THE ANGRY BLACK WOMAN TROPE:
THE HISTORY AND APPEARANCE IN TYLER PERRY’S FILMS

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By
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Abstract

The angry black woman trope has been exploited in American cinema for over a century. Created from the white male gaze, the result of the stereotype was to dehumanize and devalue black women as a result of slavery. The trope allowed black women to continue to be objectified and be considered anything but a woman. Tyler Perry, an African American filmmaker, has made many films about the trope; however, his portrayal challenges the historically negative perception of the angry black woman trope. Using the evolution of the trope and critical discourse analysis, this research discovered that Perry successfully challenges the trope in his films through the process of mimesis by portraying and interpreting the women who inspired him.
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Preface

“Ain’t I a Woman?”

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that ‘twixt the Negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what’s all this here talking about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what’s this they call it? [member of audience whispers, “intellect”] That’s it, honey. What’s that got to do with women’s rights or Negroes’ rights? If my cup won’t hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn’t you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can’t have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ wasn’t a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it. The men better let them.

Obliged to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain’t got nothing more to say.

By

Sojourner Truth

“I look at Breonna Taylor and I see myself. Everyday that Louisville fails to arrest those officers, they devalue my life and others like me.”

By

Jenisha Watts

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Introduction

I am a middle-class black woman who has been called an “angry black woman” a few times in my life. I was classified as angry whether I was voicing my opinion or simply displaying a facial expression. Instead of accepting this label as a badge of honor, I wanted to understand why this term was placed in front of black women no matter who they were. More importantly, I was curious why no other race of women was associated with being called angry. I have three daughters who are strong, intelligent, authentic, compassionate, honest and caring. Sharing this research with them will provide a meaningful reference for their history and the confidence to see themselves as more than just angry. Understanding the history of the angry black woman trope became a personal mission. It also became necessary because of the senseless violence toward black women, like Breonna Taylor, who police killed in her bed.\footnote{Breonna Taylor was fatally shot in her apartment in Louisville, Kentucky on March 13, 2020, during a botched raid. Her lifeless body laid still for 20 minutes before receiving medical attention. None of the police officers have been charged with her murder. A black woman being murdered in her own home is why the angry black woman trope is dangerous and most likely contributed to Breonna Taylor’s death.}

Through Tyler Perry’s films, I wanted to discover if there was a different interpretation of the trope that would counter the negativity associated with the trope. There are currently good and bad consequences resulting from the trope. The consequences led me to research Tyler Perry and the purpose of the trope in his films. In this paper, I argue that Perry successfully challenged the angry black woman trope through the process of mimesis by portraying and interpreting the women who inspired him in his films.
American cinema has exploited the angry black woman trope has for over a century. Created from the white male gaze, the result of the stereotype was to dehumanize and devalue black women due to slavery. It allowed black women to continue to be objectified and be considered anything but a woman. The deep-rooted stereotype has defined black women regardless of their socio-economic condition, education or profession. Negative stereotypes are an over-generalized belief that drives one group’s perspective and actions about another group. They are damaging tools often used by whites to dominate minorities.

A culmination of the mammy, jezebel and sapphire stereotypes, the angry black woman trope began in minstrel performances during slavery before circulating through media. The trope gained popularity on the small screen radio and television show *Amos and Andy* in 1928. The character from the show, Sapphire, normalized the angry black woman trope and began to minimalize the black woman’s behavior in countless television shows and films (Pieterse, 1992, pg. 132). Some characteristics of the trope are angry, rude, violent, dismissive, sexually frustrated, ill-tempered, hostile, sassy and disrespectful. As the film industry grew, it was apparent that media had a fixation on the trope. Film has been the primary medium used for over a century to desensitize audiences to black women’s existence due to the angry black woman trope.

There have been many films perpetuating the angry black woman trope. There have been many producers and directors who have chosen the popular trope to make a predictable appearance in the film. There is, however, only one filmmaker who has generated blockbuster films by sharing the real stories of the angry black woman trope. That filmmaker is Tyler Perry. He has been able to humanize the angry black woman trope
by creating films about her life. His most famous character, Madea, is often used as the angry black woman trope in his films. Though most of Perry’s films are comedies, he has a unique ability to connect with the audience allowing them to see past the black woman’s anger and expose the trauma that fuels their anger (Carey, 2014). It does not mean that black women are not angry, but they are so much more than the negativity associated with the trope.

Despite the negative criticism Perry receives, he has mastered getting to the heart of the black woman’s anger (Perry, 2015). Though his films are criticized for depicting violence, sexual abuse and other dysfunctions, he is a success. Perry is not formally trained like Spike Lee and Ava Duvernay, two other prominent African American film makers; however, he has had a career in entertainment for over twenty years that has been impressive and impactful. He explains his purpose is to bring healing to the black community (Perry, 2015). Perry’s tumultuous upbringing is what made it his mission to share the black woman’s story and show his mother and women like her the love they deserve (Essence, 2019). He also understands the business aspect, which has created a billion-dollar brand from his various movies, stage plays and television shows. Perry owns the largest film studio in America, which employs thousands of minority workers.

Contrary to other films that display the angry black woman trope, this research examines Tyler Perry’s ability to write and imitate in a way that humanizes the trope and brings understanding. Because of his motivation, I consider Perry a practitioner of black feminist thought as he focuses on the perspective and experiences of black women. Perry’s films are about black women; however, his approach does not exploit black women. He
can write and portray the angry black woman trope in a way that allows the audience to identify, relate and empathize with the angry black woman and show her love and understanding (Essence, 2009). In Perry’s films, the trope is no longer seen as just an angry black woman but a black woman who is angry. The difference is one is as an object and the other is a human.

This research is significant because attention is focused on the purpose of negative stereotypes and how the angry black woman trope was created and prostituted to give white audiences a negative perception of black women and power over them. There is some truth to stereotypes; however, it depends on what truth is being told. By researching the purpose of a trope, I was able to see why the angry black woman trope continues to be a part of American cinema for over a century. It has always been beneficial for the media to capitalize on black women since slavery and the use of this trope is no different. Unfortunately, the negativity of the trope has resulted in black women being a target of frustration in American culture (hooks, 2014). It has made them less valuable and less tolerable within American society and even with black men. The negative images have set the tone for how black women are treated and valued. Many characters we have seen of black women are mean and angry for no apparent reason, which was created on purpose. However, some films have shed light on why black women display anger. All black women are not angry, just as all white women are not angry. The films and characters that exist and tell a more authentic story of black women should be the standard and not the exception. Based on this research, I have found an appreciation for Tyler Perry’s storytelling. He has mastered manifesting the truth about the angry black woman.
My interest in the angry black woman trope was triggered by the social injustice of black women that gained extensive media coverage. In 2020, there were nearly one thousand four hundred black women or girls killed. Understanding the power of media and its influence on its audience, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of stereotypes. With the history of slavery and treatment of black women, it was purposeful for this trope to come alive during the Jim Crow era. There have been several characters considered angry black women: Aunt Esther (Sanford and Son), Dee (What’s Happening), Florence (The Jeffersons), Bernadine (Waiting to Exhale), Cookie (Empire) and Annalise (How to Get Away with Murder) to name a few. One of the contributing factors of black women being devalued off screen is due to many black women being vilified on screen. This factor also fueled my research of Tyler Perry and the purpose of the trope in his films.

“Understanding the purpose of the trope after slavery was to oppress black women without enslaving them made it clear this was something that was deep rooted and engrained in American culture” (hooks, 2014, p. 9). Knowing this history should also give an appreciation of Tyler Perry as he is a multi-generational storyteller. His craft and contribution to rediscovering the identity of the black woman by using the angry black woman trope in his films. In the past, the exposure of the angry black woman trope made it acceptable to devalue black women. It seemed easier and more acceptable to be treated as an emotionless object than a black woman that has experienced hardships. Perry’s films share beauty, depth and vulnerability beyond the surface anger on display. He has taken the negative characteristics of the angry black woman trope and created a new narrative that brings understanding and healing.
This research enters the conversation in support of Perry’s work. After researching the purpose behind the angry black woman trope is to devalue and dehumanize black women, I witnessed Perry not only writes and impersonates the trope in his films, but he allows the trope to dismantle her pain which makes her human. This skill is what sets Tyler Perry’s work apart. His films do not exploit the angry black woman trope, but they bestow her with humanity. Previous research of Tyler Perry’s films focused on specific characters and themes in his films. Harrison’s (2012) research focused on black crime and normalizing hegemony. Though Brown and Campbell’s (2014) research reveal how women are represented in Perry’s films, very little is explicitly focused on the angry black woman trope.

This research analyzes three of Tyler Perry’s films that tell unique stories about the angry black woman trope. *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (2005), *Madea’s Big Happy Family* (2011) and *Acrimony* (2018) not only depict the angry black woman, but also display the tragedy and pain that contribute to black women being labeled as angry.

