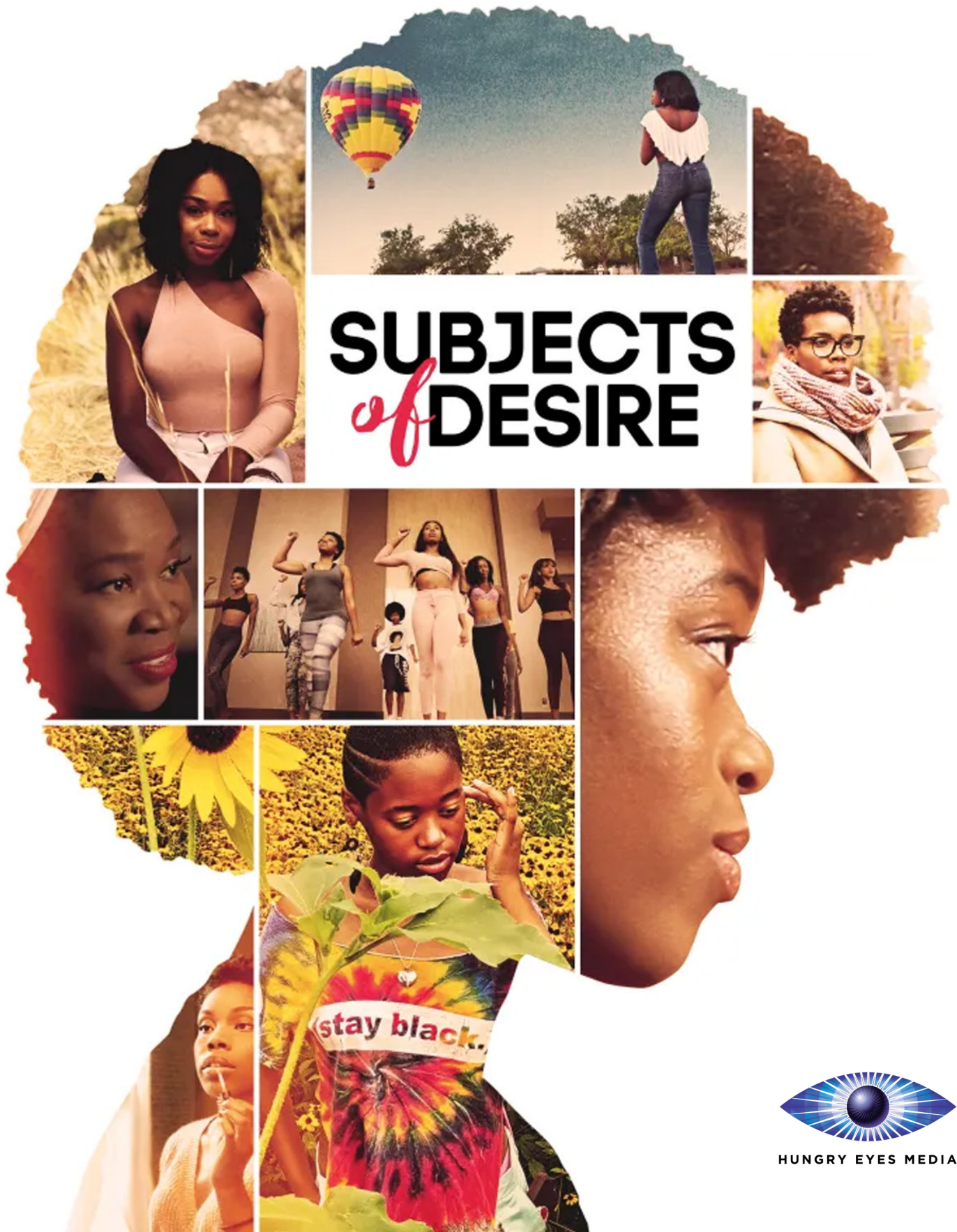


Educators' Discussion Guide



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Facilitators' Notes

CREATING THE CONVERSATION SPACE

Establishing a safe and equitable learning space is critical for the success of the conversations and dialogue that will follow this viewing. Before you begin this viewing, it is recommended that you create safety and establish norms by using some of the following steps:

- 1. Consider who is in the room.** Consider the students who may be challenged by the content or conversation based on their own identities, lived experiences or interpersonal relationships within the class. Be aware that those trigger points exist and keep that in mind when developing conversational approaches with the students.
- 2. Lead with intentions/goals.** If you are clear about the goals of why we are viewing this film, why we are having these conversations and how we hope to learn and grow as a result, it will provide meaning, direction and context to this process.
- 3. Establish some discussion guidelines.** Depending on your learning space, you may have created class norms already. It is recommended to create conversational norms as well. Creating these norms **with** your students is critical to their success. Some guidelines for conversational expectations are, but are not limited to:
 - a. Listen with your whole body (active listening)
 - b. All of who you are is welcome in the conversational space
 - c. You may disagree but you may not attack
 - d. Remove “you” statements to avoid generalization
 - e. Be critical of ideas not groups of people
 - f. Do not expect students to speak on behalf of entire groups or entire parts of their identities
 - g. Be candid when you are vulnerable
 - h. Seek answers together
- 4. Use the framework and starting point prompts in this guide.** If you can chunk the activities and approach the learning in smaller, measurable steps, conversations can be managed more effectively and students will, in turn, feel as though this process has been carefully considered.

