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Black Feminist Rev. Art CRES 42

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Samm Henshaw is a musical artist who is still widely unknown by mainstream media in the U.S. and so there hasn't been much information released on him. Henshaw is a musician based in the UK. He was born in 1994 and is the son of Nigerian immigrant parents. According to Amazing Tunes album reviews, some of his influences include Lauryn Hill, D'Angelo and gospel artists Helen Baylor and Fred Hammond. For him in creating pieces, "Art's about freedom and doing your own thing," (Amazing Tunes). Many of his songs have themes surrounded on independence, freedom, forgiveness and politicians that are lusting for power.

For this art critique, it will be focusing on Samm Henshaw's song "Slave." This song is challenging and giving voice to how Black bodies are still being subjected to modern day slavery through the cause of systemic racism. The music video for this song takes place in the inner city Black districts of the U.K. There is graffiti art as part of the major background in which he is walking all around the district, in my own mind of growing up in the U.S. this depiction of the music video seems to be similar to the Black American ghetto. The first few shots of the music video he walks past a basketball court that is surrounded by a cage like gate, which symbolizes the lack of freedom from the inner city struggles of Black youth in particular Black men. There are no women featured in this music video and so the story narrates from the point of Black men.

In the first few lines of the song, "This place is my home, built here to protect me" this speaks to the Black inner city that he is placed in. These lyrics show relationship to racial segregation in many parts of cities. These lyrics explain how this segregation under White

governing powers has the intention to protect Black people, but from what? In the line of “Need laws of my own, no foreign guidance to direct me,” Henshaw is speaking out how these laws that segregate communities in the city, are unneeded, he does not need an outsider, or foreigner (a White institution) to create laws governing Black life.

For “So tell me why, I'm running back to your authority,” this shows the relationship of how Black people may look to White power as forms of protection such as police forces that are often placed in inner cities. With “You move my mind, from the weakest part of me. I don't need nothing more than the time of day with the freedom to fall and fall astray” this shows how white power takes hold of the minds of Black people, and yet Samm is also playing around with what is freedom in the midst of White power that created these inner cities and what is freedom when these inner cities are areas built for people to “fall astray.” The chorus of “ I don't wanna be a slave no, no// I don't wanna be a slave, a slave to what we've done// I dont wanna be a slave to save// no I dont wanna be a slave no, no, no no // No matter what we've been told,” shows the resistance of not being enslaved to modern day oppression as a Black man, to not being a slave to how political powers influence Black communities and to not be a slave to the struggles that a Black man might face growing up in the inner city.

In this portion of the song, “We'll keep breaking the boat, till the boundries gone. So tell me why, our voices cannot be heard. And who decides, just what we've left to learn,” breaking the boat is a reference to Black slave revolts on ships being taken to other parts of the world and the line is saying that they will keep resisting till the boundaries keeping them enslaved are gone, and in “And who decides, just what we've left to learn” this is questioning who is in power to teach Black communities about themselves, to educate and to give freedom from their

oppression. **Significance and What it brings to Social Justice** : This song and the music video behind it questions authority and systemic racism in a way that will hopefully speak to people in positions of power to examine their privilege and use their privilege to provoke change in racist systems so that these changes can instead uplift those who are oppressed. This song is also an anthem of empowerment for Black people to continue resisting against White supremacy and to challenge systemic racism in their communities.

Works Cited:

1. "Samm Henshaw." *Amazing Tunes*. Amazing Media Group, 2016. Web. 21 Apr. 2016.
2. *Samm Henshaw -Autonomy (Slave)*. Perf. Samm Henshaw. Vevo, 2015.

Lyrics:

Need laws of my own,
no foreign guidance to direct me.
This place is my home,
built here to protect me.
So tell me why,
I'm running back to your authority.
You move my mind,
from the weakest part of me.
I don't need nothing more
than the time of day
with the freedom to fall
and fall astray.
no, no
I don't wanna be a slave
no, no
I don't wanna be a slave,
a slave to what we've done.
I don't wanna be a slave
to save
no I don't wanna be a slave
no, no, nono
No matter what we've been told,
gotta keep moving on.
We'll keep breaking the boat,
till the boundaries gone.
So tell me why,
our voices cannot be heard.
And who decides,
just what we've left to learn.
I don't need nothing more
than the time of day
with the freedom to fall
and fall astray.

no, no
I don't wanna be a slave
no, no
I don't wanna be a slave
a slave to what we've done
I don't wanna be a slave
to save me when we don't
no I don't want to be a slave
no, no, nono
And who are we to say
that this is the way to go.
And every freedom makes
a choice to take control.
And who are we to say
that this is the way to go.
When every freedom makes
a choice to take control.
I don't wanna be a slave
no, no
I don't wanna be a slave
a slave to what we've done
I don't wanna be a slave
No, no, no
to save me when you don't
no, I don't wanna be a slave
no, no, nono