

Interrogating Erasure: Moving Past the Forces of Forgetting

Farming of Bones by Edwidge Danticat

- Individual experiences make up larger social movements/trends
 - Amabelle and the telling of The Cleansing
- These individual experiences speak to the real-life manifestations of oppression
 - Amabelle reunites with Señora Valencia

How we can #stayWOKE and Combat Erasure

- Allowing time and space community healing after trauma
 - Storytelling
 - Companionship and community
- Discovering and elevating stories of the oppressed/marginalized so they can stand in opposition to Master Narratives

Haiti and The Dominican Republic: An Island Divided

- “To a large extent, Dominicans’ ideas about race, have been formed from their negative views about Haitians.”
- Dominicans “are proud to be part of a mixed-race society”
- “So they whitened the brother” – whitewashing history
- Migrant workers did jobs which “no self-respecting Dominican would do”

A House Divided: Parallels to the US

*“God knows
his mother was no stupid woman; she
could roll an R like a queen.”*

– Parsley, Rita Dove

- Melting pot vs. homogeneity
 - Dehumanization of migrant workers
 - Pressure from society (and even in the home) to assimilate
- Privileged groups living in denial
 - (me up until about a year and a half ago)

How can we stand?

“And perhaps now, after all these years, the world will welcome this great black republic as a full and equal partner in the community of nations. If not now, then when?”

– Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

- Combat dehumanization
- Embrace our differences
 - Everyone’s experience of their Blackness is different

Discussion Questions

- In order for us to build bridges and tear down walls, we have to first show that minorities are humans too. Humans with feelings and unique experiences. **How do we make room for people who fit negative stereotypes, while acknowledging the variety of experiences in minority groups?**

Discussion Questions

“On this Island, walk to far in either direction and people are speaking a different language...Our motherland is Spain, theirs is darkest Africa, you understand? They once came here only to cut sugarcane, but now they are more of them than there will ever be cane to cut, you understand? Our problem is one of dominion. Tell me, does anyone like to have their house flooded with visitors, to the point that the visitors replace their own children? How can a country be ours if we are in smaller numbers than the outsiders? Those of us who love our country are taking measures to keep it our own” (Danticat 260).

- In light of the movements towards xenophobia and extremism in the US and abroad (DR's anti-Haiti sentiment, 45, Trujillo) **where do we draw the line between “free speech” and protecting people’s rights to life and self-determination?**

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

24.912 Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies
Spring 2017

More information about these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.