- 5. Manage the conversation and address difficulties.** Be prepared to ask follow up questions (“what did you mean by...”, “let me be sure I understand...”, “can you explain more...”) when additional context may be needed. Be present in the conversation so that all learners feel supported. If conversations begin to stray away from the established guidelines, remind students to refer to them and pause or take a break if needed. Should a conversation devolve quickly, please refer to the [“Restorative Practice”](#) section of this guide.
- 6. Be prepared to defer the conversation or change the activity.** If the discussion lags or perhaps becomes contentious, give students a break by asking them to self-reflect, journal or use shorter writing prompts. Additionally, some conversations need to be deferred because they have become off-topic or too heated. Be sure to explain the reason for the deferral and understand that a deferral is not a dismissal; students will have to come back to this at a different time when the conversation can become more meaningful.
- 7. Be cautious about sharing your views.** Understanding your proximity to the issues, themes and learning here is vital to the successful facilitation of this task. The impact of sharing too many of your views can be silencing others in the room who hold different views. Modelling your thinking process can be effective, but your role is to help students learn how to think and approach these conversations, not what to think.



- 8. Confront language in the moment.** While students, especially younger students, may not realize that what they have said has racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist or otherwise offensive connotations, allowing comments to pass in the space may be interpreted as a tacit endorsement. Using some of the following prompts to help reframe without shame, are useful for disrupting that thinking while at the same time not silencing students. If comments are used as weapons in the classroom, or the space devolves into name-calling, verbal abuse or other inappropriate language, stop the conversation immediately and refer to your school's progressive discipline models.

Hitting Pause to Redirect/Reframe

"I'm going to have to pause here."	"That comment is causing a strong reaction and we need to talk about why."	"I don't find that funny. Tell me why you think that's funny?"
"It sounded like you said _____, is that what you meant?"	"That word/ comment is triggering and offensive, we need to stop for a moment and discuss."	"I wonder if you've considered the impact of your words?"

Digging Deeper for Meaning

"How might the intention of your words differ from the impact?"	"How might your comfort level, assumptions, lived experience be influencing your beliefs or process here?"	"I'm curious what your intention was when you said that?"
"What sort of impact do you think your statement has?"	"What do you assume to be true about _____?"	"Would you like to rephrase that?"

- 9. Synthesise the conversation.** Leave appropriate time at the end of the class/session etc., to synthesise what was learned, discussed etc. This step allows students space to process any cognitive or emotional dissonance they may have experienced.
- 10. Reflect and Share.** When some time has passed, reflect with your students the conversational process. Ask for feedback on how they felt it went and what could be done differently. Surveys for anonymous feedback options are powerful tools here. If necessary, you may also share any external or internal support services that your school, school district provide.

DIALOGUE CIRCLES

Setting up an effective dialogue circle is another step in establishing safety in your learning space. Place chairs and/or desks in a circle (if your room allows, you may use the floor). Remind students of the co-authored conversation guidelines and establish the rules of the circle.

- One person speaks at a time (you may also use a speaking object)
- Be critical of ideas, not people
- All participants are equal
- Everyone will have a chance to speak
- Listen with your whole body

As the facilitator, you will serve as a neutral guide. Open the circle with a moment to share and connect and get participants used to using the speaking object and active listening. Use getting acquainted prompts such as:

- If you could be a superhero what power would you want and why?
- What's your happiest memory?
- How would your friends describe you?

Or value prompts such as:

- What gives you hope?
- What excites you?
- What does it mean to belong?

A NOTE ON RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

At times, despite our best intentions and preparations, conversations can leave students feeling hurt, silenced or attacked. Should that happen in your learning space, it is important that you employ some restorative practices in your space to help rebuild the trust. Please see the [Resources section](#) of this guide for some ideas on steps you can take to rebuild safety for all.

FACILITATORS' TIP

Online learners can struggle with challenging conversations in a digital environment. Ensure you establish online norms as well as conversational ones.

Things like:

- Cameras On
- Using Raise Hand Function
- Active Listening

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

The running time for this film is 89 minutes. Should you need to break it into 2 viewing sessions, we recommend that you complete the “Before You Watch” activities and view the film until timestamp 39:34 and then complete the film and the “After Watching” activities in another class or period.

We also encourage you to remember that the activities within the guide can be linked to other course content as can the themes and issues explored in the film. Consider the ways you can refer to this guide and the film at later points in your course to continue the conversation.

