

Written/
Directed by
Nehpriei Amenii

Production
Dates: Dec 3rd -
Dec 11th

FOOD FOR THE GODS: ACTOR'S PACKET

DRAMATURG:
HOLLY RICHMOND



PREFACE

PURPOSE

This packet is a digestible guide to the references, themes, and plot structure of the show, *Food for the Gods*. I won't lie, there is a *lot* of information packed into this play, so use this packet to help inform your choices as an actor, or to answer any questions you have about the material. The next page will include a table of contents broken down by act so you can more easily find information.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions, I will be attending a majority of the rehearsals so feel free to ask me anything regarding the content or themes of the play! If I'm not, my contact info is on the front of the packet. Nehprii is also a good source to answer any questions and she is very nice, so don't be afraid to ask her either :).

CONTENT WARNING

This show contains descriptions of racism, police brutality, sexual assault, murder, execution, and lynchings. This packet will also have information and/or pictures on these topics to provide context to the play. Content warnings on pages where these will be mentioned and/ or shown will be in the Table of Contents.

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CH 1

Cause for Indifference

Despair

It is incredibly disheartening to see a system constantly rigged against you push you down again and again, while gaslighting you into thinking that progress is being made, or things are getting better. In some ways, things have gotten better for the African American community. But, between the trends of discrimination, incarceration and death penalty rates, and having to try and find help in a system initially created to oppress black people in early America, it's very easy to see why so many people despair that things are never going to get better, and these frustrations are aired by the Girl in Act I of *Food for the Gods*. She's right: this is psychological warfare. The only way for these problems to be solved is for them to be acknowledge, something no one in a position of power wants to do until someone gets killed and, even then, the public forgets and the cycle continues.

CH 2

Statistics and Graphs on the Judicial System

Historical Through-lines: Penitentiaries

On March 3rd, 1891, Congress passed a law to construct the first three federal penitentiaries. They were:

- 1) 1895: Fort Leavenworth in Kansas
- 2) 1902: Atlanta Federal Penitentiary in Georgia
- 3) 1907: McNeil Island, off the coast of Washington State

These three were the only federal prisons until 1925

- For context, the U.S. now has 122 federal prisons

Historical Through-lines: Policing

What we know as the modern police system evolved from slave patrols. These patrols existed to keep slaves and formally enslaved people "in line," using terror and violence to get work done on and around plantations. These patrols existed until the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865, where they were quickly replaced with independent militia groups in the Reconstruction Era. The main goal of these groups was to try and restrict freed slaves from enjoying/ practicing as many human rights as possible, including but not limited to:

- Access to labor
- Access to wages
- Voting rights
- General freedoms

Once these groups were restricted through the passage of the 14th Amendment, they were replaced by the Jim Crow laws and segregation, which police groups had to uphold.

Statistics and Graphs on the Judicial System

Incarceration Fact Sheet

- U.S. population = 329.5 million (as of 2020).
- African American/ Hispanic population = 32% of U.S. population (~105.4 million).
- African American and Hispanic people make up 56% of the U.S. prison population.
 - African Americans alone make up 34% of the prison pop (~2.3 million people)
 - Black people are incarcerated 5x more than white people.
- “40% (48 encounters out of 120) of police accounts explicitly cite ‘suspicious behavior or appearance’ or traffic violations (‘driving while Black’) as the reason for their attempt to detain the person who they eventually killed”
- Rates of incarceration for African American children:
 - 32% of children arrested
 - 42% of children detained
 - African American children make up 14% of the U.S. population (~46,130 people)
- Since the 1970s, the prison population has risen by 700%
 - Since the 1990s, violent crime in the U.S has gone down by 20%, but the number of incarcerated people has risen by 50%.

List of Things Formerly Incarcerated People Lose

It varies from state to state, but convicted felons in the U.S. can lose:

- The right to vote
- The right to bear arms
- Public social benefits and housing
- The ability to travel abroad
- Employment opportunities
- The ability to serve on a jury
- Parental benefits

Statistics and Graphs on the Judicial System

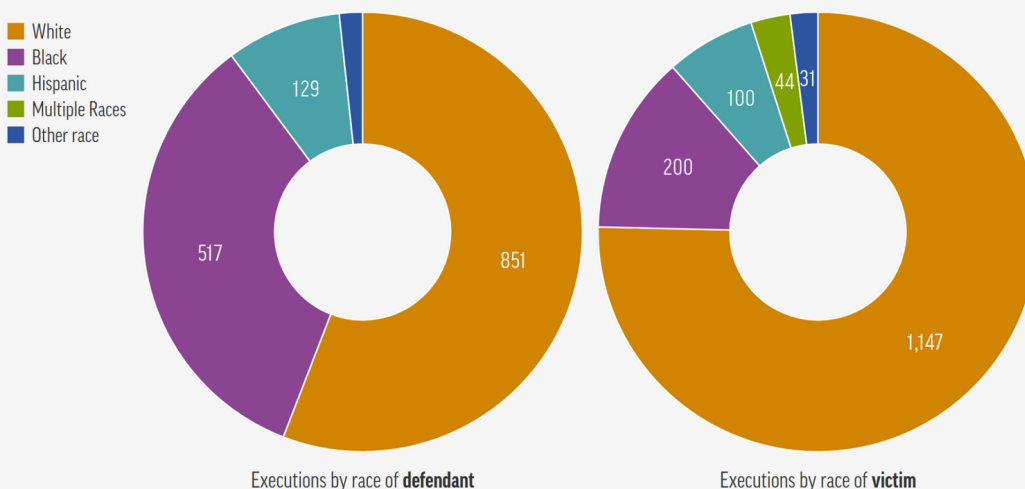
The Death Penalty

The death penalty in the U.S., much like most judicial and penal systems here, is disproportionately slanted against African American people. According to a study done by the Death Penalty Information Center, "The report found that throughout the modern era, people of color have been overrepresented on death row — in 2019, 52% of the death row inmates were Black, but that number has dropped to 42% this year, when approximately 60% of the population is white. But it also showed that the killers of white people were more likely than the killers of Black people to face the death penalty, and cases with white victims were more likely to be investigated."

Also found in the report were how the scheduling of executions are politically motivated, with the first set usually being entirely comprised of white men. "Of the 57 people on federal death row, 34 are people of color, including 26 Black men, some convicted by all-white juries...."

More executed for killing white people

Since capital punishment was reinstated in the 1970s, many more defendants convicted of killing white people have been put to death than those convicted of killing people of color.