This research is set apart from other studies because it specifically addresses Perry’s ability to imitate and mimic the angry black woman trope. Other stereotypes have been studied in Tyler Perry’s films; however, this present research shines the spotlight on the angry black woman trope. Based on the history of stereotypes and the angry black woman trope, I affirm that Tyler Perry’s films help to humanize the angry black woman trope. My analysis, similar to Manoucheka Celeste’s “What Now?: The Wailing Black Woman, Grief, and Difference,” is based on my personal viewing experience of the trope (2018).
Based on Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding theory, I have the ability to decode the messages of the trope in Perry’s films.

In what follows, I will continue with a literature review of the angry black woman trope, followed by historical and critical discourse methodologies. Towards the end of the paper, I will present the research findings, discussion and conclusion.

**Literature Review**

The literature review of the angry black woman is vast. It was necessary to capture how the trope was generated and is still the most notable character of black women on the small and big screen. The focus of the literature on the angry black woman trope was from slavery and how this negative stereotype became a common identity of black women in American cinema. There was an abundance of scholarship analyzing and criticizing Tyler Perry’s films since most of his films are about black women. Many of the essays criticized him for exploiting black women and writing marginalized characters. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a cohesive group of literature that supports my research.

**Birth of the Trope**

The angry black woman trope has been part of American culture since slavery. Africans were captured not only as slaves and servants but, eventually their roles were also for entertainment (Pieterse, 1992, p. 132). Jan Pieterse’s “White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture,” discusses how black women have been exploited since slavery. Being enslaved, raped and oppressed was not enough. It was part of the slave’s experience to work in the fields and then perform for their owners to reduce stress on the plantation. Initially, white males wore black face and pranced around
imitating their perception of the life of a slave during minstrel shows. Minstrel shows were a form of American racist entertainment where white males would perform skits in black face and imitate their version of the life of slaves. It became the lens through which American whites viewed blacks.

The characters were based on the ideals and mindsets of the white slave owners. A culmination of the mammy, jezebel, and sapphire stereotypes, the angry black woman trope made you want to hate her (Pieterse, 1992, p. 151; Bogel, 1994). She was manipulating, controlling, loud and violent. These characteristics made it easy for white Americans not to have empathy for black women.

**Introducing the Angry Black Woman to the World**

Everett Carter’s essay discusses the significance of the popular film *Birth of a Nation*. The essay highlights the film’s enormous success, which became the first film to be shown at the White House in 1915. Initially named *The Clansman*, “It was a visualization of the cultural assumptions which may be termed the Plantation Illusion” (Carter, 1960, p. 349). The film highlighted specific scenes of what life would be like before the Civil War with Negroes in their “proper place.” *Birth of a Nation* became the pre-cursor to images and insults of the angry black women.

The original angry black woman trope was introduced on the sitcom show *Amos ‘n’ Andy*. It ran nightly from 1928 through 1943 on radio and from 1951 to 1966 on television. Bogle discusses how the show voice cast two white males, similar to minstrel shows having white males in blackface. When *Amos ‘n’ Andy* got on television, black actors were hired to showcase the “coon” behavior (Shankman, 2000). The character, Sapphire, was the
angry black woman trope on the show. She was the sassy and rude wife of one of the main characters. The trope’s behavior made it easy to devalue and dehumanize black women. Not only was the audience being desensitized to the angry black woman trope, but she was also becoming less appealing to her people. The character assassination of black women through stereotypes was being brought to homes all over America (Yarbrough & Bennett, 2000).

Stereotypes

Richard Dyer suggests that stereotypes classify what may not be normal or acceptable to someone’s environment. Dyer also proposes that stereotypes tend to be conceived as functionless or dysfunctional and are agreed to be right, leading to the conformity of those being stereotyped on one hand which confirms truth and self-oppression on the other. (Dyer, 1984, p. 355). His essay “Stereotyping,” sheds light on how we settle on accepting stereotypes simply because they are agreed to be right. Based on ideas or experiences presented to us, we form types. We believe the stereotypes for the most part because they are what we are told. Though Dyer specifically addresses gay people and the images of homosexuality in films, it is relevant to black women and the angry black woman trope.

Homi Bhabha’s “The Location of Culture,” explains that an essential feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the “fixity” concept.

Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. It is this process of ambivalence, central to the stereotype, that my essay explores
as it constructs a theory of colonial discourse. For it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed…” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 66).

A stereotype can thrive on “fixity.” It is repeated and in excess to ensure racial/cultural/historical differences. “Otherness” is created and allows power and different social formations. This is the relationship America has with the angry black woman. The trope has a constant appearance in films which continues to maintain a level of disrespect. The negativity associated with the trope makes her the ideal alternative to everything positive.

Stuart Hall aligns with Bhabha by addressing stereotypes in “Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.” He confirms that stereotypes are “easily grasped and widely recognized characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them and fix them without change or development” (Hall, 2021, p. 257). This process allows for discrimination and the emphasis on the “other.” The film industry had a significant part in creating the standards for stereotypes related to the angry black women trope.

Dehumanizing and Devaluing

bell hooks “Ain’t I A Woman,” gives a voice to black women’s experiences. The book intended to look at sexism and the social status of black women; however, bell hooks
highlighted the negative experiences of black women and emphasized that their oppression began over two centuries ago with slavery. She discusses the Jim Crow era, Reconstruction era and different hurdles black women continue to deal with because of the hate and racism against them.

Patricia Hill Collins’s essays, “Controlling Images and Black Women’s Oppression” and “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images” discuss many victims of racial prejudice and stereotypes. She also discusses how negative images of black women have provided an ideological justification for race, gender and class inequality. The controlling images of white women are different than the controlling images of black women. Once slavery was over, what remained was the mammy and the “bad black woman” in the consciousness of white America.

Further explaining the devaluing through stereotypes, Hill Collins writes, “These controlling images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable part of everyday life” (Hill Collins, 2002, p. 71). The negative images that allow domination over a group and activate oppression over black women are plentiful. She states that objectification is a central component of oppositional difference. The more stereotypical images of black women, the more it is a reminder that they are the “other” that do not belong.

Supporting Black Feminist Thought

Patricia Hill Collins states that black feminist thought works on behalf of the black woman but does so in conjunction with other social justice projects such as diversity and inclusion or feminist movements (2008). It is a field of knowledge that focuses on the
perspectives and experiences of Black women. Traditional scholarship on feminism has been based on the experience of white feminist theorists and the inequality to white men. However, black feminism is an activist response to being oppressed and not being valued. It shares the contributions of black women from their experiences and perspective.

Through the process of rearticulation, Black feminist thought can offer African American women a different view of ourselves and our worlds. By taking core themes of a Black woman’s standpoint and infusing them with new meaning, Black feminist thought can stimulate a new consciousness that utilizes Black women’s every day, taken-for-granted knowledge. Rather than raising consciousness, Black feminist thought affirms, rearticulates, and provides a vehicle for expressing in public a consciousness that quite often already exists (Collins, 2008, p. 32).

**Truth or Myth**

“Debunking the Myth of the ‘Angry Black Woman’: An Exploration of Anger in Young African American Women,” by Walley-Jean suggests that research on anger in African American females is lacking (2009). She noted scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, who has described oppressive views of African American women from the “mammy” taking care of the kids to the jezebel or whore to sapphire or matriarch. Fueled by economic and social status, demands have been placed on African American women resulting in anger. This anger is triggered by numerous factors that African American women have faced for almost a century. A study amongst young adult African American women was conducted to empirically test the stereotype of examining the experience and expressions of anger. It concluded there is scientific support about the misperception of
African American women, which has significantly limited social and interpersonal interactions. Some of those misperceptions are that African American women are confrontational, violent, lazy and difficult, just to name a few.

In the article “Gender, Race and Media Representation,” Brooks and Hebert discuss that most of what audiences know and care about is based on images, symbols and narratives in radio, television, film, music and other media. The authors suggest that contemporary academic writing has criticized mainstream media for their negative depictions of African American women. “The research described in this chapter has exposed the various ways the media constructs imposing notions of race and gender” (Brooks and Hebert, 2006, p. 11). As a result of perpetuating the negative stereotype and hegemonic behavior, America continues to perpetuate the angry black woman trope. As the Hollywood film industry grew, showcasing the angry black woman trope became the acceptable character of black women. Features films such as Carmen Jones, Foxy Brown, Coffee and Waiting to Exhale are just a few that hardened the perception of black women. The result of the angry black woman in film has desensitized the audience’s emotions toward her.

**Mimesis Theory**

Walter Benjamin developed the theory of mimesis in his writing “On the Mimetic Faculty.” He discusses how mimesis allows for an identification or connection with something external. “Nature creates similarities. One need only think of mimicry. The highest capacity for producing similarities, however, is man’s” (1933, p. 1). Neil Leach further explains Benjamin’s theory as “It becomes a way of empathizing with the world,
and it is through empathy that human beings can – if not fully understand the other – at least come even closer to the other, through discovery and creation of similarities” (Leach, 2009, p. 93). Benjamin suggests that human beings need to recognize themselves in their environment.

The complex concept of mimesis evolved from Aristotle and Plato. Plato’s meaning of mimesis focuses on imitation, representation, expression and transformation. Aristotle’s perspective of mimesis was embellishment, improvement and re-creation. Although both focus on mimesis in literature, it is relevant to film and specifically Perry transforming and producing the appearance of the angry black woman trope in his films.