NOTICE OF SENSITIVE CONTENT

Subjects of Desire includes conversations about a variety of potentially sensitive content. These topics include discussions of sexual violence, anti-Black racism, descriptions of nudity, racism, racial injustice, murder, sexism, rape and misogyny. We recommend that teachers preview the film in full before they screen it with their class if possible. The following timecodes involve scenes with sensitive content:

- 10:07:08 - descriptions of nudity, anti-Black racism, slavery, sexism
- 10:24:08 - racial slurs, anti-Black racism
- 10:44:34 - (for most of the sections referring to “Jezebel”) - sexual violence, rape, sexual assault, murder, anti-Black racism



Curriculum Connections

Grade	Course Code	Strand	Overall Expectations
9	Visual Arts AVI10	Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing	B2, B2.1, B2.3
	English ENG1D	Media Studies	1.2, 1.5, 2.1

10	Visual Arts AVI20	Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing	B2
	Media Arts ASM20	Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing	B2, B2.1, B2.3
	Canadian History CHC2D	Identity, Citizenship, and Heritage	B3, C3,
		Communities, Conflict, and Cooperation	E2,
		Identity, Citizenship, and Heritage	E3
	Civics CHV20	Political Inquiry and Skill Development	A1,
		Civic Awareness	B3,
		Civic Engagement and Action	C3
	English ENG2D	Media Studies	1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 4.1

Grade	Course Code	Strand	Overall Expectations
11	English ENG3U	Writing Media Studies	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
	Gender Studies HSG3M	Research and Inquiry Skills Foundations Gender Issues and Gender-Related policy in Context	A1.1, A2.2, B3, C1, C2, C3
	Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice HSE3E	Research and Inquiry Skills Foundations Equity, Social Justice, and Change	A1.1, B1, B2, B3, C1, C3
	Dynamics of Human relationships HHD3O	Personal Growth and Development Healthy Relationships	B2, B3, C2, C3
	Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology HSP3U	Sociology	D2, D3

12	English ENG4U	Oral Communication Media Studies	1.8, 2.1, 2.2, 2.6 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
	Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice HSE4M	Research and Inquiry Skills Understanding Social Construction Addressing Equity and Social Justice Issues	A1, B2, B3, C1
	World Cultures HSC4M	The Concept of Culture Cultural Expressions	B1, B2, B3, C3
	Human Development through the Lifespan HHG4M	Social-Emotional Development and Personality	E1, E2, E3
	Challenge and Change in Society HSB4U	Social Patterns and Trends Global Social Challenges	C2, D1, D2, D3

Background

SYNOPSIS

Subjects of Desire explores the cultural shift in North American beauty standards towards embracing Black female aesthetics and features while exposing the deliberate and often dangerous portrayals of Black women in the media. From society's new fixation on the 'booty', fuller lips, the dramatic rise of spray-tanned skin, ethnic hairstyles, and athletic bodies, some argue that Black women are having a beauty moment. But others, primarily Black women, argue that traditional Black features and attributes are seen as more desirable when they are on White women. Told from the POV of women who aren't afraid to challenge conventional beauty standards, the film is partially set at the 50th Anniversary of the Miss Black America Pageant, a beauty pageant that was created as a political protest. *Subjects of Desire* is a culturally significant, provocative film that deconstructs what we understand about race and the power behind beauty.



AWARDS

Top 10 Audience Award – Hot Docs
Cultural Spirit Award – New Hope Film Festival
Best Documentary – DC Black Film Festival
Best Documentary – San Francisco Black Film Festival
DOXX Award for Best Documentary – Tallgrass Film Festival
Best Documentary – CineFAM Film Festival
Canada's Top 10 Films – TIFF

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I grew up feeling like I was outside the norm of conventional beauty. I had smooth chocolate skin, 4C hair and while I was considered nice looking, I rarely found products that enhanced my looks. Luckily, I was confident at being a 'natural,' and have literally jumped for joy over the past decade as products for Black women became plentiful and fantastic. As significant, Black women and girls started to embrace their beauty and the world began to emulate, buy, borrow and appropriate Black aesthetics. That's when I realized I wanted to understand the structures behind the beauty standards we all accept. I also wanted to deconstruct why so many of us grew up feeling hurt, insecure and sometimes ugly. I wanted to be a part of telling our story as Black women and why our beauty holds power.



I am blessed with three beautiful daughters, currently teenagers, aged 13, 17 and 19. Over the years, I've watched them develop into glorious young ladies and my hopes and dreams for them have soared. Like many mothers, I also want to protect them from the pain I felt growing up, before I grew into loving the skin I'm in. Then 5 years ago, a surprising thing happened. My girls began to tell me how many of their non-Black friends coveted their beauty. Big booty – they want that. Fuller lips, – *they are getting products for that*, slim fit, slim-thick, small waists to full hips ratio, *they are working out for that*, baby hairs, braids and extensions – *they are buying that*. Beyoncé, Rihanna, Lupita Nyong'o, even Naomi Campbell (this lady does not age), women who are considered the crème of the crop in beauty, belong in our camp. And yes white beauty standards have remained dominant, but an interesting shift is unfolding too. That's when I began to understand that while many things remained the same from my youth, a great deal has changed too. I want to tell the story of whys and how this is unfolding. - **Jennifer Holness**

Filmmaker Biographies



JENNIFER HOLNESS – DIRECTOR, WRITER AND PRODUCER

Jennifer brings a fresh, authentic perspective to telling powerful, thought-provoking stories. Jen has worked as a documentary filmmaker for nearly 20 years. She is the Executive Producer of Maya Annik Bedward feature doc, *Black Zombie*, which is in production with CBC's Doc Channel. She was recently awarded the CMPA's Indiescreen Established Producer of the Year Award in recognition of her contribution to Canada's film industry and her incredible career achievements. Jen has directed her first feature documentary, *Subjects of Desire*, about Black women and beauty that will have its world premiere at SXSW and will air on TVO and Crave in Canada. Jen who is passionate about Black Canadian History (and redressing the lack of it) is producing her first History channel series, *BLK: An Origin Story*. She will serve as a series showrunner and a director with partner Sudz Sutherland.