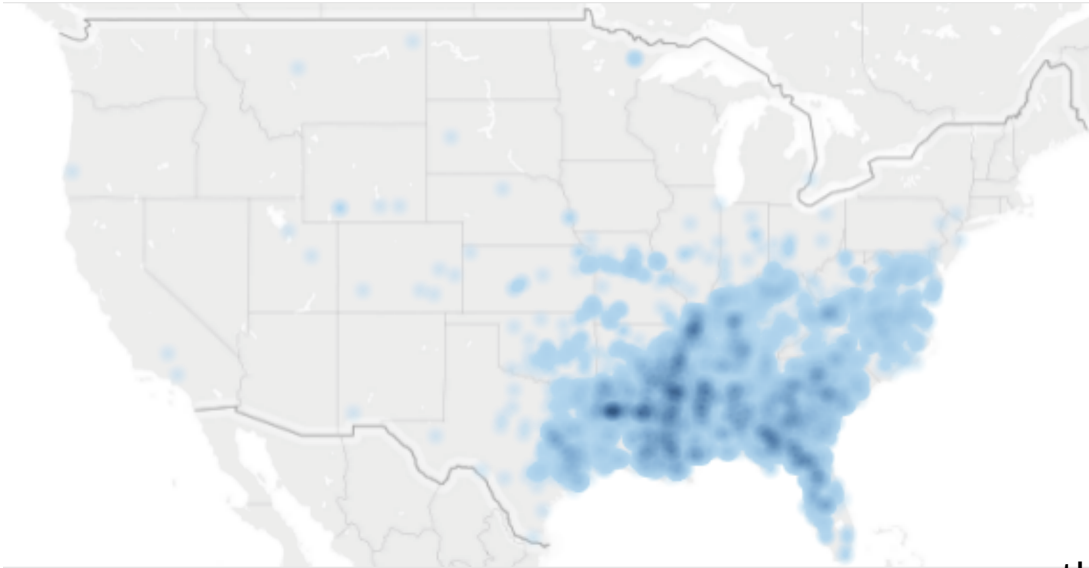
Source: Death Penalty Information Center

AP

This graph compares the execution of defendants by race and the executions of victim by race. While there are more white people, it's important to remember that Black people are overrepresented on death row (see info above for reference).

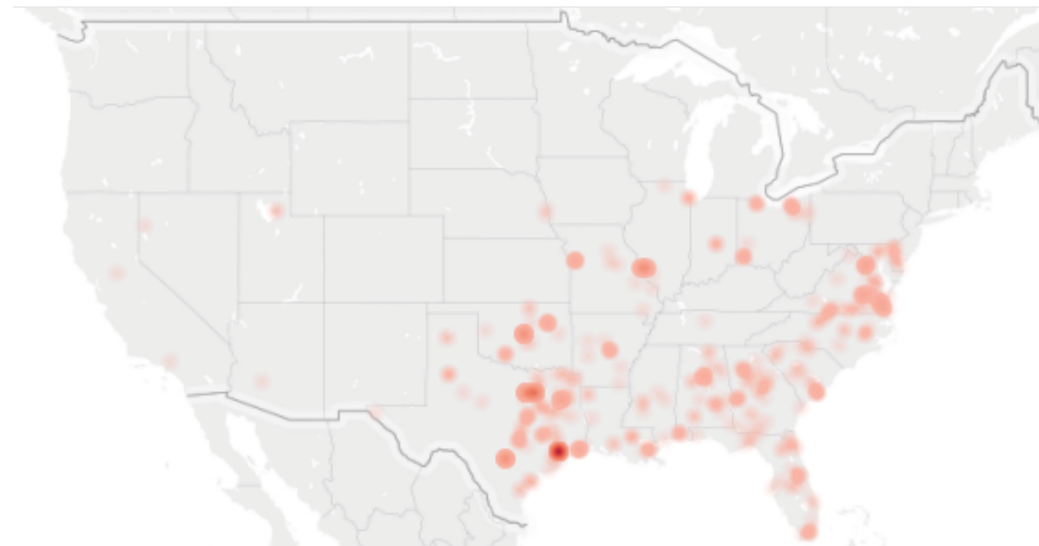
Statistics and Graphs on the Judicial System

Lynchings of Black Victims Between 1883 and 1940



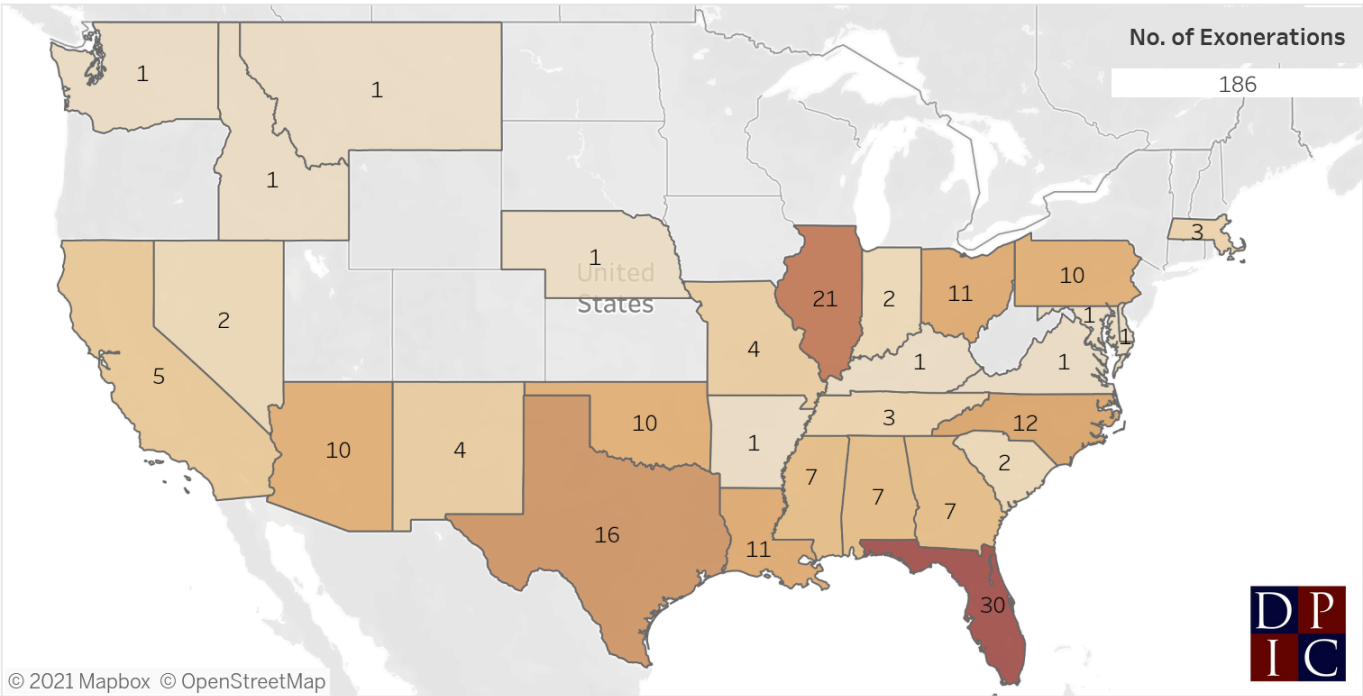
These maps compare how the practice of lynching across the U.S. links closely to disproportionate killing of Black defendants in certain regions of the country, specifically the Southern region.

