

## Universidad Sin Fronteras Class, March 20, 2013: One Page Papers

First Class in the Course on Introduction to Culture and Liberation in the U. S. South

CONTEXTUALIZING THE BLUES TRADITION:

AFRICAN CULTURAL RESISTANCE TO TRANSATLANTIC ENSLAVEMENT, 1600-1850

This question pulls me two ways. By trade I would say music is my preferred medium. I believe music has been very powerful in the advancement and hindrance of black people. I believe this is true because music has no language barrier. Which brings me to a thought that I have more adopted that food is just as powerful. We are what we put in our bodies. I believe on way of serious oppression of black people in the south is this idea of "soul food" which in tons of cases is very unhealthy. We begin to adopt certain health conditions that are caused by these diets as part of our culture when they aren't at all, ie: high blood pressure, diabetes. So I'd have to say my preferred medium is a blend between music and food!

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Collectively preparing and sharing food. I think "breaking bread" in intentional ways creates space for a community to form, establish roots and regenerate itself over time. And thus any process that binds a group together represents a fundamental set of relations necessary for the deploying of resistance strategies over time.

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Culture of Sharing

Some piece of culture that has survived at the grassroots and is in direct conflict with white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism.

I believe this is a fire we can keep burning and protect for future generations.

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I'm an activist. Activists try their best to connect with an oppressed people that has sometimes internalized their oppression, believing their oppression is rational and justified. That's why I'm in this course, to better understand ways of inspiring other people to express resistance in ways that reflect their preferred cultural medium. Activism is a medium, like music, visual art, or teaching, that exists cross-culturally to foster collective resistance.

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Food serves as my personal cultural expressive need.

While visual arts typically captivate my social minds eye

Collage arts using some mixed media techniques to re-vision the intent and reshape the expression

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I feel stripped from my culture and religion.

For that reason, I choose to not look at TV and listen to the radio on a regular basis. Only by choice, to gain my own sense of control what enters my mind.

I don't know where I come from originally. That causes me to feel emptiness. Plus a constant hunger for knowledge of my ancestors and self.

I think that is the reason we as a people don't value self because the lack of knowledge of self.

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My preferred method of cultural expression is the practice of telling stories. I believe that it is our claim to historical resiliency, and a means of getting to freedom in the present day. I practice this method by creating a safe space where folks can share, listen, and affirm the courage it takes to tell your own story, to be connected. I do this in the present day because we live in a society that devalues our history, our

struggle and our wins. I do this because we need to know that we are warriors, survivors, and healers. By sharing ourselves with each other we heal ourselves.

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Today I learned a lot about different views and methods of slavery. I've never got to see actual data and documents of or about the science of the slave trade. So that was quite interesting. I've noticed that slave history forms somewhat of a unity between all different kinds of people. It's interesting how countries of different ethnicities that have high rankings of black people are all due to the shipment of slaves many centuries ago.

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I think art is the most powerful tool of resistance and reshape the way we see ourselves and the world. I think art is the lens through which we understand and process and respond. Visual art and performance art are both extremely powerful ways to learn, expose, question, challenge, explore, dissect, celebrate, discover, and grow. Art is everywhere we look from the way our chair is designed to the way children draw their portraits to the commercials and billboards we see everyday. We are all creating art in how we dress and wear our hair. How many tattoos or rings on our hands. All this creation is part of how we understand the world. And if we can harness and be intentional in the ways we express through art, we can change the way we see one another. We have to reclaim the images and expression to use it for liberation and justice.

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Music is the core ingredient to express and explain the modern-day oppression. Music can be used as this tool to motivate inspire question authority. Challenge power. Express the need of a people's liberation. Sometimes I feel people's spirit is sleep until music is played. Once the music plays it does something for our soul. We all need music just to get us through the day sometimes. Music motivates and inspires people to be productive; creating a new wave of culture. Also create a new knowledge for people to learn and teach.

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I prefer to use food and music as my medium of cultural expression to resist from any brainwashing as a result of imperialism. I would use food because what we put in our bodies can affect our health and may use religions if it gives better knowledge of this. I will use music because it plays a big part on how we think and act and reflects our culture.

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I connect strongly with food and textile as traditions that are both deep art and celebration, and also humble, daily and ever-present sustenance for life, health, body, family, friendship. The recipes of my families Southern and Arab, teach me much about the connected histories, people, and climates/earth of both homes. To keep these tastes of home alive, the stewardship of land and care for the circle of people who come to table with a taste for these memories, this landscape, these languages—this feels and is both rebellion and creation – a fight and nurturing – a stewardship, a self-determination for people who gather and share bowls.

Clothing, textile, adornment in ritual, in the language and communication – the story-telling in mixing many parts of my history, in seeing other folk's complexity, range, depth, what we can call on, remember, presence in our bodies – the clarity and declaration of NOT PASSING, is precious.

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A cultural too that can be used for resistance to present day forms oppression is teaching of different generations.

Not to creating a society of success through systematic education but through community diversity and healing.

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My preferred medium of cultural expression that can serve as a tool for our collective resistance to present-day forms of oppression is my hair/our hair. I know only English; I can cook very little meals from Trinidad, but being natural makes me feel like I am resisting, and maybe inspiring other sisters to resist in a similar manner. Once you start thinking about “Why do you perm your hair,” it opens up all kinds of questions related to cultural genocide, oppression, and white supremacy.

So for me, as part of our collective resistance, my medium of cultural expression is my natural hair.

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#### Our duty to Resist

One preferred medium I hold is study. Reading. Writing. These cultural tools are used and trained up in us to break our minds and force us to see and understand the world and ourselves in order to control.

AND these tools are used to Resist the ignorance of oppression and develop new memory, real memory, clear thinking, and vision for new worlds.

Books, the writing of people who have resisted and moved together. The teachings and thinking of history allow us to create new practices. My experience learning has been a way that I have freed myself from individual hells, from intolerable conditions – it is also a form of culture that frees us collectively 00 if we recognize its power—

The forms of present –day oppression are warped by dulling us, distracting us, forcing a kind of candy-coated ignorance that even makes reading and study seem like a bore, an obligation, an elite, separate thing, rather than like the bread it is to our hearts, mind, and our ways of seeing each other.

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My preferred medium of cultural expression that could aid in cultural resistance is sharing of people’s stories by different methods: taping oral histories, consciousness-raising groups, talk around a kitchen table; youth talking with seniors; writing personal key moments in varied literary forms, and many I have not thought of. All of this needs to be repeatedly shared to create a sense of actual history, to see differences and similarities, ways to help each other survive pain and celebrate person & communal victories. Some of my favorite moments of these classes have been when people were relating to their personal histories.