SUDZ SUTHERLAND – PRODUCER

Sudz works on both sides of the fence as a freelance writer and director for TV dramas and feature films. Some of his most recent works include Netflix's *Ginny and Georgia*, *Superman and Lois*, and CBC's *For The Record*. Sudz's feature film, *Home Again*, won the prestigious PAFF-BAFTA Festival Choice Award in Los Angeles and was nominated for Best Direction from the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC). *Home Again* is the follow up to his multiple award-winning and Genie nominated debut feature film *Love, Sex and Eating the Bones*. His Dramatic series *Shoot the Messenger*, with writer/producer Jennifer Holness was aired on the CBC. Sudz is currently developing a comedy series for CFC-Netflix, *#relationship goals*, and will be producing and directing a powerful new documentary series, *BLK: An Origin Story*, that he co-created about lost Black History in Canada.

Cast Biographies



RYANN RICHARDSON - @theryannrichardson

Ryann Richardson made history becoming the 50th Anniversary Miss Black America. Before that, the marketing executive-turned-tech founder spent 10 years building consumer brands for companies spanning from early-stage startups (Victor) to billion-dollar “unicorns” (Uber) to the Fortune500 (T-Mobile/Deutsche Telekom). Ryann is the youngest honoree on Savoy Magazine’s list of “Most Influential Black Executives in Corporate America”.



ALEXANDRA GERMAIN - @alexxthegoblin

Alexandra was born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico to Haitian-American parents. Her upbringing shaped her into the person she is today. Alexandra and her siblings are first-generation Americans. Her parents always inspired them to go above and beyond in their endeavours.. She is currently studying Psychology with a minor in Child Development at the University of New Mexico. Alexandra still remains steadfast in pursuing her dreams and being involved in her community.



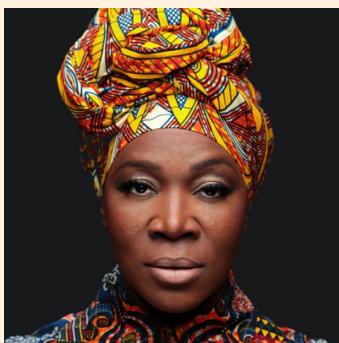
SERAIAH NICOLE - @seraiahnicole

Seraiah Nicole is a performer, activist & founder of Seraiah Nicole Creations, LLC. Her debut album *The Truth Is* is a combination of poetry, hip-hop, and soulful vocals that speak truth to power. This creative and performing artist delivers vitalizing vocals, powerful poetry & passionate interactive performances; , all while organising and capturing Philadelphia’s Black arts community with Light Open Mic & Serai’s Eyes.



BRITTANY LEWIS - @brittanyleelewis

Brittany Lee Lewis is a Miss Black America 2017, Miss America 2015, and Miss Delaware 2014 contestant. She is a PhD candidate at George Washington University specialising in African-American, urban, and U.S. 20th century history. Brittany is also a professor of ethnic studies at Wilmington University. Brittany is a political commentator and host, and has appeared on ABC, RT News, and other networks.



INDIA.ARIE - @indiaarie

India.Arie is an American singer/songwriter. She has sold over 3.3 million records in the US and 10 million worldwide. She has won four Grammy Awards from her 23 nominations, including Best R&B Album. In her latest album, *Worthy*, as always, Arie advises others to love themselves unconditionally and embrace their imperfections.



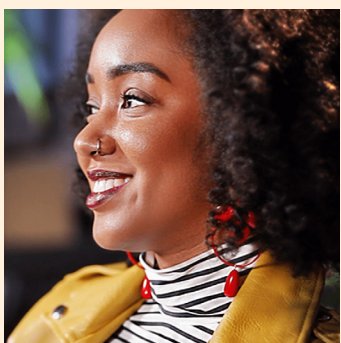
JULLY BLACK - @missjullyblack

Jully Black is a true Canadian Icon. Named as one of 'The 25 Greatest Canadian Singers Ever', (CBC Music) she has been dubbed 'Canada's Queen of R&B Soul'. As a platinum-selling recording artist, her music career has yielded multiple singles reaching the Top 10 pop, R&B, and dance music charts. She has taken home Juno and Gemini Awards earned innumerable industry accolades and was hand-selected to sing for the Queen of England. With her powerhouse vocals, hilarious personality, and love of people, Jully Black truly is every woman.



RACHEL DOLEZAL - @racheladolezal

Rachel Anne Dolezal (born November 12, 1977), also known as Nkechi Amare Diallo, is a former American college instructor and activist known for her status as a self-proclaimed Black woman, though having been born to white parents. She is also a former National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) chapter president. Dolezal was president of the NAACP chapter in Spokane, Washington (2014–2015) when she resigned amid controversy over her racial identity in June 2015.



AMANDA PARRIS - @amanda_parris

By day, Amanda Parris is a television and radio host for the CBC and writes a weekly column on Black art and culture. By night, she writes stories for the stage and screen. In 2019, her play *Other Side of the Game* was awarded the Governor General Literary Award for Drama. In 2018 she joined Johanna Schneller as the co-host of *The Filmmakers* for a Canadian Screen Award-winning second season dedicated to Canadian female filmmakers. In the same year, she joined Tom Power as co-host of *From the Vaults*, a docu-series that used CBC archival footage to revive forgotten stories in music history. In 2020 Amanda launched *Black Light*, a weekly column for CBC Arts that showcases, explores and critically engage art and popular culture created by Black people.