Executions of Black Defendants Between 1972 and 2020

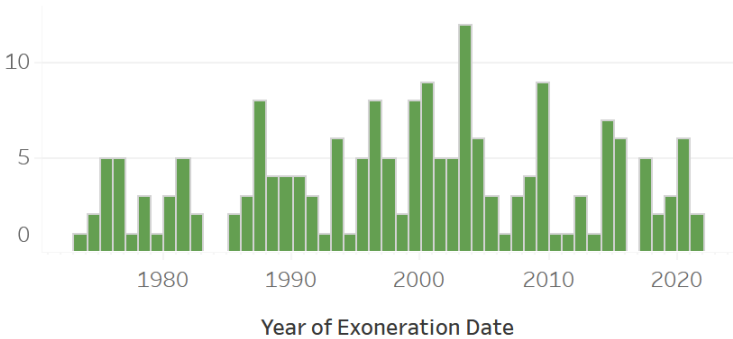
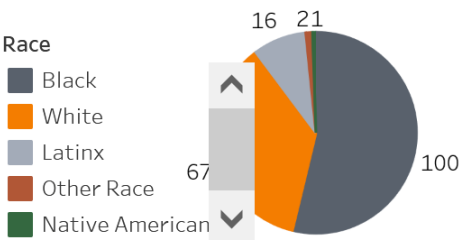


Statistics and Graphs on the Judicial System

Death-Row Exonerations



Exonerations by Race



While innocent people are being exonerated from wrongful convictions, as you can see from the map chart, there have only been 186 exonerations from 1973 to 2021. There are plenty more wrongfully convicted people, especially Black people, that are in jail or on death row.

CH 3

Other Symbols and References in Act I

Max Roach + Abbey Lincoln's Tears for Protest

Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite on the full album: *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite*, contained these artists:

- Vocals: Abbey Lincoln
- Max Roach: Drums
- Piano: Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson
- Bass: Eddie Khan
- Saxophone: Clifford Jordan



This Black jazz piece that was often described as the “uncontrollable unleashing of rage and anger that have been compressed in fear for so long,” was written as a response to the violence against Black people during the Civil Rights Movement, specifically towards the negative reactions towards the Woolworth Counter Sit-In and the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa.

Strawberries, Chocolate, and Wine

Overall, all three of these food items display decadence. However, with their presence at a funeral reception, the meanings change slightly.

Strawberries:

Strawberries are often associated with love and fertility, and are recognized as a "feminine" plant linked to the goddess, Venus. In Native American folklore, strawberries were a symbol of rebirth, since they were found at the beginning of the spring season.

Chocolate:

The meaning of chocolate stays pretty much the same in terms of decadence, but it is also symbolic for love, happiness, and hope for good times ahead.

Wine:

Wine is most associated with happiness, togetherness, and, most importantly, transformation. It is often a symbol of blood, as is seen in Christian communion tradition, and can be linked to the brevity of life, since most wine is the best long after its original creator is gone. 9

Other Symbols and References in Act I

Nothing But Water

Nothing But The Water (I), by Grace Potter & The Nocturnals, was released on their album of the same name in 2005. Normally, Grace Potter is a rock musician, mixed with a little bit of folk, and this song plays more into the latter, specifically drawing upon themes often used in African American gospel music. The themes include water and being made pure by water through baptism and how people united are more powerful than one. I unfortunately don't know much else about the song and Potter's development of it or if she's covering/ drawing heavy inspiration from a particular African American artist. The only thing I could find was that she was inspired by the music of the late 60s/ early 70s.

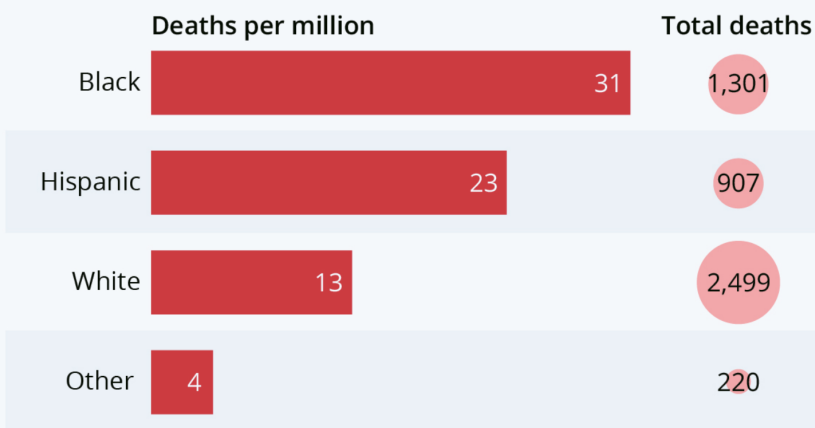


CH 4

Cause for Rage

U.S. Police Shootings: Blacks Disproportionately Affected

Number of people killed in police shootings in the U.S. since January 1, 2015



As of July 14, 2020

Source: The Washington Post



statista

Police kill a disproportionate number of black people

US population

BLACK HISPANIC WHITE

13% 17% 63%

All people killed by police

31% 12% 52%

People killed by policing while not attacking

39% 12% 46%

Data from the FBI's 2012 Supplementary Homicide Report

CH 5

Transatlantic Slave Trade

Brief History

From 16th-19th century: 12-15 million African people were enslaved and passed through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. During this span of time, there were over 20,000 recorded voyages in which 10-19% of all kidnapped African people died during the transport process. A majority of kidnapped African people were shipped out of Ghana, where the most infamous captive ports and captive dungeons in the world were, to the point where the passage way between the dungeon and the port was called "the door of no return." If you're viewing this online, below is a link to an animation showing the progress of the trade up until it was outlawed in the U.S. in the 1800s.

- <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2021/09/atlantic-slave-trade-history-animated-interactive.html>

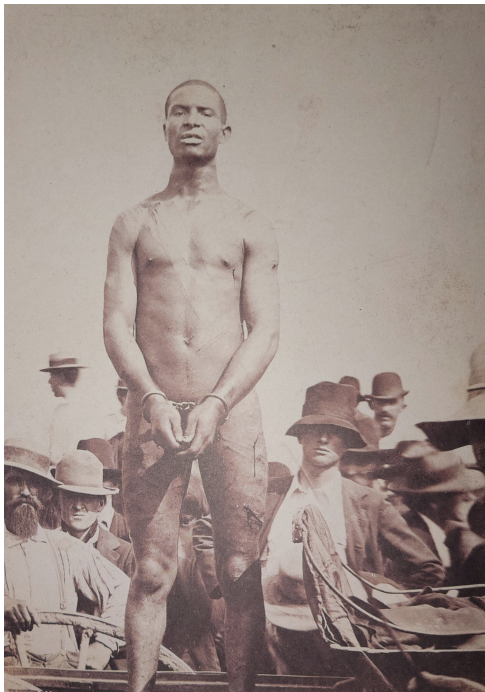


Pictured above is the Cape Coast Castle, one of the most infamous captive dungeons. It was originally constructed by a British merchant company in 1652 and thousands of kidnapped African people passed through its door before slavery was made illegal in England.