**Tyler Perry’s Work**

Briana McKoy’s article, “Tyler Perry and the Weight of Misrepresentation,” focuses on narrow typecasting and stereotypical roles. Her analysis argues that Tyler Perry’s films create cultural capital that has the ability to construct a belief system about the behavior of African Americans. McKoy addresses the stereotypes of African American women: mammy, jezebel and sapphire. An example given is the Madea character in Tyler Perry films which brought filmmaker, Spike Lee, to call Tyler Perry’s work “buffoonery.” The study examined female lead characters in Tyler Perry’s films. It employed the qualitative method of semiotic film content analysis.

In Tamika Carey’s article, “Take Your Place: Rhetorical Healing and Black Womanhood in Tyler Perry’s Films,” she highlights how Tyler Perry has successfully made films about middle-class black Americans. She also acknowledges that he has employed thousands of people on his film productions. However, one of the most important things
he has done is allow healing to take place in the stories of black women. Though the pain and fury draw the audience in, Perry has mastered healing through his films. “So many people are in need of healing” that he developed “an unbelievable pull to have people see his movies and be healed” (Carey, 2014). Although many directors think Perry exploits black women and their anger, Carey argues that Perry tells the stories of the black women who raised them. Perry has mastered using humor and honest writing to talk about the pain behind the anger. The pain and struggles they went through caused them to be angry. Their pain is connected to the trauma of what black women were going through over a century ago when they were brought to America and enslaved. They continue to be dehumanized. Their husbands and children are either being incarcerated or murdered. Perry has grossed a billion dollars from his plays and films by simply telling the real stories of black women (Berg, 2020).

“Bruised and Misunderstood: Translating Black Feminist Acts in the Work of Tyler Perry” is an essay by Nicole Hodges Persley which allows Perry’s work to speak for itself. She recognizes the work that was important for Perry to tell was about black women. Persley’s engages the arguments that animate the criticism against the director. She quotes American writer and poet, Audre Lorde, “I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal, and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood” (Persley, 2012). Based on Lorde’s quote, Persley explains Perry’s willingness to be misunderstood for the sake of telling the story of black women. Persley also aims to recognize Perry as a black male feminist director.
Theodore Harrison’s essay, “Tyler Perry’s Madea Goes to Jail: Normalizing Hegemony and Stereotypes of Black Crime,” expands communication studies by analyzing theoretical themes and patterns that might suggest a compelling social framework for the film’s acceptance and commercial success in Tyler Perry’s films. He also explains how stereotypes are normalized. He analyzes to see if Perry’s films counter the hegemonic behavior of America. Harrison’s findings are relevant in discovering that Perry’s films do not promote hegemony; however, his films bring normalcy to the experiences of black characters.

Brittney Terry’s essay, “The Power of a Stereotype: American Depictions of the Black Woman in Film Media,” advances the goal of institutionalizing more accurate visual accounts of black femaleness, thereby exposing the inaccuracies of the dominant gaze. The study marks her intersectional positionality in race and media studies. She explores some specific ways cinematic representations of black womanhood are socially and politically damaging.

In Interpreting Tyler Perry: Perspectives on Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality, edited by Bell and Jackson, the articles address the life of Tyler Perry, his road to becoming an entertainer and the birth of his characters. Scholars analyze how Perry depicts African Americans in his films. The focus is not on how he is able to achieve this, but how the audiences are receptive. Many of the articles address Tyler Perry’s films as misrepresenting African American women; however, I will argue that his films open a truth to African American women that is relatable.

Key Terms
The key terms found during my research are: trope, mammy stereotype, jezebel stereotype, sapphire stereotype, stereotypes, dehumanization.

**Trope** is a phrase, sentence or verse, formerly interpolated in a liturgical text to amplify or embellish.

The **mammy stereotype** is informal for mother. Disparaging and offensive (formerly in the Southern US), the mammy is a black woman engaged as a nurse to white children or as a servant to a white family.

The **jezebel stereotype** is a wicked shameless woman who is usually young, exotic, promiscuous, who test the limits.

The **sapphire stereotype** is a rude, loud, stubborn, overbearing and insulting character.

A **stereotype** is a simplified and standardized conception given to members of a group.

**Dehumanize** is the act of depriving one of human qualities or attributes and divest of individuality.

**Methodology**

To explore my research about the angry black woman trope, the methods I used are the evolution of the trope and critical discourse analysis. My analysis relies on my interpretations based on the production and use of the trope. I explore the history of stereotypes and the creation of the angry black woman trope. Understanding why the stereotype was created can further explain why the trope has been a standard characteristic of black women in film. I also look at how the trope evolved to Tyler Perry’s version of the angry black woman.
Daymon and Holloway describe historical research to be a discrete or complimentary approach whereby you either carry out a standalone historical study using historical research techniques to trace the role of communication in past contexts or you complement this with research methods that enable you to compare and contrast the historical study with findings that relate to contemporary events and settings (Daymon and Holloway, 2002).

Historical analysis is a method that usually analyzes written and visual documents. It also involves making sense of the past, as well as explaining key people and pertinent events. It is a way to use the past to understand the present based in events that have happened. The past must also engage in current dialogue and figure out events. My analysis will use this method as a standalone historical study of the angry black woman trope from slavery to Perry’s films.

Daymon and Holloway write that critical discourse analysis, mainly focuses on the notions of power and ideology, examining how ‘discursive practices. . .can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people’ (Fairclough and Wodak, 2004: 357). Its main proponent in the UK is Fairclough (e.g., 2010), who centres his work on language as a tool for communication in social life, mainly looking at issues such as social change, politics (especially in political speeches) and globalization. Another important scholar is van Dijk
(2008), who is concerned, inter alia, with the ways in which media and political elites control access to public discourse (Daymon and Holloway, 2002).

I used the method of critical discourse analysis to explore the angry black woman characters portrayed in Tyler Perry’s films. Specific scenes and certain images will bring clarity to the message within the scene. I transcribed specific scenes from Perry’s films that highlight deeper issues about why the characters are angry. Critical discourse analysis helps to uncover patterns and interpretations. It also offers the ability to analyze spoken text, visual images and music.

Encoding and decoding is an ideal theory to utilize for a critical discourse analysis. This theoretical framework of my research is based on the cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall. He created the “Encoding and Decoding Television Discourse” which was developed in 1973. It offers a theoretical approach to how media messages are produced, disseminated and interpreted by audiences. Though Hall’s theory may operate as a linear process, message sent and message received, utilizing Manoucheka Celeste’s approach just as she did in her essay “Close-Up: Black Images Matter: ‘What Now?’: The Wailing Black Woman, Grief and Difference,” empowered me to seek after the deeper message of the angry black woman trope in Perry’s films.

Hall suggests a four-stage theory of communication: production, circulation, use and reproduction. Production is where the encoding begins. Circulation is how the message is perceived. Use involves having a meaningful discourse for the message to be purposefully decoded. Reproduction is up to the audience and how they want to interpret
the message. The interpretation is based on the audience’s experience and beliefs. Each stage operates autonomously. Encoding is a system of coded meanings in which the sender needs to understand how the audience will receive the message. The sender uses verbal and nonverbal symbols for the receiver to understand. The decoding of a message is how the audience understands and interprets the sender’s messages. There are three positions to decoding a message. The dominant-hegemonic position is where the audience receives the message exactly the way it was encoded. The negotiated position is when the audience accepts and rejects messages that are sent. The negotiated position can acknowledge the dominant position; however, the decision is made to interpret what is acceptable to the audience. The oppositional position means the audience understands the message but rejects the dominant message and creates or alters the message for what is valuable to them. This decoding is based on the audiences’ own experiences (Hall, 1997).

Coupled with deploying the model of encoding and decoding, critical discourse analysis brings the critical tradition of social analysis into language studies. It contributes to critical social analysis a particular focus on discourse and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities, and so forth). Critical social analysis can be understood as normative and explanatory critique (Fairclough, 2013).

White Americans decoded the introduction of the angry black woman trope during slavery from a dominant/hegemonic position. The message was decoded the exact way the sender intended, which was to dehumanize and desensitize the audience to black women. The message during slavery was intended for white audiences to objectify and vilify black
women. While viewing the angry black woman trope in Tyler Perry’s films, I could have received the message from a dominant perspective and fully agree with everything. However, I understood the more profound meaning beyond the visual and textual message as a black woman. In receiving the message from a negotiated perspective, it was liberating to reject the initial stereotypical behavior of the trope for entertainment purposes and receive the healing message Perry promotes. Receiving the message from a negotiated position allows the possibility for compassion, understanding and empathy. This means the dominant position is acknowledge but not fully accepted. The receiver can make up their own rules and accept some messages while rejecting others. By using Stuart Hall’s theory, I was able to edit and receive the message based on my beliefs and experiences.

Black feminist theory is vital in American society. It explains the value and liberation of black women as a necessity and is an active response to the oppression of black women. Unlike white feminist theory, race and sex are equally important to black feminist theory. The rights, value and equality of being a woman are secondary if a black woman is first not acknowledged as being a woman. “As a critical social theory, Black feminist thought aims to empower black women” (Collins, 2000). Sojourner Truth, Angela Davis, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins contribute to this theory of pushing and acknowledging the value black women bring to society.

