of innocence. [46] hooks argues, "Hushpuppy has a resilient spirit. She is indeed a miniature version of the 'strong black female matriarch,' racist and sexist representations have depicted from slavery on into the present day. Through the camera's gaze, Hushpuppy's small Black body was transformed into that of an adult." [47]

The impact of mediated narratives and constructions of bodies was evident during the 2013 Academy Awards, [48] when a staff writer for The Onion, a satirical newspaper, called 9-year old Wallis a "cunt." [49] The staffer tweeted, "Everyone else seems afraid to say it, but that *Quvenzhané Wallis is kind of a cunt, right*? #Oscars2013." The comment was favorited at least 411 times and received over 500 retweets. While favoriting signals the intentional 'liking' of a comment, re-tweeting could occur as the result of frustration or anger towards the comment. However, it is unknown which response was greater, or the impetus behind re-tweeting the comment. Further, the heightened attention paid to this comment and its virality signal the importance in examining the ways we discuss Black girls and women's bodies in media. While The Onion is a satirical paper, making the staffer's tweet a joke, the ability to jokingly call a young girl a "cunt" exists

as the result of the intersection of racism and sexism, which defines Black female bodies as hypersexual, angry, and emasculating, or the colloquial definition of a cunt.

Although the right to recognition is not a main component within social citizenship literature, instead focusing on access to education or other social goods, like Somers and Roberts (2008) and Somers (2008), [64] I argue that positive value and recognition are imperative to understanding contemporary structures of racism and sexism and its affects on Black girls and women's lives. The rapid pace of new media makes racist and sexist discourses unremitting: the Internet is available all day everyday, where images and texts, even if deleted, remain. Physical bodies need not be present for individuals to discuss and demean them in digitally mediated platforms; the essence of bodies remains as after-images, where the fluidity of crooked spaces reinforces controlled racist and sexist discourses. The intangible and fictitious bodies of Black girls and women, irrespective of age, remain enmeshed in identity politics.

In the following sections, I address the movie, and how individuals in digitally mediated platforms responded to Quvenzhané Wallis playing the iconic White fictitious character Orphan Annie. I interrogate online comments or micro-blogs—comments made in digitally mediated platforms—to ascertain adherence to racist and sexist discourses. Within this, I examine how discourses maintain controlled representations of Black femininity and further restrict access to positive value and recognition, or social citizenship.

Annie *the Movie*

Annie, produced by Jada Pinkett Smith, Will Smith, and Jay-Z, released in December 2014, and stars Quvenzhané Wallis as Annie, Jamie Foxx as Daddy Warbucks, and Cameron Diaz as Ms. Hannigan. The remake is centered in New York City, with an updated vibe—Daddy Warbucks is telecommunications billionaire who would like to run for Mayor of New York, throughout the film, advanced technology is prominently displayed, and it is set in a contemporary urban environment: Brooklyn, which makes the classic tale more appealing to children and "tweens." When Quvenzhané Wallis landed the role of Annie costarring with Jamie Foxx, a fissure that possessed the possibility for respectable inclusion occurred. The updated set, urban environment and use of technology provided the space to envision a new Annie. However, the cartographies of race and its intersection with gender generally, and within this paper Black girls and women specifically, places their bodies outside the parameters of acceptability.

The original Orphan Annie was a beloved character. Annie's story represents the triumph of the human spirit, the achievement of the American dream—anyone can make it and miracles do happen. Individuals questioning Quvenzhané's ability to portray this represent the continued mapping of Black femininities as pathological and outside the parameters of emphasized and respected femininity. Although some responses to the movie are positive, met with excitement, and acknowledge it as an updated version, others remain

skeptical with some engaging an angry tone, pointing to Quvenzhané brown-body as problematic.