CH 6

The Happenings and Stories

Frank Embree, 1889



Falsely accused of assaulting and raping a 14 year old white girl, Frank was caught by an angry white mob. His lynching was on July 22, 1899, after he was captured, handcuffed and stripped naked to be forced to confess guilt. When the stripping did not work on Frank, he was then whipped 103 times with a bullwhip that tore into his skin and caused severe bleeding. He was whipped 50 more times again before begging to talk. Seeing that he would die anyhow, Frank confessed to the crime and pleaded that he would not be burned to death and that his parents were told about his death. According to a reporter's account which was not added to the newspaper details about his capture and death, Frank was castrated and made to eat parts of his manhood before he was finally led to an oak tree to be hanged. Images of his lynching were made into postcards for the white community.

The Happenings and Stories

George Stinney, 1944



At the age of 14, Stinney was convicted, in a proceeding later vacated as an unfair trial in 2014, of murdering two white girls in his hometown of Alcolu, South Carolina. He was executed by electric chair in June 1944, thus becoming the youngest American with an exact birth date confirmed to be sentenced to death and executed in the 20th century.

Amadou Diallo, 1975



Diallo was an unarmed 23-year-old Guinean immigrant fatally shot by four NYPD plainclothes officers. One officer would later claim to have mistaken him for a rape suspect from one year earlier. The officers were later acquitted, setting off a firestorm of controversy.

The Happenings and Stories

Emmett Till, 1955



Emmett Louis Till was a 14-year-old African American who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955, after being accused of offending a white woman in her family's grocery store. Despite the gruesome brutality of his murder and state of his corpse, Till's mother decided to have an open-casket funeral, saying: "There was just no way I could describe what was in that box. No way. And I just wanted the world to see."

Tens of thousands of people lined the street outside the mortuary to view Till's body, and days later thousands more attended his funeral. In September 1955, an all-white jury found Bryant and Milam not guilty of Till's kidnapping and murder. Protected against double jeopardy, the two men publicly admitted in a 1956 interview with *Look* Magazine that they had killed Till.

Till's murder was seen as a catalyst for the next phase of the civil rights movement. In December 1955, the Montgomery bus boycott began in Alabama and lasted more than a year, resulting eventually in a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that segregated buses were unconstitutional. According to historians, events surrounding Emmett Till's life and death continue to resonate. Some writers have suggested that almost every story about Mississippi returns to Till, or the Delta region in which he died, in "some spiritual, homing way".

The Happenings and Stories

Kenneth Chamberlain, 2011



After his LifeAid medical alert necklace was inadvertently triggered by his pacemaker, police came to his home and demanded that he open his front door. Despite his objections and statements that he did not need help, the police broke down Chamberlain's door. According to police, Chamberlain charged at them with a knife and he was tasered, and then fatally shot.

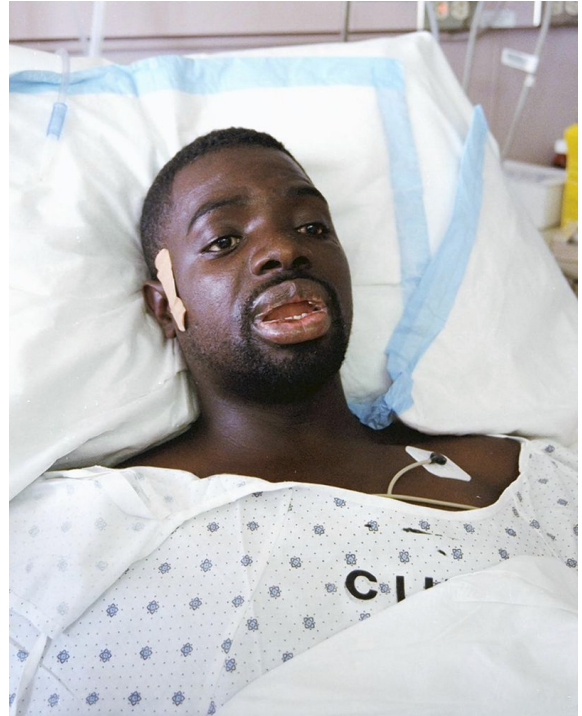
Oscar Grant, 2009



Oscar Grant III was a 22-year-old African-American man who was fatally shot while lying face-down in the early morning hours of New Year's Day 2009 by a BART Police Officer in Oakland, California. His death was captured on cell phone video, which went viral and sparked protests in Oakland calling for officers to be brought to justice.

The Happenings and Stories

Abner Louima, 1997



Louima, trained as an electrical engineer in his native Haiti, worked as a security guard in Brooklyn, where he resided with his wife and child. After visiting Club Rendez-Vous, a popular hotspot in Flatbush, he and fellow partygoers got in the middle of a fight between two women. When the police showed up, the officers beat the man with nightsticks, two-way radios, and their fists while taking him to a 70th Precinct holding cell. Cops took Louima to a bathroom in the precinct and continued to beat him while Officer (at the time) Justin Volpe kicked him and squeezed his privates. Volpe then took a plunger handle and sexually assaulted Louima, bragging to a fellow officer that he “took a man down tonight,” according to the trial testimony. His injuries were so severe as to require three major surgeries and a two-month hospitalization, and it stands as one of the most vicious examples of police brutality in America.

The Happenings and Stories

Fred Hampton, 1969



Fred Hampton was a prominent leader of the NAACP, specifically their Youth Council. He joined the Black Panther Party in 1968, and quickly became the head of the Illinois chapter. He organized peace treaties between rival Chicago gangs, established a free breakfast program for kids, and organized rallies. Hampton, on Dec 3rd, 1969, was assassinated by the FBI in his own apartment, after eating drugged food at rally.

Sean Bell, 2006



November 25, 2006—the night of Bell's bachelor party and the day before his wedding. Bell and two close friends were shot a total of fifty times by five uniformed and plainclothes undercover New York Police Department officers. Bell died, and two of his friends, Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman, were severely wounded.

The Happenings and Stories

Kalief Browder, 2015



Browder was a 17 year old who was held at the Rikers Island jail complex, without trial, between 2010 and 2013 for allegedly stealing a backpack containing valuables. At his arrest, Browder asked the officers why he was being charged and said, "I didn't do anything." A police officer told Browder he would be taken to the precinct and would likely be allowed to go home. Browder and his friend were taken to the 48th Precinct police station, where they were fingerprinted and kept in a holding cell for a few hours. They were then taken to the Bronx County Criminal Court, where they were processed at the court's central booking, interrogated, charged, and taken to Rikers.