Tyler Perry is an activist of black feminism. He uses his platform to elevate the value of black women on and off screen. Through his films, Perry tells the authentic story of black women in his community. His creativity lessens the “other” placed on black women by the controlling images of the trope through stereotypical roles. More specifically, Perry
changes the narrative of the angry black woman trope being an object. Perry acknowledges that it is part of his responsibility (Perry, 2020). Like the “Black Lives Matter” movement, all lives cannot matter until acknowledgment and change is brought forth for black lives.

The theory of mimesis is derived from the Greek term “to imitate.” Although Plato’s and Aristotle’s perspective centered around a form of copying, Walter Benjamin further developed the theory as a linguistic concept. His essay “Doctrine of the Similar,” focuses more on the theory of language (Rabinbach, 1979). “On the Mimetic Faculty” emphasizes the mimetic faculty on the formation of language. “As such language becomes a repository of meaning and writing becomes an activity which extends beyond itself, so that in the process of writing writers engage in unconscious processes of which they may not be aware” (Leach, 2009). However, it was also rooted in the divine act of creation. Mimesis can take over in action form from a physical aspect. It leaves little thought of boundaries and allows new identities to exist. Benjamin’s concept of allegory reveals there is hidden meaning which through mimesis can lend voice and expression. Man then becomes the translator of that muted language (Lin, 1996).

Mimesis theory supports and explains Tyler Perry’s ability and unique gift of not only writing in the voice of the angry black woman, but also transforming into the black women he grew up watching. His ability to become the trope is a reflection of the “pure” form of expression and transformation by taking on the characteristics of the women he endears. “Realities are not becoming images here, but images are becoming realities” (Gebauer & Wulf, 1996). The audience can connect to something real within his characters, which allows them to relate and understand. What further makes Perry’s work
successful is that the audience can relate, but the characters in his films are also an extension of the women they either grew up with or an extension of themselves. Mimesis theory allows empathy to be transferrable in Perry’s films as his films show a strong likeness and authenticity to black women. The purpose of him empathizing with black women because of his childhood transfers to the audience. In turn, the audience is able to empathize and connect with the characters in Perry’s films.

Data Collection

For this research, I selected three of Tyler Perry’s films to review and analyze for the angry black woman trope. Each of the films has black female characters who are depicted as angry black women. Though each storyline is different, Perry masterfully discusses difficult topics that black women and many other women have experienced. *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (2005) grossed $50.7 million at the box office. It was his first feature film. *Madea’s Big Happy Family* (2011) grossed $54.2 million at the box office. *Acrimony* (2018) was another successful Tyler Perry film that grossed $46.4 million. Each of the films focuses on black women, their families and their experiences. I chose these specific films that cover over ten years of Perry’s work.

In some research, the audience may consist of a group; however, my research is an audience of “one.” As Manoucheka Celeste did in her essay, “Close-Up: Black Images Matter: ‘What Now?’: The Wailing Black Woman, Grief and Difference,” I am the audience reviewing the films. As a black woman, my interpretation of Perry’s films and characterization of the angry black woman trope is based on me identifying as a black woman and a black woman who has been labeled an angry black woman. My personal
experiences allowed me to decode Perry’s film from a black woman’s perspective and relate to the trope in his films. It was a liberating process to allow my experiences to dictate the messages I received. Based on the history of the angry black woman trope, there is a difference in Perry’s films which is absent of the dehumanization effects the trope had in early cinema.

The films were observed from a casual perspective to capture my thoughts without the influence of other participants. This gave me the ability to connect with the characters from my perspective and interpretation. I then watched the films to review the text and visuals.

**Evolution of the Trope**

Stereotypes have a purpose within colonial discourse. “As a form of splitting and multiple belief, the stereotype requires, for its successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 77). Repetition is part of the process in making a group palatable. One can adjust and get accustomed to being exposed to a particular image. Skin is also brought up to promote racial differences. “Skin as the signifier of cultural and racial differences in the stereotype is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as ‘common knowledge’ in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses, and plays a public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 78). The emphasis of skin signifying an “other” makes it very easy to be separated from that group. Inviting differences into consciousness is a precise way to tolerate stereotypes. You become aware and numb to the stereotype at the same time. “The stereotype is not a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of
representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations (Bhabha, 1994, p. 75).

Bhabha references the Negro and the fact there is no way for ‘the Negro’ to get around being different. He discusses the work of Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* and how it highlights stereotypical racist practices and discourses of colonial culture. Bhabha suggests another scene of colonial discourse where there is a subverting split within a strategy of social and political control. “The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 82). Based on racist stereotypical discourse, the colonized population, which means black women, are the cause and effect of the separation between America and black women. Therefore, black women are to blame for how they are treated based on who they are. Bhabha quotes Fanon, “Phrases such as ‘I know them’, that’s the way they are,’ shows this maximum objectification successfully achieved” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 83).

Stuart Hall aligns with Bhabha by addressing stereotypes in “Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.” He confirms that stereotypes are easily grasped and widely recognized characteristics about a person, which are then reduced to those traits that are exaggerated and simplified and cannot be changed or developed (Hall, 2021, p. 257). This process allows for discrimination and the emphasis on an “other.” The film industry after slavery had a significant part in creating the standards for stereotypes
related to the angry black women trope. Hall mentions stereotypes have the ability of splitting. If a group does not fit what is deemed normal, then the group is deemed unacceptable. The group is then deemed the “other.”

There are four ways to understand the people we encounter and how they are categorized: role, individual, type and member. Individual and type can be coded to someone’s personality and what makes them unique. A role can be focused on their dress, speech, and gestures. Whatever is done at the moment when the individual is encountered can be coded. The sum total of a person, complexities and uniqueness make them an individual. Based on Dyer, a breakdown in connection or acceptance happens when roles are related to divisions in society or groups, primarily in class and gender, but also, racial and sexual lines. Types and members are relevant when dealing with groups that struggle with one another. “A type is any simple, vivid, memorable, easily-grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and changed or ‘development’ is kept to a minimum” (Dyer, 1984, p. 355).

Dyer’s perspective on stereotypes is in agreement with Orion Klapp’s book, *Heroes, Villains and Fools*. Dyer quotes Klapp, “Class, political significance and social structures come into play. Stereotypes refer to things outside one’s social world, whereas social types refer to things with which one is familiar; stereotypes tend to be conceived as functionless or dysfunctional (or if functional, serving prejudice and conflict mainly), whereas social types serve the structure of society at many points” (Dyer, 1984, p. 355).
Dyer emphasizes “one’s social world” is relevant to white, middle-class heterosexual males. What is right for them should be right for everyone. This hegemonic structure is what creates what is deemed normal and acceptable. According to white, middle-class, heterosexual males’ worldview, value-system, sensibility and ideology, this structure also establishes what is right. This perception is natural to them and therefore, stereotypes become clear-cut, rigid and unalterable mechanisms a group is condemned to. Stereotyping allows the dominant groups’ norms to subordinate groups, reinforcing the dominant groups’ beliefs. “Hegemony through stereotyping has two principal features based on Roger Brown which he has termed ethnocentrism. He defines ethnocentrism as thinking of the norms of one’s group as right for men everywhere and the assumption that given social groups ‘have inborn and unalterable psychological characteristics’” (Dyer, 1984, p. 356).

bell hooks gives a voice in defense of all racism and sexism black women have had to deal with in her book *Ain’t I A Woman*. She argues that the black woman’s demise is related to that specific time when black women were raped by their white slave owners. She acknowledges the impact oppression had on all black women in America by the ‘institutionalized crime’ during slavery. The rape of the enslaved led to a devaluation of black womanhood that permeated the psyches of all Americans and shaped the social status of all black women once slavery ended. “One has only to look at American television twenty-four hours a day for an entire week to learn the way in which black women are perceived in American society – the predominant image is that of the ‘fallen’ woman, the whore, the slut, the prostitute” (bell hooks, 2014, p. 52).
Black women have had little value based on the social hierarchy since slavery. They are the oppressed of the oppressed. White men are ranked first, white women second, although it could be black men and then black women. bell hooks argues the devaluation of black women started as a result of the sexual exploitation during slavery. White women blamed black women for their demise as much as white men. They saw black women as prostitutes who slept with their husbands in their own homes. Black women were not considered women; they were objects.

During Black Reconstruction, black women wanted to change the negative images perpetuated by whites, but the damage was already done. Black women did their best to emulate white women; however, they were threatened and ridiculed. Media back then, which were newspapers and magazines, entertained white readers with negative stereotypes about black people. “Systematic devaluation of black womanhood was not simply a direct consequence of race hatred, it was calculated method of social control” (bell hooks, 1984, p. 60). Blacks were considered inferior regardless of their status; therefore, whites declared that no black woman would be considered a lady. Institutionalized devaluation of black women encouraged white males to objectify black women and regard them as prostitutes. There was going to be no change in the perception of black women.

*Birth of the Trope*

During slavery, black women were stripped of their identities and given tainted, demeaning and harsh new identities. From being stolen off the soils of Africa to the abolishment of slavery in 1865, black women were treated inhumanely by being tortured,
beaten and raped. Black female slaves were forced to work as hard as male slaves while still being forced to do womanly duties.