DR. CHERYL THOMPSON - @DrCherylIT

Cheryl Thompson is an assistant professor in the School of Creative Industries at Ryerson University. Her research focuses on histories of Black hair, racial performance, the critical study of media and advertising, and the intersections of gender, class, and power. Her work has appeared in *Emergent Feminisms: Challenging a Post-Feminist Media Culture*; *the Journal of Canadian Studies*; *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'histoire*, *Feminist Media Studies*; and *Fashion Studies*. Her books include *Beauty in a Box: Detangling the Roots of Canada's Black Beauty Culture* (Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2019) and *Uncle: Race, Nostalgia and the Politics of Loyalty* (Coach House Books, 2021).



DR. CAROLYN WEST

Dr Carolyn M. West is an award-winning international speaker, domestic violence/sexual assault expert, cultural sensitivity trainer, expert witness, and Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Washington. She has written more than 80 publications, including *"Mammy, Sapphire, Jezebel, and the Bad Girls of Reality Television: Media Representations of Black women"*. With more than three decades of experience, Dr West is a nationally recognized scholar who investigates the psychological impact of media images on Black women. She is the writer/producer of the upcoming documentary *"Let Me Tell Ya'll 'Bout Black Chicks: Images of Black Women in Pornography,"* a searing illustrated multimedia presentation that explores sexualized images of Black women in popular media.



DR. HEATHER WIDDOWS - @ProfWiddows

Heather Widdows is a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Birmingham, UK. Her most recent book is *Perfect Me: Beauty as an Ethical Ideal* (Princeton University Press, 2018) which has been defined by *Vogue* as "ground-breaking" and listed by *The Atlantic* as one of the best books of 2018. She is the author of *The Connected Self: The Ethics and Governance of the Genetic Individual* (2103), *Global Ethics: An Introduction* (2011), and *The Moral Vision of Iris Murdoch* (2005). She has co-edited, with Darrel Moellendorf, *The Routledge Handbook of Global Ethics* (2014). Heather's *Perfect Me* book led to her founding the [#EverydayLookism campaign](#), to increase public and policymaker understanding that negative comments about other people's bodies matter.



GARVIA BAILEY - @garviab

Garvia Bailey has a career in media spanning close to two decades as a producer, writer, host and columnist for the CBC and is part of the podcast production team Media Girlfriends. She is a sought after interviewer and moderator, her notable interview subjects include Eddie Glaude Jr (Hot Docs), Claudia Rankine (AGO), Roxane Gay (Toronto Public Library), and the late John Singleton (TIFF). Garvia is a co-founder of [jazzcast.ca](#) amplifying the roots of jazz as an African-American-derived artform.



RAYNE SUTHERLAND - @raynesutherland

Rayne Sutherland is in her second year at Western University. She is currently studying health sciences and business, which combines her passion for helping people in a real-world setting. She is very enthusiastic, energetic, fun and hardworking. Rayne enjoys cooking, reading, listening to music and having fun with her friends and family.



DAEJA SUTHERLAND

Daeja is entering her first year at The New School. She is studying visual arts and creative writing and hopes to work in animation or screenwriting. She is passionate about social justice work, especially issues surrounding BIPOC and queer youth. Daeja's hobbies include reading novels and manga, watching movies, drawing, and practising yoga.



TORIE WILLIAMS - @torieewilliams_

Torie Williams is a proud Jamaican-Trini-Grenadian. She is a fourth-year student at McGill University studying economics. During her time at McGill, she has been involved in the Black Students' Network and is beyond thankful for the dynamic community it has provided her. She loves music, cooking food, and trying out new hairstyles.

Grades 7 and 8 Activities and Resources

BEFORE YOU WATCH

Choose two or more of the following activities designed to generate ideas and brainstorm before watching the curated clips for grades 7 and 8. It is recommended that you start with the first activity, but all three are helpful in practicing visible thinking and allowing students to discover what they already know about the topic.

A. IMAGE BRAINSTORM

(Suggested Timing: 10-15 minutes)

Display the poster image on the board or in the classroom. In small groups have students brainstorm on chart paper the following prompts:

- Look closely at the image, what do you notice about the images? What stands out to you?
- Based on this image, what do you think this film is about?
- What are 5 questions that you have about this film? (Based on what you see in the image or what the image makes you think of)
- Whose voices do you think we are going to hear in this film?

MATERIALS

- Chart Paper
- Image
- Marker
- Tape
- Post-it Notes
- *Online - Jamboard, Pear Deck, Padlet or other brainstorming tools



B. WORD WALL

(Suggested Timing: 20 minutes)

Watch the [TRAILER](#) and complete the following:

Give each student 2 or 3 post-it notes. Have them write down one word that comes to mind after watching the trailer. Have the students place those words on the board, their desks or another appropriate space in the room. Once the students have completed the brainstorm, begin to gather the words into larger themes.

FACILITATORS’ TIP

Look for themes like: Cultural Appropriation, Anti-Black Racism, Media Representation, Discrimination, Marginalization, Identity

These terms may need defining for your students. You may refer to the glossary section for support.