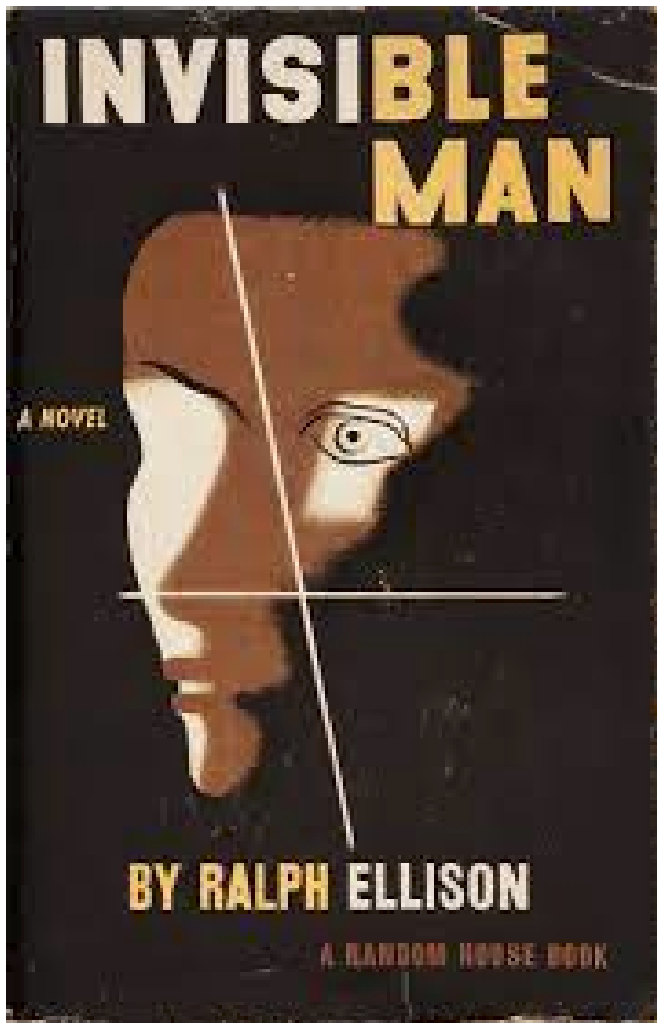
During his imprisonment, Browder was in solitary confinement for two years. Two years after his release, Browder hanged himself at his parents' home. His case has been cited by activists campaigning for reform of the New York City criminal justice system and has attracted widespread attention in the years following his death.

CH 7

The Soundscape

Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*

Emerson's *Invisible Man*, one of the top 100 books of the 20th century, is an exploration of race & identity. Emerson based a lot of the events in the book off of interviews he conducted with other African American people as a part of the Federal Writers Project in 1938 about their experiences with being black in the U.S. The opening line reflects the tone for the whole novel:



"I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."

The Soundscape

"Joy and Pain"

Rob Base and DJ EZ rock, "Joy and Pain" is a 90s Hip Hop/ Rap song that was based off of the song "Joy and Pain" by Maze ft. Frankie Beverley. The original song is an 80s R&B song and the meaning behind both versions is that, even though there are bad things in life that'll bring you down, you have to remember that there are good things that make it worth living to the fullest.



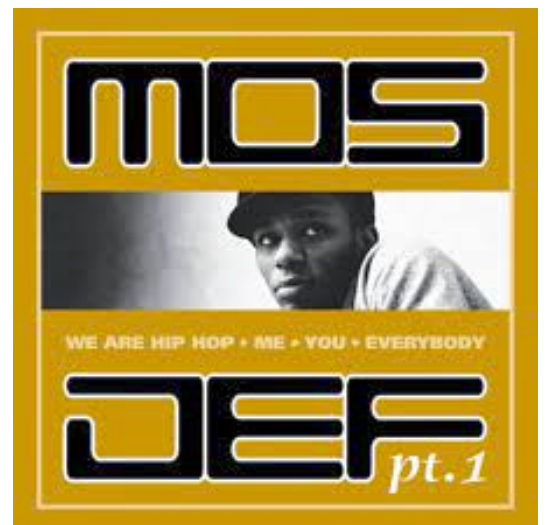
"If I Ruled the World"

Kurtis Blow's "If I Ruled the World," is a 1985 Hip Hop song about what the world would be like if the singer was in charge. He lists off examples like "Peace in every culture" and "Build the homeless a home." He admits that, while the task wouldn't be easy, it would be worth it to make sure that everyone was happy and taken care of.



"Soldier's Dream"

MOS DEF's, "Soldier's Dream," is a Hip Hop song that comes off more like a spoken word performance piece set to a Hip Hop beat track. The song talks about the collective PTSD of African Americans because of the systemic racism in the U.S. It compares racism in America as a constant war, and generations of African Americans as the soldiers, with invisible scars from unfair treatment and lack of recognition in US culture.



The Soundscape

Zora Neale Hurston, "Zombies"

This writing was Hurston's account of her trip to Haiti in order to learn more about the Voudoux (aka in the U.S, "voodoo") religion and the phenomenon of zombies. While there, Hurston met a woman named Felicia Felix-Mentor who had been dead and buried 29 years prior in 1907. Apparently, Felix-Mentor had been buried and mourned for by her family and, right before Hurston arrived in Haiti, Felix-Mentor showed up at her old property. Her husband confirmed it was her but, because she was technically dead and everyone had moved on and started new parts of their lives, there was nothing left to be done but put her in a hospital and waiting to die again. The theory Hurston came up with to explain this was that Felix-Mentor was given a poison that simulated death and also damaged the brain, so she was left a shell of herself when she woke up but, before she could investigate further, Hurston fell ill with stomach problems.

But, she did learn this: the key to understanding zombies was to not try and decipher the culture to look for all these intricacies; just believe someone and their experiences with that religion.



