

Malikah Fard-Allah (2018)

“Black Women Advance the Narrative Surrounding the Black Female Body with Spoken Word Poetry”

Within this capstone project, two spoken word poems, Alyesha Wise’s “To This Black Woman Body” and Kai Davis’ “Ain’t I a Woman,” are analyzed through an intersectional feminist lens. The project highlights how black female spoken word artists use the art form of spoken word poetry to revise the misguided and harmful narratives their bodies have been subjected to for so long. Analyzing the language, content, and literary devices within each respective poem shows just how Wise and Davis use their voices to oppose the limiting narratives imposed on them by the dominant hegemonic structures within society. The project draws on Melissa Harris-Perry’s theory of the “crooked room” and Kimberlé Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality to analyze how each poem is able to convey the truth of Wise, Davis, and the other women who look like, and are treated like, them. Wise uses purposeful diction to negotiate narratives that have trapped the black female body within the “crooked room” of society’s expectations. Davis parallels Sojourner Truth’s famous 1851 speech “Ain’t I a Woman?,” echoing Truth through her use of religion and personal experience. This capstone project looks at the ways in which black women experience life, as their black female bodies are constantly under the scrutiny of society’s dominant cultures.