C. WHAT I THINK IT MEANS CHART

(Suggested Timing: 10 minutes for part 1, 10-15 minutes or part two after viewing)

In elbow partners or smaller groups, have students complete the “What I Think it Means” section of the following terminology chart. As students watch the film, invite them to add or change their definitions based on what they learn while viewing.

Term	What I Think It Means	Actual Definition
Perm		
Cultural Appropriation		
Racism		
Blackfishing		
Representation		
Stereotype		
Binary		

VIEWING MATERIALS

The following are curated clips that provide an overview of the themes and issues explored in the full version of *Subjects of Desire*. These clips have been gathered with the age and stage of middle schoolers in mind.

1. ["Intro and Conceptions of Beauty"](#)
2. ["The Beauty Binary and Anti-Black Racism"](#)
3. ["Teens Roundtable"](#)
4. ["Ms Black America and Media Representation"](#)
5. ["Beauty and The Law"](#)
6. ["Where are they Now?"](#)

AFTER YOU WATCH

These activities are designed to be completed after viewing the clips. It is recommended that you give as much time as possible to work through the discussion and the writing reflection as processing some of this learning may be challenging to your students. If you have worked through the conversational norms prior to the discussion jigsaw activity, refer to the norms you created prior to beginning this exercise.



A. DISCUSSION JIGSAW

(Suggested Timing: 30-40 minutes)

Place students in groups of 4-5 and assign each a number. Once the initial groups are established, have all 1's, 2's etc gather to discuss their quote and prompt. Allow 10-15 minutes for conversation. Once the timer is complete, regroup the students into their initial groups so that each individual can discuss their quote with a larger group.

	Quote	Prompt
1	"Black women have been historically denied the power of beauty, and I think it was intentional" – <i>Ryann Richardson</i>	Does "beauty" have power? Who defines what is beautiful? What does this quote make you think about?
2	"So, if I already am born into a box, you're not giving me any freedom to self-identify who I am. You're not giving me any freedom to evolve. You're just keeping me in that box." – <i>Alexandra Germain</i>	What does the speaker mean by "box"? Have you ever been put in a box? What does that feel like? What does it mean to self-identify?
3	"Everything we do is cool on them, but it's not cool on us." – <i>Alexandra Germain</i>	Who is "them" and who is "us" in this quote? What does cultural appropriation mean? Where do you see evidence of this in your own lives?
4	"I challenge everyone to just start paying attention to the images that you see on a day to day basis, and you're going to be like, "oh my God, Becky is everywhere." – <i>Dr. Cheryl Thompson</i>	Are you aware of the images/representation that you see in media? (Social media, TV, films, books, magazines etc) Who is absent from those images? Who is "Becky"? What does that name represent?
5	"And anyone that wants to support the Black community should be doing so as an ally, rather than centring themselves and their voices." – <i>Brittany Lee Lewis</i>	What does it mean to be an ally? What do you think "decentering" means?

B. SELF-REFLECTION WRITING PROMPT

(Suggested Timing: 20-30 minutes or as a homework task)

Consider the following quote:

"We all have, like a part, a place inside of us that we're insecure about something. I don't have better words than that. And we wonder if that makes us flawed, and if that flaw makes us unworthy of being loved, and if that unworthiness means we'll never-- You know, there's a place that is like an unravelling that can happen just from one little thing. Just because we live in this world that tells us somebody's perfect, but you're not."

- India.Arie

Think of a time that you felt unworthy, what did that do to your sense of self? How did that feeling impact your perspective on the world? How does social media affect that perception of what is worthy? Does your self-image get impacted by what/who you see or don't see in the media? When something is deliberate, how might we use our personal power to affect change? If you don't identify as Black or female, how do you amplify the voices of those that do?

Student Responses: These can take the form of a written paragraph, a blog post, an article for a school publication. Students could also address the reflection through visual media (a painting, photo etc.). This is an opportunity for students to be creative as well as self-reflective.



Grades 9-12 Activities and Resources

The learning tasks below are intended to be completed as close to the viewing of the film as possible. In the post viewing section, there are many activities that you, as the facilitator can choose to lead. It is recommended to complete at least 2 before moving on to the consolidation.

BEFORE YOU WATCH

A. ASKING QUESTIONS

(Suggested Timing: 10 minutes)

Read the film synopsis and/ or watch the [TRAILER](#) and with an elbow partner complete the chart below.

See	Think	Wonder



AFTER YOU WATCH

PRE-DISCUSSION TASKS

Choose one or more of the following visible thinking tasks.

A. COMPASS POINTS

(Suggested Timing: 10-15 minutes)

Display the following and have students complete the activity prior to beginning the discussions. This task allows students to orient themselves in terms of what excites them, worries them and allows them to create a space that feels safe for conversation by giving them the chance to suggest conversational tactics.



E- What excites you about this topic?

W- What worries you about this topic?

N- What do you need to know before engaging further with this topic?

S- What suggestions do you have for how we can talk about this topic?

B. PEELING THE LAYERS

(Suggested Timing: 15-20 minutes)

Many issues are layered and nuanced. This activity will help students “peel” away at the layers that make up the issues and themes explored in this film.