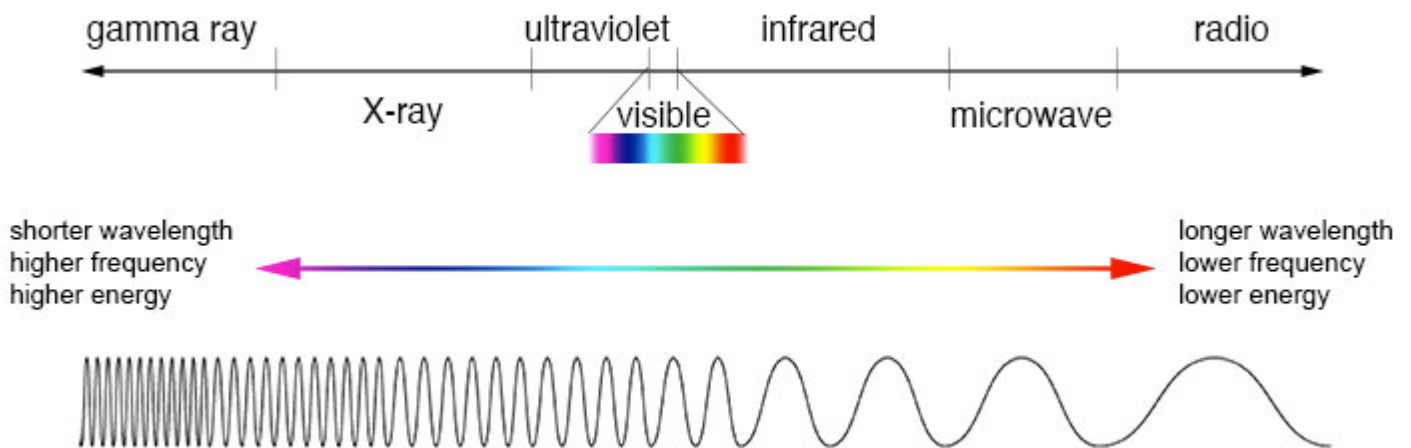
"Religions survive not because people love the faith of their fathers but because they help us navigate the world as we find it." - Zora Neale Hurston

Picture on the left: Felicia Felix Mentor

The Soundscape

Dark Matter

Dark matter is a hypothetical form of matter thought to account for approximately 85% of the matter in the universe and about 27% of its total mass-energy density. Primary evidence for dark matter comes from calculations showing that many galaxies would fly apart, or that they would not have formed or would not move as they do, if they did not contain a large amount of unseen matter. It is the force that keeps the entire universe and black holes together and, while there's a lot of regular matter, there will be infinitely more dark matter. We just don't know how to comprehend it.



Visible light is the only thing that we can be able to comprehend, and that leaves a lot of mystery to the known universe in addition to the unknown.

The Soundscape

James Baldwin, “Who’s the nigger?”

James Baldwin was an American essayist, novelist, playwright, and poet. His first career was a preacher to follow in his father's footsteps but even though he was a great writer, he had a great fear of public speaking. In his writing, Baldwin dealt with themes of racial tension, interracial relationships, and homosexuality, and also used it to deal with his daily musings of grief, despair, and beauty he saw in the world.

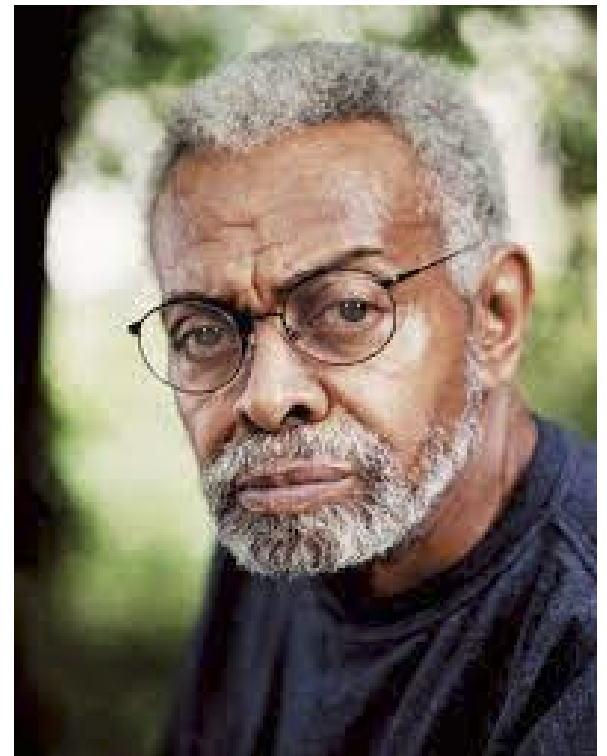
During the Civil Rights Movement, Baldwin became an essential voice and, despite his fear of public speaking, he went on a speaking tour in the early 60s to raise money for CORE (Congress of Racial Equality). While he was afraid of public speaking, people loved hearing Baldwin speak because he spoke with brutal honesty about the problems affecting African Americans. He taught black students to always question their schooling, since the government controls public education and was a strong opponent of using racial slurs, as he saw them as a tool for white people to create an “other” and separate themselves even further from them, creating more oppression. Despite the severity of his work, Baldwin was an advocate for brotherhood and love.



The Soundscape

Amiri Baraka

Amiri Baraka (previously known as LeRoi Jones) was an author, poet, and playwright that was most known for his biting social criticism through his work and incendiary style, which often made it hard for critics to remain objective when reviewing. Incredibly confrontational in his work, Baraka used this style to call attention to the issues within and happening to the African American community as a whole and became so influential that he is often regarded as one of the most important writers in the 20th century. He believed that black writers should look to black influences and beauty standards when writing, instead of looking for the approval of white people and that poetry should be a response to your lived experience, not outdated rhetoric. Because of this mindset and his approach to his work, Baraka is also considered to be “One of the 8 figures... who have significantly affected the course of African-American literary culture.”



CH 8

Other Symbols and References in Act II

White, Red, and Black

The colors of white, red, and black come up consistently in the imagery throughout *Food for the God*, so I think that it's important to analyze the symbolism and meaning behind each of these colors and how they relate to the themes of the show, as well as the significance to African spirituality and culture.

White:

White is often seen as a color of magicalness. In the Middle East, the religious concept of "white magic" is used in reference to magic that is used to heal or help others, whereas "black magic" was outlawed, since it was a destructive force. Essentially, if the magic was done for a selfless purpose, it was white magic.

In West African spirituality, specifically Ghana, West Africa, white clay powder indicates spiritual purity, and is used when performing sacred rituals. In the picture to the right, the priest has covered himself in the kaolin powder considered to be food for the spirit, used to elicit the deity's power and for protection against any beings that may try and hurt him.

In addition to these meanings, the color white also symbolizes the world of spirits and ancestors, a mother's milk and nurturing, purity, procreation, and mourning a life that should be celebrated.



Other Symbols and References in Act II

Red:

Red is usually symbolic with blood in most African art, either in the context of war or childbirth. Depending on the framing of the color, then, red can either be a hyper-masculine color in the context of war, or a hyper-feminine color in the context of childbirth. Either way, red is a color that signifies royalty. In the context of funerals and mourning, red is often worn by those who were family to the deceased.



Black:

Black is a color that is largely representative with the unknown, specifically death. At funerals, black is often worn as a color to signify grief over a loved one's passing and, in Ghana in West Africa, black is a color often worn by friends of the deceased. In other instances in art, black is also symbolic for behaviors and actions that should be avoided.



Other Symbols and References in Act II

Red Carnations

As a rule of thumb in *Food for the Gods*, whenever red appears it usually is symbolic for blood, and this is especially the case for the red carnations. Outside of blood, red carnations also have important meanings attached to them. Carnations in general are usually a symbol of a woman's, specifically a mother's, love. Depending on the shade of red, the carnation takes on different meanings. Light red symbolizes friendship and admiration, dark red is for love and affection, and pink is for a mother's love. Other colors of carnations have other interesting meanings as well: white means good luck or pure love, striped means regret, and yellow means disappointment and sorrow.