Methods

The ability to engage with new media provides the possibility for community or neighborhood like interactions, engagement, or distinctions based upon features like race, class, and gender (i.e. Black Twitter) that can be studied through inter and intra group interactions. Additionally, new media provides the possibility for micro-level engagement that mirrors lived experiences in digitally mediated platforms and has the potential for offline, and tangible individual or group effects. [50] Although the Internet is largely a public domain, there are certain segments or spaces, or moments where one believes they are in the company of those 'like them,' revealing personal information or beliefs they may otherwise conceal. At other times, individuals irrespective of their engagement (backstage or frontstage) employ the racist and sexist frames that in other circumstances would be taboo. [51]

To understand the ways individuals use the Internet to discuss Black girls and women, including ways that maintain social exclusion, I examine online comments. [52] I engage a Black feminist critical discourse analysis lens, and argue the effects of racist and sexist discourses in digitally mediated platforms, similar to Harris-Perry's crooked room, create crooked spaces for Black women. These spaces control, police, and restrict Black women's ability to belong and

access full social citizenship in both online and offline spaces. I am intentional in the use of space instead of room as it better suits the non-physicality, amorphous, and indistinct structure of the Internet. The use of spaces also provides the opportunity to theorize the ways seemingly dimorphic constructs—the 'real' world and the 'online' world—exist in symbiotic relationships and provide the space to reaffirm and recreate exclusionary discourses.

Online Analysis

In selecting the websites to use for analysis, I intentionally chose sites that in discussed celebrity news and popular events. In selecting articles for analysis, I chose one from a general online 'paper,' the *Guardian* that explicitly discussed the role of racism in conversations of the movie (581 comments), and one from an entertainment site, *E! Online* that discussed the movie and its cast (238 comments), totaling 819 comments. I examined comments line-by-line, using key words, tenor or tone, and engagement with subtle or overt sexist and / or racist narratives. This process resulted in 115 comments: 74 from the *Guardian* and 41 from *E! Online*. The comments represent a little more than ten percent of total comments made. I further analyzed each comment for subtle or overt engagement with racist and sexist narratives, which resulted in three themes: Political Misappropriations, Racist and Sexist Narratives, and Historicizing Fiction. I discuss each theme with relevant findings in the next section. Please note unlike the *Guardian*, *E! Online* names can be sentences, which I abbreviate after initial mentioning.

Results and Discussion

The politics of race within the context of the US are difficult to discuss. This partially stems from America's inability to have a true reconciliation with its racist and sexist politics –those particularly affecting both Black women and men– after the end of legalized second-class citizenship in 1964/1965. Rather than discussing the effects of racism and sexism on the country, those negatively and positively impacted by stratified laws and policies, many, mostly those adhering to the white racial frame, opted for abstracted liberalism, or the belief that we had "overcome" racial tensions. [53] As this belief system progressed, when racism and its intersection with sexism were brought to the fore, media, politicians, and everyday citizens pointed to success stories, argued people played "the race card," or termed minorities "special interest groups," nullifying challenges. With continued challenges to racial and gender inequalities, those advancing the white racial frame—successfully veiled within colorblind or post-racial discourses—more fervently cling to myths and inverted beliefs to support racist and sexist arguments. These challenges reframe and misappropriate the politics of racism, making the victims aggressors, engage racist and sexist narratives often veiled within seemingly benign language, and demarcate boundaries of belonging, recreating fictitious characters into living icons.

Political Misappropriations

The theme, Misappropriated Politics encompasses narratives that directly engage the myths of race, or inverted epistemologies that reframe the right to be upset with, or challenge "racist" characterizations. This theme had the largest number of comments and longest narratives, totaling 56 comments. Those employing misappropriated politics called upon narratives that reverse the structure of racism or political correctness: the substation of Black bodies should exist without question unlike White bodies that create "problems." Within this theme, individuals attempted to produce "valid" arguments against the inclusion of Black characters in historically White roles. They argued the use of Black bodies in historically White roles resulted from politics and the advancement of these politic demonstrated a 'black agenda.' For instance, bull**** [54] responding to a comment on *E! Online* said,

> "1. They made it political. 2nd if they were going 2 remake a classic then it should be like the classic. .3. What if bunch of white guys did a remake of "boyz n the hood" or "colors" or next Friday".. I bet there would be an uproar about that.. sorry we can dislike the move cause of the case [cast] members REGARDLESS of skin color.. I will not watch it mainly due to the political agenda and cast members. ."