Consider the image on the left. Think of one of the social issues in the film as a layered object, the surface is the skin, the flesh is what is underneath, and the core represents the deeper, more complex centre of the issue. What is at the surface of this issue? What is in the middle and what is at the core?

Give students 15-20 minutes to complete this diagram and have them share it with a peer.

C. THEN AND NOW

(Suggested Timing: 30-40 minutes)

Ask students to complete the chart below individually. Give them 15-20 minutes to flesh out their thinking. If space allows, have students find peers in the room who had similar or the same “Used to Think” and allow 2-3 minutes to share their “Now I Think” entries. Do this 3 or 4 times.

Concept/Term	“I Used to Think...”	“Now I Think...”
Cultural Appropriation		
Media Representation of Black Females		
Marginalisation and Erasure		

D. CLIP QUEST

(Suggested Timing: 40-60 minutes)

Using the clips below create a chart either digitally or on paper and group them according to a theme. Once you’ve grouped them as you see fit, create a theme statement for each grouping. Your statement should provide a connection to all the clips in each grouping.

****Extension: using your theme statement, write a short, structured paragraph that more deeply explores the social impact of the underlying issues being discussed****

Clips	
Seraiah Nicole - Ghetto is now Popular	Roundtable
Jully Black - Why are you attacking me	Seraiah's Poem
Ryann - Too Black	Dr. Carolyn West - Mammy Definition
Cheryl - Olympia's Maid	Dance Sequence
Brittany Lee Lewis - Black Women and Rape	Alexandra Germain - Black Men and Women

Discussions

Ensure that before the large group conversation, you have completed the conversational norms exercise and that you are sitting in a community circle.

Place students in small discussion groups. Instruct them to choose 2 quotes from the chart below that they will work through as a small group. Before this, have the class determine one quote they would like to discuss as a large group.

Set a timer for 10-15 minutes for small group conversation.

****Extension: Any of these quotes could be used in a formal Harkness Discussion as an AOL assessment. For tips on setting up a Harkness Discussion, please refer to the resource page.****

Quote	Prompt/Question
"The most disrespected woman in America is still the Black woman..."	How do you define respect? Who gets to define it? This quote is from 1962, based on the film why do you think this rings true today?
"Black women have been historically denied the power of beauty, and I think it was intentional"	Does "beauty" have power? Who defines what is beautiful? What does this quote make you think about? Where do power dynamics surrounding beauty show up in your lives?
"So, where white women went back into the house, Black women went into their house to serve them and to clean up after them once again."	What trope is this referring to? Where do you see this playing out in the media and in what ways does it damage individual identity?
"We all have, like a part, a place inside of us that we're insecure about something. I don't have better words than that. And we wonder if that makes us flawed, and if that flaw makes us unworthy of being loved, and if that unworthiness means we'll never...You know, there's a place that is like an unravelling that can happen just from one little thing. Just because we live in this world that tells us somebody's perfect, but you're not."	Where does the external pressure to be "ideal" show up in your lives? How do you navigate that pressure? What do you think happens where there is no relief from that pressure? Are there strategies that you use to combat this? How can we show up for others who don't have those strategies?

Quote	Prompt/Question
"Beauty is becoming an ethical ideal."	What does it mean to be "ideal"? Whose ideal are we being measured against? How can the concept of decentering be applicable here?
"So, if I already am born into a box, you're not giving me any freedom to self-identify who I am. You're not giving me any freedom to evolve. You're just keeping me in that box."	What boxes are you put into? What does being put into a "box" do to your ability to express your identity? What systems are in place to maintain these boxes?
"If something tragic happens in my life, as Black people we should be allowed to cry, to scream, to yell, to have the same exact responses, especially to the systematic racism that we experience on a day to day basis."	Define "tone policing". Have you ever seen it? Heard it? Been affected by it? Did it to someone? Why do you think this technique is used to silence or dismiss people of colour, especially Black women?
"I challenge everyone to just start paying attention to the images that you see on a day-to-day basis, and you're going to be like, "oh my God, Becky is everywhere."	Are you aware of the images/representation that you see in media? (Social media, TV, films, books, magazines etc) Who is absent from those images? Who is "Becky"? What does that name represent?
"Everything we do is cool on them, but it's not cool on us."	Who is "them"? Who is "us"? Who defines what is cool? How does the quote relate to cultural appropriation? Where have you seen evidence of this?
"I find it extremely offensive. Deeply, profoundly offensive, because every time somebody does that, they're basically reducing Blackness to aesthetics."	What does it mean to be "reduced to aesthetics"? How could that minimization be harmful?
"And anyone that wants to support the Black community should be doing so as an ally, rather than centering themselves and their voices."	What does allyship mean in this regard? How might people be able to decenter themselves and amplify Black female voices?

TONE POLICING - A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Rewatch [this clip](#) of Jully Black talking about her exchange with Jeanne Becker during *Canada Reads* judging.

INDIVIDUALLY

Refer to your definitions of “tone policing”. What is the example of how that strategy was used in the story being told?

Read: [“Unpacking the Conversations That Matter”](#)

CONVERSATION CIRCLE

In your conversation circles, explore the incident and consider:

- Why it was so relevant in the context of where and when it happened
- The specifics of the incident using the 5 W’s method or another visible thinking tool
- Share instances of being the recipient of, or the instigator of, tone policing.
- Discuss the concept of “intent vs impact” and how that understanding can help frame restorative conversations

If the conversation becomes charged, allow students to reflect on these questions individually via response journal or free writing. If students are reluctant to share or are finding it hard to connect with the issue, refer to the “Peeling the Layers” activity and have them work through that task before trying to re-engage the conversation.