Celestial Knowings

Hush Houses

Hush Houses, also known as hush harbors, brush harbors, and hush arbors, were a way for slaves to practice religion the way that they wanted to practice it. Pre- Civil War, African Americans could only worship 3 ways:

- 1) Segregated churches, accompanied by their masters and led by a white minister
- 2) African American churches
- 3) Hush harbors

While attending segregated churches and churches organized on the plantations for slaves was a safer option, most of the messages being conveyed were to be a good, loyal servant of "the Lord" and to never disobey their masters. Hush houses were the most dangerous option, since the organizations met out in the woods in the middle of the night and any slave caught would risk being beat, separated from their families, or even killed if they were caught attending these services. Because of the secrecy of these meetings, hush house services began the popularization of using songs as coded messages on when and where to meet so slaves could tell each other when services would while being worked, and the slave drivers would be none the wiser.

In addition to Christianity, hush houses would also incorporate African worship elements, such as ring shouts where a dance circle would form, moving counterclockwise, leaders lead the group in song with the rest of the group repeating back the chorus, to keep the spirit and religious practices of their homeland alive. Hush houses were also used as meeting houses for planning freedom, whether that was through organizing escapes or revolts. Nat Turner's rebellion, for example, was organized in a hush house.



Celestial Knowings

Libations

Libation, or the pouring of liquids, is performed at ceremonies such as the launching or christening of new ships, to the christening of the new human baby.

Traditionally the christening is done by breaking a sacrificial bottle of champagne over the bow of the ship, as the ship's name is called aloud during its launching. It is said that this is done to invite good luck. In certain African cultures, pouring libations on the ground is to honor ancestors, a victim of a senseless act of violence, or gods and/or deities.

Its primary importance seems to lie in the act of pouring, because the liquids that are poured out (wine, milk, honey, water, oil, and in some cases even blood) and the places where this is done (on the ground, into chasms, upon the altar, over the sacrificial victim, into a sacrificial bowl) vary and change. Libation can be traced back as far as the Bronze Age by means of libation pitchers and bowls discovered in excavations or depicted in stone reliefs and vase paintings or on gems, seals, and rings. The ritual is found in almost every culture and geographical area, but the kinds of libations and their performance, place in the cult, relations to other rituals, sacrificial materials, and possible meanings and functions differ from one religion to another and even within the same religion.

Christianity has no room for libations in its cult. It uses water in baptism; sees in wine the blood of Christ, the sacramental drink of the Eucharist (substituted in some instances by milk or honey), which is offered not to but by the deity, and certainly must not be spilled; and uses oil for sacramental anointing.



Celestial Knowings

Baptism

In the Christian Church, baptism is the religious rite of sprinkling water onto a person's forehead or of immersion in water, symbolizing purification or regeneration and admission to the Christian Church. In many denominations, baptism is performed on young children and is accompanied by name-giving.

Definition of baptism:

1a: a Christian sacrament marked by ritual use of water and admitting the recipient to the Christian community

b: a non-Christian rite using water for ritual purification

c: Christian Science : purification by or submergence in Spirit

2 : an act, experience, or ordeal by which one is purified, sanctified, initiated, or named



Celestial Knowings

The Black Madonna



The term Black Madonna or Black Virgin tends to refer to statues or paintings in Western Christendom of the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus, where both figures are depicted as black. The Black Madonna can be found both in Catholic and Orthodox countries.

The paintings are usually icons which are Byzantine in origin or style, some made in 13th- or 14th-century Italy, others are older and from the Middle East, Caucasus or Africa, mainly Egypt and Ethiopia. Statues are often made of wood but occasionally made of stone, painted and up to 75 cm (30 in) tall. They fall into two main groups: free-standing upright figures or seated figures on a throne. There are about 400–500 Black Madonnas in Europe, depending on how they are classified. There are at least 180 Vierges Noires in Southern France alone, and there are hundreds of non-medieval copies as well. Some are in museums, but most are in churches or shrines and are venerated by believers. Some are associated with miracles and attract substantial numbers of pilgrims.

CH 10

Madame Coal Belly & Ol' Man River

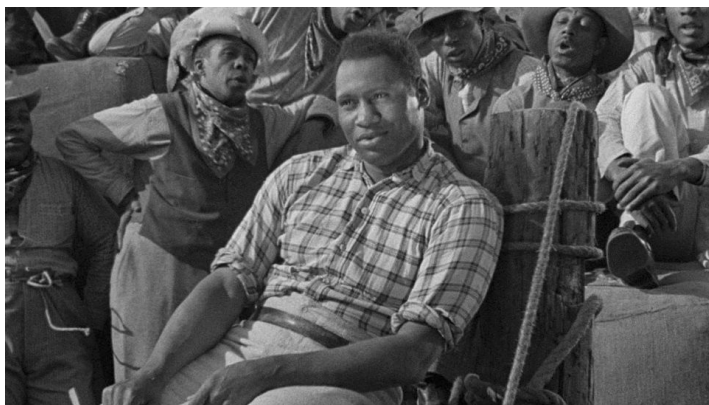
Ol' Man River

Ol' Man River was originally a song from the 1927 Roger & Hammerstein musical, *Show Boat*. The show was the first American musical to depart from the mainly comedic formula at the time and was also the first race integrated musical on Broadway. The definitive version of the song is sung by the man the song was written for, popular African American singer of the time Paul Robeson.

The song, "Ol' Man River," in the context of the musical, is sung by the character, Joe (as played by Paul Robeson), who is an African American dock worker. He sings of the troubles of the African American people living along the Mississippi River, but "Ol' Man River" pays no mind and keeps flowing.

*Here we all work 'long the Mississippi
Here we all work while the white folk play
Pullin' them boats from the dawn till sunset
Gettin' no rest till the judgment day
Don't look up and don't look down
You don't das make the boss man frown
Bend your knees and bow your head
And pull that rope until your dead
Let me go 'way from the Mississippi
Let me go 'way from the white man boss
Show me that stream called the river Jordan
That's the old stream that I long to cross.*

*Ol' man river, that ol' man river
He don't say nothin', but he must know somethin'
He just keeps rollin', he keeps on rollin' along
He don't plant tatters, and he don't plant cotton
And them what plants em, are soon forgotten
But ol' man river, just keeps rollin' along
You and me, we sweat and strain
Body all achin' and racked with pain
Tote that barge and lift that bail
You get a little drunk and you lands in jail
I gets weary, and sick of trying
I'm tired of livin', but I'm scared of dyin'
But ol' man river, he just keeps rolin' along*



Madame Coal Belly & Ol' Man River

Madame Coal Belly: Phillis Wheatley



Madame Coal Belly, also known as the wife of Ol' Man River, is based heavily off of the imagery of Phillis Wheatley. Wheatley was one of the first black women poets ever published in the U.S. and, when reading her work, it's important to remember that she had to write her way into American lit before she or any other black writer could claim a special mission and purpose for an African American literature. She essentially had to create the genre of African American literature, as she had no models other than Euro American ones for her poetry and, because of her, no single writer has contributed more to the founding of African American literature.