All the roles that black women carried led to anti-black woman tropes. The angry black woman trope is a combination of the mammy, jezebel and sapphire tropes. It is suggested that “the angry black woman stereotype is a social control mechanism that is employed to punish black women who violate the societal norms that encourage them to be passive, servile, nonthreatening and unseen” (Pilgrim, D. p. 121). All of the tropes were established to devalue black women.

The mammy trope is often characterized as a large, asexual, dark-skinned woman who cares for her family more than her own family if she has one. She will care for the home and is usually the primary caretaker of the white children (Pieterse, 1992, p 131). An example of a mammy character is in the film *Gone with the Wind* from 1939. The mammy trope was played by Hattie McDaniel who also won an Oscar for her performance. The Madea character has many similarities to the mammy trope. She is often caring for children and grandchildren.

The jezebel stereotype is characterized as a young, exotic woman motivated by her sexual abilities and uses them to get what she wants from men. It originated from the Bible when Jezebel defied Elijah and did what she wanted. She is considered to be a wicked woman. This stereotype propels the notion that black women have a large sexual appetite and that they are meant to procreate. The jezebel usually appears with her hands on her hips while men gaze at her.
The sapphire stereotype originated from the mammy trope. She is considered a “sassy mammy.” This black woman runs her house with ease and is accepted by the white community. They don’t respect her, but they tolerate her. The sapphire is prone to being mean-spirited and will also insult and nag her husband. This stereotype is the fire of the angry black woman trope. “Sapphires were depicted as evil, treacherous, bitchy, stubborn and hateful” (bell hooks, 2014, p. 85) (Pilgrim, 2012).

Labor was not only the role of black women during slavery, but the entertainment as well. With the production of film in the late 1890s, stereotypes began to gain popularity in minstrel films. Initially, the representation of black people was done by blackface. White men and women would dress as a slave to dance and prance. The characters in blackface would appear to be lazy, overly happy and buffoons. The identity of black people was being transformed (McKoy, 2012). These stereotypes were creating a long-lasting image of black women.

The film, Birth of a Nation by D.W. Griffith, circulated across the country in 1915. It was a notable film about the reconstruction of the white people in the South with black people. Initially called The Clansman, but once it gained more notoriety, the name of the film needed to be bigger. This film was the first where hegemonic representation appeared and publicly showed the oppression of black people. The black characters that appeared in the film were white actors wearing blackface. Some of the scenes in the film showed black women violently raped. This film caused a movement across the country and portrayed the South as the victim after being subjected to the integration of black and white people. Birth of a Nation had a special screening at the White House in 1915 when
Woodrow Wilson was president. The reviews from the film were said to be “the greatest movie ever made” (Pieterse, 1992, p. 132).

As media progressed to radio and television, racism became more prevalent, as well as the angry black woman trope. It was in the 1920s when the trope was popularized on the show *Amos ’n’ Andy*. The show was initially a radio show which was brought to the small screen. The angry black woman character was a familiar face from the minstrel stage. She was complaining, neck-rolling and had nothing good to say about her husband. As post-colonialism continued to settle in, it was apparent why the trope was created. Pilgrim suggests that “the angry black woman stereotype is a social control mechanism that is employed to punish black women who violate the societal norms that encourage them to be passive, servile, nonthreatening and unseen” (Pilgrim, D. p. 121). America became visibly acquainted with the angry black woman trope and was getting quite comfortable with her presence.

*Angry Black Woman over the Decades*

As the popularity of television grew and the production of television shows, the angry black woman trope became a staple as black women were cast for roles. The presence of black women in roles was not just entertainment for the white audience. It was to promote hatred and fear. Brooks and Hebert discuss that most of what audiences know and care about is based on images, symbols and narratives in radio, television, film, music and other media (Brooks and Hebert, 2006, p. 11). Over the years, these characters influenced the perception America would have of black women (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2004,
Whites in America needed to be entertained and distracted by black women to avoid their flaws, greed and violent behavior.

*Amos n Andy* was the first sitcom show to display an angry black woman trope. The show was initially a radio show in which two white actors voiced all the black characters. It was in 1951 when the show was televised and cast with black actors. Sapphire was the wife of one of the main characters. She was loud, obnoxious and rude to her husband. Her dominant and defensive presence made it easy to dislike her. Not only was the sapphire character used to dehumanize the black woman, but she was also used as a weapon to belittle black men for being lazy. “These images of ‘others’ in society became essential for its survival because those individuals who stand at the margins of society clarify its boundaries. African-American women, by not belonging, emphasize the significance of belonging” (Hills Collins, 2002, p. 70).

As the Hollywood film industry grew, showcasing the angry black woman trope became the normalized character of black women. The more exposure to the trope, the more the mistreatment, through racism and features films such as *Carmen Jones* (1954), *Foxy Brown* (1974) and *Waiting to Exhale* (1995) are just a few that hardened the perception of black women. The result of the angry black woman trope in film has desensitized the audience’s emotions toward her. Being seen as loud, violent, rude and obnoxious makes it difficult to relate and empathize with black women.

Several sitcoms featured an angry black woman trope cast. The character would often display the most aggression toward the other characters. However, the trope would give the most unwanted exchanges and insults. A few examples of television shows that had an
angry black woman trope are *Sanford and Son* (1972, Aunt Esther), *The Jeffersoms* (1975, Florence), *What’s Happening* (1976, Dee), *Martin* (1992, Pam), *Everybody Hates Chris* (2005, Rochelle), *How to Get Away with Murder* (2014, Annalise) and *Empire* (2015, Cookie). All of these characters displayed anger and aggression. The behavior was normal and acceptable, but the underlying trend was to be displeased with her behavior.

**Tyler Perry’s Reintroduction of the Angry Black Woman**

Tyler Perry, the successful American writer, director, producer, filmmaker and philanthropist was born Emmitt Perry in 1969. He grew up with an abusive father who would beat him and his mother. From his real-life interactions with black women and an empathetic heart, Tyler observed his mother, aunt, and their girlfriends talk about serious issues. He would witness a range of emotions from the women in his life, but he understood why. They were angry, mad, sad, hurt and stressed due to situations they had gone through. When those conversations would happen, someone would tell a joke to make the tears turn to laughter. Perry went inward through all the trauma which helped him develop his most famous character, Madea, to life (About Tyler, 2020).

Perry’s character, Madea, is one of the most popular angry black woman tropes in film. Mabel Earlene Simmons (Madea) is the tall, loud and overbearing great aunt portrayed in many of his films. She is the epitome of an angry black woman. Perry’s films showcase Madea and dozens of other female characters that fulfill America’s fixation has with the angry black woman trope.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, he was doing low-budget screenplays. He made enough money to revamp his craft and came back even stronger. In 2000, Tyler introduced the
Madea character in the play, “I Can Do Bad All by Myself.” This character developed by identifying and impersonating the women he interacted with as a child. Based on his version of the angry black woman trope, the play sold millions in tickets and sold-out theaters all over the country. In 2011, Forbes named Tyler “the wealthiest entertainer” when he made $130 million in one year. He made money from merchandise, ticket sales and videotapes of his stage plays. Tyler continued to make films and also created over a dozen television shows. He has made major deals with BET, partnered with his mentor, Oprah Winfrey, and starred in several feature films. In 2015, Tyler became a film studio owner. Tyler Perry Studios sits on 335-acres in Atlanta, Georgia, a former active military base during the civil war. By Perry having his own studio, he has the freedom and cultural capital to help construct a new belief system about the angry black woman trope. Though Spike Lee called Tyler Perry’s work “buffoonery,” he eventually supported Perry when he launched his film studio and created jobs for thousands of African Americans.

Tyler Perry does not deny the purpose of his wealth. His painful upbringing and watching the heartache of his mother and other women have permitted him to set the table for black women. He is all for black women and the black feminist movement (About Tyler, 2020). Perry wants all black women to know their value. His love and empathy for black women transfer off the screen into the audience. One of the most important things he has done is allow healing to take place in the stories of black women. The fixation America has with the trope is drawn in by feistiness and fury; however, Perry’s real intentions are more than just entertainment. He has mastered humanizing the angry black woman through his films. “So many people are in need of healing” that he developed “an
unbelievable pull to have people see his movies and be healed” (Carey, 2014). Although many directors think Perry exploits black women and their anger, he completely disagrees. He is telling the stories of the black women who raised them (Young, 2019). The pain and struggles they went through caused them to be angry. Perry has mastered mimesis and honest writing to talk about the pain behind the anger. “It really is not different than what black women were going through over a century ago. They (black women) continue to be dehumanized. Their husbands and children are either being incarcerated or murdered” (Persley, 2012). Harrison states, “Perry’s images and discourse are presented in a way that disrupts the historical stereotypes of black women” (Harrison, T. III, p. 108). They counter the white male gaze, which wanted to demean black women by empowering them to tackle systemic issues which have plagued them for decades. Tyler Perry has been able to draw in audiences by using the trope of the angry black woman to share her pain while tackling tough topics that are taboo in the black community and all cultures. What is so authentic is that his childhood experience trained him to be empathetic to black women’s experiences.