Bull****'s argument engages slightly in a misappropriation; however, he points to the political motives behind questioning why Quvenzhané

could not play Annie, arguing it would be the same if White men were substituted for Blacks, in fictional (non-documentary) films. Within this argument, individuals deny the structure of race that structures experiences and categories. Although Orphan Annie was White in the comic strip and in the films, her Whiteness was not central to the character or location of the story. In contrast, *Boyz 'n the Hood* and *Friday*. center on the lives of young Black men in urban environments. Race is central to these movies, and if removed would drastically change the characters and their life situations. The "politics" called into question by bull****, while central to the white racial frame and inversions of racism ignores the nature of racial politics within Hollywood, which historically and contemporarily [55] whitewashes characters.

Like bull****, gingerliu inverted politics saying, "Okay.lets [sic] what happens when a well known 'black' story is cast with white people. You can bet everyone will complain. But here, because its [sic] the other way round [sic], it's 'racist.'" gingerliu's argument centers on the belief that there are political motivations behind the casting of a Black actress in a designated White role, and that if a 'black role' were recast, it would cause an uproar. This narrative ignores the consistent whitewashing of Hollywood and the entertainment industry in general; instead relying on a myth that Whiteness is under attack within movies and in online comments. Similarly, Kevin King, when responding to Oirish Martin's argument that Quvenzhané's portrayal was merely tokenism due to "reasons," commented, "Yeah, its well out of order, I'm sick of being oppressed by too [sic]. Anyway, I was

thinking we could meet up and chuck a burning cross in to her front garden? Get back to me ASAP please."

The assertions made by bull****, Oirish, Kevin King, and gingerliu reframe the politics of oppression making Whites the victims of oppression. It is important to remember that online comments have multiple readings or interpretations based upon previous interactions with the author, one's perspective, and the overall tenor or tone of the larger conversation. Although one could argue Kevin King's statements are ironic and, thus, fail to challenge the politics oppression in the United States, that is a reading done outside the conversation and through a particular lens. Further, the overall response to King's comments, irrespective of his claimed intent, added to the overall conversation that justified disproportionate experiences of violence and advocated violent attitudes. Therefore, the satirical nature does not take away from the potential impact on readers who see it as normative and reminds others of the impacts racism has on our everyday lives and perceptions of humor.

Racist and Sexist Narratives

This theme examined the ways online comments engaged racist and sexist narratives to discuss Black girls and women's bodies. Although this theme had the fewest comments at 27, the comments demonstrate the continued reliance on myths of inferiority and pathology. These comments, bound within duplicitous words and images of the white racial frame often exist without direct acknowledgement or

realization. [56] This maintains the belief that Black girls and women are hypersexual, strong, and emasculating.

A conversation between stoneface1, vonZepplin, and marinated on the *Guardian* demonstrated the intersecting discourses of racism and sexism. stoneface1 began, "does annie [sic] still get her gun in this version," vonZeppelin replied, "uzi kiddin.[sic]?," to which marinated replied "its [sic] in her pocket..."As demonstrated through the pun-laden conversation Black female bodies are not funny innocent orphans, instead they are violent gun-toting adults reinforcing negative constructions that support social exclusion from belonging.

HAHA HOHO, on March 5 in response to spb, who said, "So...they changed the races, the names and even the time period. Why the **** even call it "Annie?," said " Should call it Shaundara or Lekeisha." Similarly, PGalore posted, "Annie-qua. I don't think so. A total bomb." The addition of 'qua,' 'Le,' and 'dra' turned a normative name, like Annie or Keisha, into a 'Black' name. Moving it beyond stereotypical additions to traditionally Eurocentric names, sonteface1 posted "uvavu eranu" to the *Guardian* in response to someone saying they could not pronounce her name. stoneface1's assertion that her name is garbled language and a random string of consonants and vowels belittles Quvenzhané's name and reminds the audience that Black names are nonsensical and thus do not deserve respect.