Wheatley's major influences were Greek and Roman poets i.e. Horace, Homer, Virgil, as well as Biblical narratives for their imagery and symbolism. She was very well known for her elegies, specifically for the 18 found in her first work, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773). When analyzing her poems now, scholars laud her saying "... The emphasis she gives in these poems to the celebration of the dead is assuredly compatible with the African practice of animism...Indeed the subject of death 'emerges continually in the literature and expressive cultures of the black Atlantic (John C. Shields)."

Tying Wheatley even further into the character of Madame Coal Belly, her elegies reflect the practice of animism, the belief that spiritual beings are concerned with human affairs and are interested in helping/ harming human interests. Animism also believes that all beings on this earth have a distinct spiritual essence.

Madame Coal Belly & Ol' Man River

Madame Coal Belly: Spiritually

In the same vein as female folkloric figures that act as seers, beings of sight and knowledge who carry the burden of 'witnessing.' A mother figure made of Iron and fire to protect the home both literal and metaphorical- the home of the people, of her children. Often guardians of time, creation, destruction, protection. Sometimes depicted in fearsome ways. Associated with fire or light, the hearth. A goddess who resides "in-between," capable of existing in both the land of the living and dead— much in the same way, historically, that in many cultures women both help bring children into the world and wash and prepare the bodies of the dead. See: Eingana, Hestia, Mut, The Pythia, Inanna, Kali, Isis, Annapurna, Cōātlicue, Sunan Ambu)



Right: Isis, Egyptian goddess of healing, rebirth.

Left: Mut, Egyptian goddess of motherhood, mother of the gods.

CH 11

Other Symbols and References in Act III

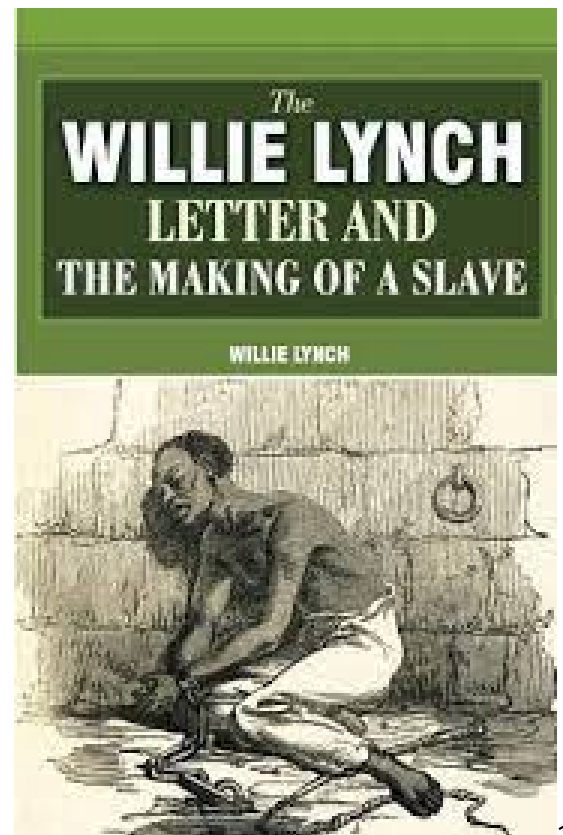
"Nature Boy"

"Nature Boy," by Nat King Cole, was the first song to ever be recorded by Cole. This song is amazing, first of all, and I think it sets the tone really well for the scene honoring the souls of all the black men that have been unjustly killed. The lyric that best explains the song is this: "The greatest thing you'll ever learn Is just to love and be loved in return."



The Willie Lynch Letter:

The William Lynch speech is an address purportedly delivered by a certain William Lynch (or Willie Lynch) to an audience on the bank of the James River in Virginia in 1712 regarding control of slaves within the colony. The letter purports to be a verbatim account of a short speech given by a slave owner, in which he tells other slave masters that he has discovered the "secret" to controlling black slaves by setting them against one another. The document has been in print since at least 1970, but first gained widespread notice in the 1990s, when it appeared on the Internet.

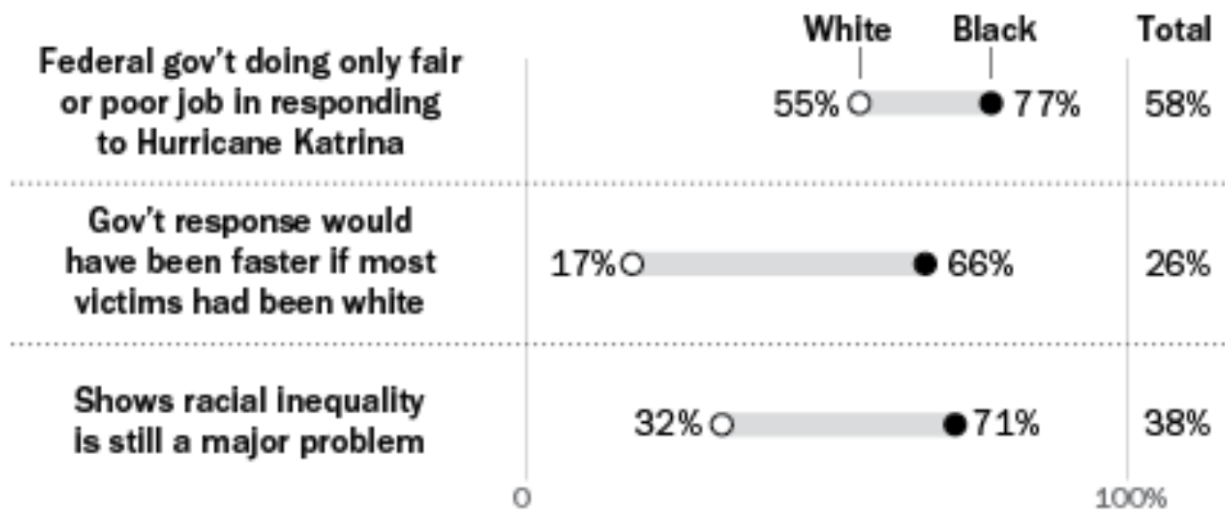


Other Symbols and References in Act III

Hurricane Katrina Infographic

Ten Years Later, a Look Back at the Racial Divide Over Government's Response to Hurricane Katrina

% who said in 2005 ...



Source: Pew Research Center survey, Sept. 6-7, 2005. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. "Don't know" responses not shown.

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