Critical Discourse Analysis

To engage my research, I perform a critical discourse analysis on three of Tyler Perry’s films. The films I chose highlight the experience of the black family, as well as invite the audience into the personal life of the angry black woman trope. I am able to examine the trope and how Tyler Perry presents her to the audience. The films are encoded from a dominant-hegemonic approach. The decoding is based on how the audience perceives and interprets the message. Through encoding and decoding theory, I was able
to analyze transcribed text and look at the positioning of the characters and lighting. Although the scenes can be decoded from a dominant/hegemonic position, the audience is able to decode the message from a negotiated position. This means the dominant position is acknowledged, but not fully accepted. The audience has the ability to accept some parts of the message while rejecting others which is based on experiences and interests. The audience was also able to decode the films from an oppositional position. Based on decoding, the literal meaning is understood, but due to different backgrounds, the audience has their own way of decoding the message and forming a completely opposite interpretation. The three films I, as the audience, analyze *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (2005), *Madea’s Big Happy Family* (2011) and *Acrimony* (2018).

**Diary of a Mad Black Woman**

*The Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (2005) is one of Tyler Perry’s most popular films, which was originally a stage play. The title alone tells you what the movie is about. The fact that a black woman is mad or angry, the audience expects to witness cursing and violence. The film deals with physical abuse, adultery and forgiveness. The film is about a couple (Helen and Charles). After 18 years of marriage, Charles decides to kick Helen out of their home and move his girlfriend in. Helen has to move in with her grandmother, Madea. Both would be considered angry black women tropes. She is bitter, but learning to live a new life. I analyzed two scenes in this film.

In the first scene - Madea’s Chainsaw, I analyzed Madea with her granddaughter, Helen, going to get her belongings from the house her husband, Charles just threw her out
of. Madea is confronted by the girlfriend in the closet. While sitting on the floor in a sea of clothes, she cuts up clothes with a chainsaw.

**Transcript**

Madea – laughing
Girlfriend – Who are you?
Madea – Who are you?
Girlfriend – Wrong answer. I’m the owner of this house.
Madea – No you ain’t, my granddaughter the owner of this house. You the hoe! Ain’t got no power or no deed.
Girlfriend – Did you do this? This is Vera Wang.
Madea- Who that is? She do nails. I need to get my nails did.
Girlfriend- That’s it. I’m calling the police.
Madea – I ain’t scared of no po-po. Call the po-po hoe. (louder) Call the po-po hoe.
Girlfriend – If I call the police, they’re going to be here in 10 minutes.
Madea – Ok. Then than that leave me nine to beat the hell out of you. (takes off earrings)
Girlfriend – I know Taekwondo
Madea – And I know “whip yo ass.”
Girlfriend – Ha! (position ready to kick)
Madea – Come on bring it on. You don’t know I’m from the projects.
Girlfriend – (says something in Spanish)
Madea – Come on. Come on. What the hell is your problem. Be quiet. Be quiet. (she’s listening at her granddaughter scream) Oh hell no. (she runs and hits the girlfriend in the back of the head).
Girlfriend – Yeah you keep running.

**Decoding from negotiated position** – I, as the audience, see Madea as an angry black woman who is displaying violence by her tone and carrying weapons. She threatens Charles’ girlfriend with a chainsaw and gestures for the girlfriend to react so they can fight. Her tone is loud and she is not afraid of the police; however, Madea is not a threat since she is cracking jokes. It is understandable for her to be angry based on her defending her
granddaughter. The audience can understand the character being angry. It is an appropriate response for her grandchild to be kicked out of her own home. Madea’s behavior is an appropriate response for a protector to want to help her family. The audience experiences Madea as a nurturer and defender.

Decoding from oppositional position – Based on the scene, the audience does not have an oppositional position. The audience’s beliefs are not opposite of the message that was encoded. The audience shares some of the same beliefs and therefore cannot take an opposing position of the Madea character.

The theory of mimesis is visually prevalent in the Madea character. Perry has transformed into a character of the many women he admired as a child. He is not simply pretending to be one particular person, but he has taken some characteristics and used his imagination to become Madea. Perry’s attire, his voice, his gestures are all similar to the women he admires. The character Madea is not portrayed in a way that the audience considers her less than human. Her voice matters and her life matters to her family. She is valued by how she is treated.

The second scene is with Helen and Charles after he was injured as she comes to pays him a visit. In the room where Helen and her husband, Charles, meet, the room is darker with red paint on the walls. The scene is dark and cold as an extension of Helen’s anger. Both people are on opposing sides to represent being against each other. The camera is close up on Helen’s angry face and Charles face of despair. Charles is in a wheelchair and Helen is standing over him, dominating him. Helen approaches Charles and slaps him in the face.
Transcript

Helen: Let me explain something to you. Old Helen is gone and you will not talk to me like that. Now I came here to help you. But now, I’m going to get even.
Charles: Helen
Helen: Shut up. (She grabs a photo) Lil Brenda and your kids. (She breaks the photo) Do you see what you left me for? This is what you left me for. (She balls up the photo) She didn’t give a damn about you Charles. (She stuffs the photo in Charles mouth) She told them to let you die. I was your wife. I loved you. I never would have hurt you. Why did you do this to me? To us? Answer me!
Charles: Mumbles (He is in shock)
Helen: And you know what’s funny? I gave you life. Even though you took it from me. (She grabs a kid’s bat and hits Charles). Boys. I wanted children Charles and had you not been with those whores, we would have had them. Got me all stressed out. (Helen walks back and forth) My hair falling out. My weight up and down. Can’t keep anything down. Two miscarriages. You took life from me. And you never even said I’m sorry. I’m going to let you sit here for a few days and think about what I said.

Decoded from negotiated position – The audience finds Helen possessing the characteristics of being angry by standing over Charles and getting in his face. After listening to what Charles put her through, the audience does not perceive Helen as angry. Rather, she is perceived as hurt. Yes, Helen did express anger and aggression, but the audience empathized with her being able to express her hurt. Helen could have been perceived as an aggressive woman, but based on what she had to endure made her actions understandable. The audience has remembrance of a neighbor dealing with a similar situation. Looking beyond the aggression of Helen, the audience can see that Helen is working through the trauma she has endured.

Decoded from oppositional position – Based on the oppositional position, the audience does not have an opposing view. Because of similar culture and experiences, the
audience can look past the character’s actions and agree with some of the ways the message was encoded.

Based on the theory of mimesis, Perry’s ability to write from the voice of an angry and hurt woman proves that mimesis is relevant. He has the ability to tap into the gestures and emotions of the character and bring her to life. Although there are scenes in the film where Helen’s presence is devalued by her cheating husband, that is situational. Helen’s character is important to her grandmother and important enough to her husband who needs her to take care of her. Based on Perry’s writing, Helen is showing emotion which makes her relatable to the audience where they can empathize with her.

Madea’s Big Happy Family

_Madea’s Big Happy Family (2011)_ was another one of Tyler Perry’s box office hits. It was marketed as a comedy which highlighted the dysfunctions of a black family. A mother (Shirley) is diagnosed with cancer. Her goal is to get her family on one accord because she doesn’t have much time. She seeks the help of her aunt (Madea) to help her reach out to her children. Unfortunately, they are too preoccupied with their own issues and don’t realize their mother will succumb to her illness.

Shirley’s daughter (Kimberly) is considered the angry black woman trope in the film. She comes across as an ungrateful, disrespectful and a short-tempered wife and daughter. She demeans her husband and dismisses everything her mother tells her.

In the first scene, Kimberly comes over to have dinner with her family after her mother (Shirley) begged her and Madea threatened her. The dinner is at her mother’s home. Shirley, Madea, Aunt Bam (family friend), Kimberly’s sister (Tammy), Tammy’s
husband (Harold), Kimberly’s husband (Calvin) and the younger brother (Byron) are all at
the crowded table when Kimberly walks in the door. She has a look of disgust before she
sits down. The lighting in the room is dingy and dull. The camera angles are also close
ups to focus in on the harsh facial expressions.

