



RAP SESSIONS PRESENTS:

FROM PRECIOUS II FOR COLORED GIRLS

The Black Image in the American Mind

When the newly minted Tea Party Movement clashed with the 100-year-old civil rights group The NAACP earlier this year, it brought to the fore a tension bubbling beneath the surface throughout the nation: What happens when the conservative re-branding of free speech meets the liberal preoccupation with political correctness?

From entertainment to politics, and the media images that accompany them, the civil rights era idea of “Blackness” is currently in flux. **FROM PRECIOUS II FOR COLORED GIRLS** examines how this redefinition of Black culture, politics and ethnicity—from without and within—has affected the ways Blacks are perceived and discussed in today’s national culture.

With a view on America’s racial history and future, this exciting program dissects contemporary moments in popular culture and political debates where race, image and identity come center stage. Films like Lee Daniels’ *Precious*, Tyler Perry’s *For Colored Girls*, television dramas like *The Wire* and *Treme*, and hot button political issues such as immigration and Islamophobia lead the list.

FROM PRECIOUS II FOR COLORED GIRLS introduces audiences to HBO’s award winning documentary *The Black List* as a springboard for a subsequent interactive and timely discussion. Led by a distinguished panel of scholars, journalists and activists, this provocative, 90-minute townhall style gathering (60 panel and 30 min Q/A) challenges students to consider the following:

- Is “racial tolerance” as passé an idea as pundits from Glenn Beck to Juan Williams suggest?

- How do the various backgrounds and experiences of Black immigrants fit into this discussion?
- To what extent does gender and class continue to inform our understanding of race?
- Has Black authenticity as defined through a 1960s lens run its course?
- How do popular narratives of Blackness from *Birth of a Nation* to *Precious* impact public policy around policing, incarceration, housing and employment?
- Is there room for the full-range of Black political expressions in the American mainstream?
- Are provocative Black images like Will.i.am's Black face at MTV awards overstated or understated?
- What can students do to move the national discussion of race beyond the Black-White paradigm?

THE PANELISTS

Mark Anthony Neal is the author of five books, including *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture* (1998), *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic* (2002), and *New BlackMan* (2005). He has lectured on hip-hop and gender around the country, including the Ford Foundation, Stanford University and at the groundbreaking 2005 Hip-Hop and Feminism conference at the University of Chicago. Professor of Black Popular Culture in the Program in African and African-American Studies at Duke University, Neal is a frequent commentator on NPR and contributes to the on-line media outlets SeeingBlack.com and theLoop21.com. *Looking for Leroy: Legible Black Masculinities* (2011) is his forthcoming book.

Joan Morgan is the author of the bestselling *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: My Life as a Hip-Hop Feminist*. Since she published the book in 1998, Morgan has been a widely sought after lecturer and commentator on hip-hop and feminism. An award-winning journalist, a provocative cultural critic and a self-confessed hip-hop junkie, she began her professional writing career freelancing for The Village Voice before having her work published by Vibe, Madison, Interview, MS, More, Spin, and numerous others. Formerly the Executive Editor of Essence, she's taught hip-hop journalism at Duke University and is currently a visiting scholar at Vanderbilt University.

John Jennings is an Associate Professor of Visual Studies at the State University of New York-Buffalo. His research and teaching focus on the analysis, explication, and disruption of African American stereotypes in popular visual media. His research is concerned with the topics of representation and authenticity, visual culture, visual literacy, social justice, and design pedagogy. He is an accomplished designer, curator, illustrator, cartoonist and award-winning graphic

novelist. His work overlaps into various disciplines including American Studies, African American Studies, Design History, Media Studies, Sociology, Women and Gender Studies, and Literature.

Elizabeth Méndez Berry is a journalist who has written about culture, education and criminal justice for the Washington Post, Vibe, The Nation, Latina and Time. "Love Hurts," her investigative article on domestic violence in the hip hop industry, won ASCAP's Deems Taylor award for music reporting, and was included in Da Capo's Best Music Writing anthology. She has lectured at Duke University, Fordham and Princeton and is an adjunct professor of music journalism at NYU. An op-ed she wrote for New York's El Diario helped spur the country's first ever city council hearings on street harassment, in October 2010. In his book *Decoded*, Jay-Z cited an essay of hers as inspiring the song "P.S.A." on *The Black Album*.

Vijay Prashad is Professor and Director of the International Studies Program at Trinity College. He is the author of a dozen books, including most recently *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (2007). The Village Voice chose two of his previous books as books of the year (*Karma of Brown Folk*, 2000; *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 2001). He is a contributing editor for *Himal South Asia* (Kathmandu, Nepal), *Amerasia Journal* (Los Angeles), and *Left History* (Canada). He writes a regular column for *Frontline* (India), and for www.counterpunch.org. He is on the board of the Center for Third World Organizing, United for a Fair Economy, and the National Priorities Project.

MODERATED BY BAKARI KITWANA

Bakari Kitwana is a journalist, activist and political analyst whose commentary on politics and youth culture have been seen on CNN, Fox News (the O'Reilly Factor), C-Span, PBS (The Tavis Smiley Show), and heard on NPR. He is CEO of Rap Sessions and Senior Media Fellow at the Harvard Law based Think Tank, The Jamestown Project. His 2002 book *The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* has been adopted as a coursebook in classrooms at over 100 colleges and universities. The former Executive Editor of the Source, he has taught in the political science department at the University of Chicago, is co-founder of the 2004 National Hip-Hop Political Convention and is a visiting scholar the Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media at Columbia College of Chicago. *Hip-Hop Activism in the Obama Era* (Third World Press, 2011) is his most recent book.

ABOUT RAP SESSIONS

For the last five years, Rap Sessions, the first national tour of its kind, brought townhall style meetings to scores of cities across the country. In 2011, Rap Sessions continues its commitment to engaging the most difficult dialogues facing the hip-hop generation. By touring the nation with leading hip-hop activists, scholars and artists, Rap Sessions helps jumpstart crucial local debate. Past participating institutions include Harvard Law School, Princeton University, Brown University, University of California - Berkeley, Stanford, Vanderbilt University, Washington University, the University of California - Los Angeles, the University of Chicago, The City Museum of New York, The Kauffman Foundation, The Walker Art Center, The Experience Music Project Museum, among others.

To book a session: 440-779-9893 • email bakari@bakarikitwana.com • or visit: www.rapsessions.org.