Synthesis Activity

Teens and adults spend a lot of time on social media. Some studies suggest that on average it is between 2-6 hours per day. What we consume in the media impacts many things in our lives, and in particular, can have serious impacts on our self-worth and self-image. We heard women in the film discussing how there was a lack of representation and positive representation of Black beauty in the media. Using your ["Then/Now" chart](#), reflect on the social media representation in your own social media and consider how this process has changed the way you see who is represented and how.

Then, using the [cast bios](#) as a starting point, choose at least 3 cast members to follow on social media. Consider the importance of representation when it comes to shaping individual identity and perception of others. How will you view images of Black women now?

FACILITATORS' TIP

Students can reflect in pairs or individually. This activity can be done anytime after viewing the film.



Glossary

Term	Definition
Skin Bleaching	Refers to the process of using chemicals to lighten areas of the skin or achieve an overall lighter complexion. The active ingredient in most skin bleaching creams is poisonous mercury.
Perm	Refers to the process of using chemical hair products to “relax” the tight coil curls. Otherwise known as relaxers or straighteners, it is used to achieve straighter hair.
Trope	A trope is a word used in a non-literal sense such as an idea or phrase used to invoke a powerful image.
“Mammy”	An image used to portray Black women as nurses, maids, housekeepers or slaves.
“Jezebel”	An image used to portray Black women as oversexualized or hypersexualised beings. Often used as a slur to notate promiscuity, this trope has dangerous outcomes in the form of rationalized and even sanctioned sexual violence against women of colour.
“Sapphire”	A reference to a character on “The Amos and Andy Show”, Sapphire is used in tandem with the “Angry Black Woman ” trope as a means to stereotype and diminish Black women’s ability to express emotion. Often linked to tone policing.
White Fragility	A term coined by author Robin DiAngelo refers to the tendency among members of the dominant White cultural group to have feelings of defensiveness, anger or dismissal when speaking about racism.
Blackfishing	A term used to describe a person of non-Black descent who uses makeup, hair, clothing etc to present themselves as Black usually to gain attention or access to spaces that are not open to them.
Yellowfishing	A term used to describe a person of non-Asian descent who uses makeup, hair and clothing to present themselves as Asian usually to gain attention or access to spaces that are not open to them.

Term	Definition
Intersectionality	A phrase coined by professor Kimberle Crenshaw to describe how race, class, gender and other identity characteristics overlap and affect the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups.
Cultural Appropriation	Refers to the inappropriate adoption of cultural elements of a minority group by a majority group with no reference or credit given to the originators. Includes knowledge, symbols practises etc.
Jim Crow	Jim Crow laws were a set of state and local statutes in America that marginalized African Americans in a post-slavery society. These laws prevented African Americans from voting, holding jobs, access to education and were the foundation for segregation. The laws were repealed in 1968 but the effects are still felt today.
Decentering	The ability to shift focus from an established centre. In most equity spaces, this refers to the process of shifting focus away from a dominant centre to include important perspectives of people considered not to be in the centre.
Tone Policing	Also referred to as tone trolling or tone fallacy is a conversational tactic that dismisses the ideas or thoughts being presented when they are deemed to be angry, sad, frustrated, fearful or otherwise charged. Often used in connection with feelings of White fragility.
Transracial Identity	Having a racial identity or racial expression that differs from one's race of birth.
Shadeism/ Colourism	The discrimination against an individual based on their skin tone, whereby the lighter skin tone is placed at the top of the hierarchy. Linked to terms like "passing" in regard to proximity to Whiteness.

Resources

1. Restorative Practice in Schools and the Classroom - <https://www.kickboardforschools.com/sel-social-emotional-learning/restorative-practice-ideas-for-your-classroom/>
2. Learning for Justice- Critical Conversations about Race with Students - <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/lets-talk>
3. Representation of Black Women in Media - <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/black-women-photographers-polly-irungu/>
4. Statistics and Information of Black Female Representation in Hollywood - <https://seejane.org/research-informs-empowers/representations-of-black-women-in-hollywood/>
5. The Black Female Experience in Canada - <https://monitormag.ca/shorthand/black-women-in-canada-200221160623/index.html>
6. Anti-Black Racism in Canada - <https://www.bcg.com/en-ca/publications/2020/reality-of-anti-black-racism-in-canada>
7. Allyship and Activism - <https://blog.leeandlow.com/2021/02/03/defining-activism-and-allyship-an-interview-with-lalena-garcia-and-caryn-davidson/>
8. Teens and Activism on Social Media - <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/social-media-activism-changed-everything>
9. Creating a Harkness Discussion - <https://nowsparkcreativity.com/2016/12/harkness-discussions-in-3-simple-steps.html>
10. Harkness and Equity Maps - <https://lindsayannlearning.com/harkness-discussion/>
11. Tone Policing - <http://www.theinclusionsolution.me/unpacking-the-conversations-that-matter-if-you-werent-so-angry-people-would-listen-and-the-problem-with-tone-policing/>

Credits

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RING FIVE

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