Transcript

Madea: Well look who decided to finally decided to show up. I can tell you this, I
thought I was going to have to go out and hunt you down like a rabbit dog.
Kimberly: Well I made it
Madea: Yes you did. She so bougie (speaking to Cora).
Kimberly: Did you tell Madea where I was? (speaking to Calvin)
Calvin: She was trying to find you.
Kimberly: Oh, you’re enjoying this, aren’t you? That’s alright we will deal this
when we get home.
Madea: Come on, Let’s pray.
Calvin: No, no, no, no. Let’s deal with this right now. I have an announcement to
make.
Kimberly: Calvin!
Calvin: No!
Kimberly: Keep your voice –
Calvin: Family, I am sick of Kimberly’s bull.
Kimberly: Do you think this is funny, Calvin?
Tammy: Trouble in paradise.
Harold: Tammy!
Tammy: What?
Calvin: You need to get some help and if you don’t, I’m leaving. And I’m taking
my son with me.
Kimberly: You are not taking my child anywhere, Calvin.
Calvin: You think I’m gonna let you put all this venom in my child?
Kimberly: You are not taking him…
Madea: Don’t these look good, Shirley? (She holds up biscuits) They sure look
good. Y’all wanna eat some?
Aunt Bam: Yes it does. I just wanna eat it.
Kimberly: I can’t do this. (She speaks over the chatter) I’m sorry, I can’t sit here
like we’re one big happy family when you know we can’t stand each other.
Shirley: Kimberly!
Kimberly: No mama! If you want us to sit here, you eat it.
Calvin: Kimberly, don’t talk to your mother like that.
Kimberly: Calvin, you better shut the hell up. I’ll talk to my mom how I wanna talk to my mother. I’m not going to tell you again to show me some damn respect.
Calvin: What is wrong with you?
Kimberly: You’re what’s wrong with me. Everybody sitting here, like, playing nice. This is wrong. This is ridiculous.
Shirley: Kimberly, I just wanted to have a nice dinner, everybody together.
Kimberly: Why?
Shirley: That’s all.
Tammy: Girl, you better act like you got some sense.
Kimberly: Shut up, Tammy. Nobody’s talking to you.
Tammy: But I’m talking to you.
Kimberly: You are always in my business. It is so obvious you’re jealous.
Tammy: Jealous of what?
Calvin: Kim stop.
Kimberly: Shut up, Calvin.
Tammy: You [growls] Shut up, Harold. What do I have to be jealous of? (as she looks at Kimberly)
Shirley: Tammy, stop it.
Madea: No, no, no no, Shirley, you need to let this happen. You need to let this happen and figure out what the hell is going on with these children. Let it happen. Let it get out all in the open. Go on and say what you need to say. Say what you need to say, Tam.
Tammy: I wanna hear this.
Kimberly: Of me. That’s right I said it. Me. My family, my husband…
Tammy: Oh girl, please. I don’t want anything you got. But, you get rid of what you don’t want, don’t you?
Madea: Mmmmm. Oh! Oh!
Tammy: Like us.
Kimberly: Whatever.
Tammy: We’re your family. All Mama wanted us to do was sit down and have dinner, but you just can’t do that. Why Kimberly? Are we too ghetto for you? You don’t eat greens and cornbread no more?
Shirley: Tammy!
Tammy: No Mama. I need to say this. I’m not jealous of you. I’m not the one that got pregnant at 13 and had Mama to raise my child.
Shirley: Tammy.
Tammy: Say something now.
Aunt Bam: Oh.
Calvin: Kimberly, what is she talking about?
Kimberly: You are too ghetto for me. (tears fill up in Tammy’s eyes.
Tammy: You make me sick.
Kimberly: Let’s go. (speaking to Calvin) Let’s go. Now Calvin.
Shirley: I need to talk to Kimberly.
Tammy: I’m sorry, Mama.
Madea: It had to happen Shirley. Don’t worry. Let’s pray.

**Decoding from negotiated position** - After analyzing this scene from the negotiated position, the audience considers Kimberly’s behavior to be demeaning and rude to her family. It is evident that she has deep rooted issues with her family and is very angry. After it was revealed that Kimberly had a child at thirteen, the anger was overtaken by sadness. It was apparent that Kimberly having a baby at that age was a family secret. Her anger turned into shame and embarrassment. The purpose of her anger was out in the open. From the audience’s experience of knowing a teenager who had been raped by an older acquaintance, the character’s anger is understandable. This unresolved trauma and dark secret stripped Kimberly’s innocence. The audience is sympathetic to the character and sees her emotionally broken from the abuse and from keeping a secret.

**Decoded from oppositional position** - The audience could not form an opposing position of the character Kimberly. That would mean the audience would have to not consider the negative experience of being raped at thirteen and her family hiding that secret. If the audience wanted to ignore the character’s experience, I could see an opposing view.

The theory of mimesis is visually prevalent in the Madea character. Perry is modeling the behavior of the women from his childhood and representing their personality in a unique way. Again, his clothes, voice and gestures her all part of the women in his life. The theory of mimesis is also part of his writing. Based on the character Kimberly being raped at thirteen, Perry can also relate. He disclosed in an interview that he was molested in his adolescence. Based on the script, Kimberly’s life was devalued by her abuser who raped her. In turn Kimberly mirrored that energy and devalued her husband
and mother. The script was written for Kimberly to be desensitized to her family; however, Perry turned that into an opportunity to bring resolve and closure and allow Kimberly to heal.

The next scene is a combination of two scenes. It captures all the family back at Shirley’s home after Shirley’s funeral. The family gathers in the living room. They are all wearing black not really speaking. Madea takes over the scene and begins to lecture everyone on their behavior. It is symbolic that the family are not just wearing black for the funeral, but also because the secret and poor behavior are about to die as well.

Transcript

Madea: She mad at the world. Honey, you know why you be so mad? (Looking at Kimberly) This child was raped by your uncle at 12 years old. Anything that’s covered up don’t get healed. That’s what’s wrong with people. Keep trying to cover things up and covered up. That don’t help nobody. (Kimberly is crying) I can’t stand nobody sitting around saying, “What goes on in this house stays in this house.” Let me explain something to you. Whatever went on in that house, if you’re getting hurt by it and it’s tearing you up in your adult life, you need to go get some help. This man is trying to love you and you acting like a fool. (Madea points to Calvin). Always grouchy and mean. And the reason you so nasty, honey, you ain’t forgave the man that raped you. You got to forgive those people, honey. Not for them, but for you. If you don’t, they take power over you. Do you hear me? Forgive him for your own sake. This man is trying to love you. Go talk to him like you got some sense. Go on upstairs and talk to the man. (Kimberly grabs Calvin’s hand and quietly whispers ‘I’m sorry’)

The scene switches to an upstairs bedroom where everything is white and bright which represents hope. Kimberly enters the room and exhales. That signifies letting go and a new start. Calvin follows her into the room.

Transcript
Kimberly: You know, my mama used to rock me to sleep in here.
Calvin: (sighs) At the hospital, she told me to tell you that she loved you and that she was sorry and she felt like she felled you. (Kimberly begins to cry)
Kimberly: (crying) She said that?
Calvin: Yeah. Baby, why? Why didn’t you tell me?
Kimberly: I didn’t know how.
Calvin: I want to hold you. Can I?
Kimberly: Please.
Calvin: We’re going to get some help. (They embrace. Kimberly sobs) I love you
Kimberly: I love you. I’m so sorry.
Calvin: Baby, I love you.
Kimberly: I’m so sorry, baby.

Decoding from negotiated position – The audience’s findings indicate a different reaction to Kimberly. Although Perry characterizes her as being an angry black woman, Kimberly is looking to redeem and forgive herself for the anger and bitterness she gave toward her family. Perry created the space for Kimberly to confront her pain and transform it into healing. It was symbolic to go into a room where her mother would rock her. Kimberly had to go to the past to be able to move forward. Madea was significant in the scene as the angry black woman trope. Her presence made it acceptable to hear her wisdom. In the scene, Kimberly was no longer an angry black woman. She was a woman who after opening up, was ready to give and receive love. She was ready to heal. Based on the audience’s experience she could empathize with Kimberly and support her.

Decoded from oppositional position – The audience could not take an oppositional position to the message encoded because the audience has the same views. Based on experience and the audience’s perspective on Kimberly’s abuse, the audience does not oppose the intended message.
The theory of mimesis was relevant to this scene in the film as Perry again gave a voice to women who have moved past abuse and walked in forgiveness. His ability to do that is due to the women in his life and specifically watching his own mother attempt to forgive his dad from abusing her (Patterson, 2011). Perry’s film displays characters who are valued regardless of their difficult situations. Kimberly, the perceived angry black woman was able to express multiple emotions during the film. The audience did not see her as not having value. Kimberly’s character was humanized by sharing the experiences she had gone through.

**Acrimony**

*Acrimony* (2018) is the first psychological thriller written and directed by Tyler Perry. A faithful wife (Melinda) who is tired of standing by her devious husband (Robert), is enraged when she feels her husband has betrayed her. Melinda decides to divorce her husband; but once she finds out he is engaged to an old college fling, Melinda is furious.

The film begins with a judge addressing Melinda in court. However, what is speaking louder than what the judge is saying is a song by Nina Simone. “Soul intentions are good. Lord please don’t let me be misunderstood.” The song says it all. It was symbolic for Melinda being an angry black woman and being labeled or misunderstood. Based on how black women have been portrayed as angry, the song expresses that her intentions are good, but hopes someone can see her. Melinda is in a trance as she listens to the judge chastise her for her aggressive behavior. As the song comes to an end, she must acknowledge her behavior and accept her sentencing of having to go to counseling or Melinda will be going to jail.
The next scene begins with Melinda sitting on the couch of a counselor. She has on all black. The color tones of the scene are grey which makes the scene feel cold and disconnected. The counselor is asking questions, but the camera does not show her at all. The camera stays directly on Melinda. It was as if Melinda needed to come face to face with herself. She is speaking directly to the camera as if she is looking in a mirror.