The discursive impact of sexist and racist narratives embedded within society is further evidenced through Commontata's March 11 post to the *Guardian*, "Say what you like about the kid but adorable she ain't – she is precocious and quite unlikable. She may be a great little actress but that is what it is – an act, Dapperchap could not understand why "precocious has so many negative connotations. All it means is the child developed faster, generally mentally, than their peers. Surly [sic] this is not a negative trait in itself?" Although Dapperchap's assertion that the term in and of itself is nothing more than a more advanced child, when taking account of the discursive impact racism and sexism have on the ontology of Black femininity, the benign word transforms into malicious indictment. Black girls, like Quvenzhané, are denied the opportunity to be young and innocent, their behaviors automatically cast as more developed than their peers are: they are always already adults.

Historicizing Fiction

Quvenzhané's young Black body substituted for the fair, nearly porcelain, and red-haired Annie ruptured viewers perceptions of the film, and the ways filmmakers should or should not present bodies. The final theme, historicizing fiction, examines the perceptions individuals have of the character Annie, focusing on the ways individuals recreated Annie's fictional body into that of a historical persona or icon and accounted for 32 comments.

Narratives within this theme failed to see or acknowledge that Orphan Annie, albeit a beloved character was fictional. Although I acknowledge that for some, beloved fictional characters become 'real' and carry with that the love and passion one may feel for a person. However, it is important to understand that even if the character was "real" to a person, it still lies within a fictional base that operates outside of a specified race and as such, should allow for various representations or constructions.

Pazuzu, in response to the *Guardian* article said, "These poor deluded PC souls don't realize that Annie and Daddy Warbucks are historical characters, and that the comic strip as well as the musical are concerned mainly with accurate historical portrayal. Therefore, Annie must always be played by a white Girl." Although Pazuzu later argued he was being sarcastic, 10 commenters believed his text. We cannot be sure that Pazuzu was in fact being sarcastic, as one user argued before Pazuzu responded that was in fact the case, or if he agreed due to the responses. Once posted, W's comment presented Annie the spunky and ever-loved orphan as a historical figure who lived and deserved respect. This comment also points to the inversions of the white racial frame where the historical accuracy of the film negates the experiences of Blacks during the early-to-mid-twentieth century. Although the time lacked cell phones, Black people populated cities in America with orphans who were both young and Black.

W responding to the *E!* article asked, "why destroy what was already perfect." In response to a question about judging a movie they had yet to see, w responded, "did you saw the trailer?, what i'm [sic] trying to say is that annie [sic] was a beautiful classic movie why they had the need to make a remake." The classic beauty w sees lies in the white skinned and red haired body of Annie. The movie now, with a brown skinned and tightly curled, brown haired girl located in an urban environment with a Black Daddy Warbucks destroys the beauty of the film.

Orphan Annie, a comic book "heroine," like other heroes took on social mores and advanced cultural beliefs: she rescued strays, fought off gangs, and had a heart of gold—and a mean left hook. For individuals within this theme, Orphan Annie is a cultural icon. As such, her image should remain true to the comic, including her race. Because the current movie is an update, and in some ways is a reimagining of Annie to that of a 21st century girl living in an urban area, those engaged in revisioning fiction into historicalreality challenge Quvenzhané's body, the politics of misappropriated politics, and reverse racism.

For instance, manunkind posting to the *Guardian* said, "What if they casted her in Anne Frank movie [sic]?" The assertion that Quvenzhané, similar to her casting as Annie, could be placed in the role of Anne Frank, a Holocaust victim, demonstrates the intentional blurred line between fictitious and historical characters. Spb continued,

> There's nothing wrong in change, per se, or remakes… but
> to take property that has existed one way for decades (with
> particular looks for the characters, particular names & a
> particular period) and simply make a modern-day "black
> version" doesn't do anyone any favors and should not be
> seen as progress. In fact, it's tokenism. Plus, this version just
> looks BAD.

