**Reading Analysis #2 Race and Representation in Film**

Bell hook’s article “The Oppositional Gaze” dives into the history of black women and their relationship with film. The article revolves around the concept of “the gaze”. Historically, Black men and women were punished, whipped and tortured if they were caught looking at their white owners. Through film, black people were able to express a certain form of agency by engaging in “the gaze” with the white movie- stars on screen.

When black women found themselves in film, which was indeed rare, their representation was one that real black girls and women could not relate to. The representation was degrading and offered zero empowerment.

Slowly we are seeing a push to have a greater/more accurate representation of black people and culture in film, toys, advertisements etc. Famous rapper Tyler the Creator is using his platform to introduce the first black lead character in a cartoon. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Tyler in which he testifies his character will not follow stereotypical narratives that black characters are often subjected to:

“He ain’t got no guns. He ain’t shoot no f\*\*\*\*\*g basketball…And we gonna put him on TV and he’s the lead character. He ain’t the comic relief, he ain’t the sidekick…” (metro.co.uk, 2017).

Is the push for more black characters in film and television well received in the white community? Or will such shows only be viewed by black audiences?

In summary, the bell hooks article is important to remember when carrying out my research project. I will be actively looking for the interplay of race in addition to class, gender, sexuality in order to see if the observations of this 1992 article still hold true today.

References

Hooks, Bell. 1992. “The Oppositional Gaze” *Black Looks: Race and Representation* pp.115-131

Metro.co.uk.com. 2017. “Tyler, the Creator calls out lack of black cartoon characters on TV: “We don’t have sh\*t”. *METRO.*