**Transcript**

Melinda: Every time a black woman gets angry, she is a stereotype. Therapist: So do you think you have an anger problem? Melinda: How in the fuck I might have an anger problem? Therapist: Do you think you’re entitled to this anger? Melinda: That’s like asking me if I’m entitled to being hungry. He caused all of this. All of it. It’s not me. That’s why that bitch owes me. Therapist: What does he owe you? Melinda: Every damn breath in his body. Therapist: Why do you feel that way? Melinda: You don’t know what he did to me. You don’t know! Therapist: Would you like to share what he did? Melinda: Do I have a choice? Therapist: We all have choices? Melinda: Not when some damn judge is making me sit here. You know what? This is bullshit? Ok. This motherfucker torments me and he gets to walk free? (smoking a cigarette) What are you writing? Therapist: Just my notes. Melinda: What do your notes say? I’m a stereotype? Therapist: Is that what you think you are? Melinda: Hell no! Sick and tired of hearing that. Every time a black woman gets mad, she’s a stereotype. Oh she emasculates men. Therapist: Is that what you think you did? Melinda: Bitch! Are you not listening to me? I never did anything to him. I was everything he need me to be. I was strong when he needed me to be. I played weak when he needed me to be. I was pathetic. Don’t tell me I don’t have a right to be angry. Therapist: Is that what you think I said? Melinda: I really don’t give a damn what you said. But it’s wrong. All of it is wrong.
Therapist: Why don’t we do this. Why don’t we just start from the beginning? Help me understand this injustice. Just tell me what happened.
Melinda: How far back do you want to go? I remember every damn thing. That’s the problem. I can’t get it out of my head. How far do you want to go?
Therapist: Let’s start at the beginning. How did you meet him?
Melinda: It was raining and I was in college.

The next scene cuts to Melinda running into her husband Robert when they were college students and meeting each other for the first time. As the scene reflects on the past, Melinda’s mother had passed away and she and her sisters had to be responsible for themselves.

**Decoded from negotiated position** - The audience’s findings, based on the negotiated position, is that Melinda’s behavior is initially cold, bitter and distant. As the story unfolds, Melinda’s pain was not dealt with, which caused trauma and turned into anger. She became less trusting of Robert; however, the rage Melinda displayed is what landed her in court. Based on the audience’s understanding, they can relate to Melinda having difficulty trusting after the death of her mother. The audience has dealt with the trauma of losing their own mother. The one person you trusted the most is no longer here. The unresolved pain turned into anger is undeniable. Based on the angry black woman trope, Melinda is viewed different because she is hurt.

**Decoded from oppositional position** - Based on the audience sympathizing with Melinda’s character, they did not decode the message from an oppositional position. The audience understood the anger was the result of Melinda grieving her mother’s death and not trusting. The reason behind the anger was revealed to the audience which provides the audience an opportunity to change their thoughts. The character is separated from the trope and the character is able to be viewed as a black woman who is angry.
The theory of mimesis is relevant to this film. Although Perry does not appear in the film, he wrote this film with the women he knows who have experienced loss. The script was written with the women in mind with similar stories that he pulled from. Although Melinda felt devalued during the film, Perry’s script made a point to show how valuable the character was to her family and her husband. The pain Melinda felt was related to her childhood.

**Discussion/Conclusion**

The angry black woman trope has been part of American history for over a century. The trope is a culmination of negative stereotypes used in minstrel shows to entertain whites in America created after slavery. By understanding how the trope originated, I could trace the impact the trope has had on black women. Over a century, black women have been treated less than a woman and less than human. The media perpetuated the existence of the angry black woman trope in radio, television and film. It resulted in black women not having any value in America, which meant abuse was inevitable. American cinema has displayed the angry black woman trope in many films. Without the proper context, the trope has the propensity to objectify and dehumanize black women. Although the trope has evolved, I found a deep appreciation for Tyler Perry by consistently bringing value back to black women and humanizing the angry black woman trope.

Understanding the power and intention behind stereotypes was enlightening. Stereotypes are generalized beliefs that fuel one group’s perception of another. During slavery, it was apparent that black women were considered less than human. They were the oppressed of the oppressed. They were not as strong as black men or as desirable as
white women. Black women were objectified, which led to them being raped and beaten at the hands of white males. To maintain the institutional devaluation and dehumanization of black women, they were exploited based on their roles and benefits to society. Black women were either considered a mammy, jezebel or sapphire. The stereotypes were used as a dominant hegemonic tool for control. Conforming to a stereotype is what makes it acceptable. Not that slaves had much choice, but black women were forced to accept and fulfill their stereotypes. Once slaves became free, it was beneficial to fuel the fear of white people in America by repeatedly reminding white Americans that black women were less than human. Minstrel shows were a form of entertainment to mock slaves for white audiences. This is how the angry black woman trope gained notoriety.

With the invention of the radio and television, the angry black woman trope circulated through America. The film, Birth of a Nation and the radio turned television show, Amos n Andy were the first to provide a template to an unruly black woman. Not only were images provided, but the power of mass media proved that America was fixated on the angry black woman trope. Numerous films and television shows have black women characterized as the angry black woman. Not only is it acceptable, but there is a level of compliance.

Tyler Perry, the American filmmaker, has created numerous films with the angry black woman trope. However, based on his style, he is rewriting the damaging narrative of the trope. Though Perry has been criticized for fueling the trope, I found that through the mimesis theory, Perry has mastered the ability to transform, imitate and become the women who influenced his upbringing. With imagination and a perspective that supports
black feminism, he is rewriting the narrative of the angry black woman. Through Perry’s pain, mimesis has allowed him to depict the trope and represent her through his storytelling. He brings value and healing to the black women who are angry on screen and to many black women in his audience.

Based on Hall’s theory of encoding and decoding, I used his model to analyze three of Perry’s films that had an angry black woman trope from a negotiated position and oppositional position. Unless a receiver or audience member just wants to disagree with Perry, his writing style forces the receiver into a negotiated position by humanizing the trope. Perry’s writing and storytelling is focused on the truth, love and forgiveness. He unveils the anger behind the trope and expose a woman who is experiencing life. His characters were not just carrying a banner of anger, but of hurt and pain. Like most films with an angry black woman trope, Perry does not objectify the black women in his films. He gives them life, depth and strength which reaches the audience to empathize and root for them. Stories such as these films contribute to other black women seeing positive images and influence them to rise above the despair of being a black woman in America.

Other films highlighting the brilliance of black women: Hidden Figures (2016), The Help (2011) and Black Panther (2018). The black women in these films display strength and triumph. Although the characters in The Help are maids, the strength of character in fighting against the racism they experienced every day was admirable. The women in Perry’s films may initially be perceived in a stereotypical fashion based on hegemonic undertones but then decoded by an audience who can relate to the characters and heal as well. Putting Hall’s theory to practice and Celeste’s approach of connecting
with the characters gave me a deeper appreciation of Tyler Perry’s work. Despite the many critics, people like me understand the responsibility he has put on his shoulder. He is changing the narrative of who black women are in this country. Discrimination, oppression and sexism are no longer acceptable and white fragility in this country can no longer displace blame on angry black women (Jones, T. and Norwood, K., 2017). I believe Perry’s work contributed to having the first African American-Asian woman, Vice-President Kamala Harris in office. Yes, black women are justified to be angry, but in the likes of Sojourner Truth “Ain’t We Women?”

I have learned a great deal about communication and the power of media. The media can perpetuate stereotypes by continuing to highlight them or they can dispel them. As a nation, we are at a pivotal time when people need to make a decision to use the knowledge that may be at their fingertips and find out the truth. Yes, some stereotypes may have truth; however, if they are used to dominate over another, promote fear, hate or inequality, then the question should be, “why?” and “how?”

The angry black woman trope recently influenced two events: the murder of Breonna Taylor and the nomination of Vice-President Kamala Harris. In 2020, Breonna Taylor, a young African American woman, was killed in her apartment. The media tried to claim possible involvement in criminal activity (Oppel, Taylor, & Burroughs, 2021). That was proof for me that the media and police somehow wanted to justify her life being taken at twenty-four years old. Vice-President Kamala Harris was also deemed an angry black woman by our former president and the media (Autry, 2020). He called her a
monster, nasty and disrespectful. In the end, the truth prevailed. Vice-President Harris’s passion for justice and equality is what people believed in far more than the trope.

A new angry woman is on the rise. She has made minimal appearances in films; however, she is showing up in reality. White women who are taking it upon themselves to police black men and women in situations they perceive are not right are called “Karen.” The “karens” make calls to the police claiming their lives are being threatened by black people when “karens” are the ones being threatening or doing something against the law. “The angry Karen is invoked to indicate her manipulation of her racial power and white privilege” (Lewis, 2020). Because of systemic racism, the law will stand on the side of white women, unless her dishonesty is videotaped. In 2020, there were numerous cases where white women attempted to show the power of their skin (Negra, 2020). It appears these “angry white women” are seeing a change that is making them uncomfortable.

I succeeded in my expectations to expose the truth about the angry black woman trope. My research also confirmed that Tyler Perry’s work does not hinder black women with the appearance of the trope in his films. Instead, his films have transformed the angry black woman trope into a black woman who has experienced life. He has given her a new image and helped her find her voice. Perry’s films answer Sojourner Truth’s question, “Ain’t I a Woman?” His reply is, “Yes you are!”
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