The idea that there are "black versions" without acknowledging the whiteness of television is a common misnomer. [57] These narratives also move the fiction of White oppression –there is no White Entertainment Television, as Randandan argued– to reality. Commenters advancing these narratives portend the belief that Whites experience reverse racism. Within the context of *Annie*, the use of a Black girl's body to replace that of fair skinned red-haired White woman demonstrates the discrimination (loss of roles to Blacks) Whites experience and garners vehement responses.

Conclusion

As Sassen argues, much of what happens in digitally mediated platforms are "deeply inflected by the cultures, the material practices, the imaginaries, that take place outside electronic space." [58] The overlapping construction of culture, power, ideology, and technology creates a hybrid structure that presents historically racist and sexist belief systems in new spaces, or digitally mediated platforms. The results of the inflection are embedded within comments left by

individuals, who reflect the material practices of denying positive social recognition to Black bodies through hyper-speed and endless narratives.

As presented within this article, comments made in digitally mediated platforms at times engage negative, racist, and sexist narratives to respond to stories irrespective of the format or general conversation. Some refer to these responses as trolling. [59] Trolls intentionally aggravate the audience, seeking out spaces where their mediated bodies, beliefs or perspectives will create a disruption, intentionally steering the thread away from the topic. [60] One could argue commenters like spb, Pazuzu, and gingerliu are trolls seeking disruption. However, their comments are not intentionally disruptive, and are inline with the questions and sentiments of others in the thread. Buckels, Trapnell, and Paulhus found trolling behavior correlated with sadistic personalities who derive a sense of pleasure and accomplishment from disrupting forums. Because most of the comments presented within this paper do not intentionally disrupt, nor do they appear to attempt to gain pleasure it is unlikely they are sadistic individuals seeking thrills. [61]

Racist and sexist comments, those that attempt to misappropriate politics, argue for reverse racism, and historicize fiction deny positive recognition and value. It is important to note that even if some of the comments do intentionally provoke, the discursive impact remains. Comments made in digitally mediated platforms that cry foul when a Black body portrays a White body police the

boundaries of acceptability. They also remind readers that Black women's positionality on the margins as angry, violent, sexualized beings disallows their (re)presentation of emphasized or idealized White femininities and bodies.

The positionality of Black women, from girlhood, adolescence and into adulthood is inscribed with pejorative narratives of non-idealized femininities. These narratives, presented in digitally mediated platforms continue to deny Black girls and women the opportunity to be seen as 'moral equals' worthy of equitable "social and political recognition" [62] or variable representation. Comments in digitally mediated platforms, whether subtly or overtly presenting sexist narratives control images of Black girls and women by misconstruing images, bodies, clothing, mannerisms, language, and femininity. [63] Failing to see Black girls and women outside of these constructions effectively denies social citizenship.

The comments on the *Guardian* and *E! Online* present vile narratives wrapped within seemingly benign statements. These comments reminded us of the pernicious nature of racism and its intersection with sexism, of the myths of a post-racial and/or postfeminist era. The effects of racism and sexism remain deeply entrenched in American society. As demonstrated by the comments that call upon misappropriated politics, use historically racist and sexist, or historicize fiction contort the structure of racism and sexism, belittle, denigrate, and ridicule Black culture, and maintain the belief that only Whites have the right to possess and (re)present characters.

The discursive impacts recreate crooked spaces, problematizing the possibility for positive recognition and value of Black girls and women's bodies.

Notes

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[49] "Everyone else seems afraid to say it, but that Quvenzhané Wallis is kind of a cunt, right? #Oscars2013" tweeted by The Onion at 8:42 pm on February 24, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/25/onions-controversial-tweet-quvenzhane-wallis_n_2757532.html

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[54] All names appear as they did on the website. It is unclear if the edited names (****) were chosen or imposed by a moderator.

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