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Color Coded

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Color Coded

A Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Arts Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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In loving memory of Pokima Nicole Holmes.

Thank you for teaching me to always question the rules and never my dreams.

The Colored Imaginary

Color Coded is a play exploring the Colored Imaginary. Claudia Rankine talks about the existence of the Racial Imaginary in her text, “The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind”.¹ Her discussion of the Racial Imaginary dissects the category of whiteness by trying to understand how the imagination plays a role in white people’s experience of the world and the others who inhabit it. Claudia Rankine’s exploration of this imaginary illuminates how prejudices form and remain, as well as how an engagement with such an imaginary space, made up of years of history, hate, and fear, can lead to real actions from those who rely on the validity of this imaginary. The *New York Times* quotes Claudia, as she notes that:

“I think sometimes we’re dealing with racists who go out to murder and I think sometimes we’re dealing with people who have in their consciousness a built-up idea of who they are and who the ‘other’ is, and are inside a fight that doesn’t exist except in their imagination, and because their imagination is armed, the person on the other side ends up dead.’ These racist constructions in the imagination throw people of color into a ‘false fight for their humanity’, she said, paraphrasing the poet Fred Moten. ‘We’re spending a lot of energy just trying to stay human.’”²

First having heard the term “white Imaginary” in a classroom setting, it was natural for me to be curious about what other imaginaries exist and what constitutes them. We can understand that the White Imaginary is not only a set of stereotypes and ideologies revealing how the white mind works when dealing with people of color, but furthermore is an ever-present force which attempts to dictate the ways in which people of color should be allowed to live. And, although having heard the term for the first time, this toxic, hegemonic, imaginary is absolutely

¹ Rankine, Claudia, Beth Loffreda, and Max King Cap. *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*. Fence Books, 2015.

² Charlton, Laurreta. "Claudia Rankine's Home for the Racial Imaginary." *The New Yorker*, June 19, 2017. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/claudia-rankines-home-for-the-racial-imaginary>.

nothing new. It is a broad term encapsulating the colonizer-destroyer mindset people of color have to be in conversation with every day. Because of the lack of nuance the white Imaginary provides people of color, my Senior Project partner, Rishi Mutalik, and I decided to write about the Colored Imaginary-*our* ideologies, *our* viewpoints, what collective, cultural, and historical instances form *our* mindsets.

An example of a thought process that might occur within the White Imaginary might be best explained by an episode of “The Trisha Goddard Show”.³ This show, brings people on to talk to family members, friends, or partners about issues they are having and grievances they wish to air. On one particular episode, an older white woman was brought on the show by her two daughters to discuss why she is disgusted by them dating black men and, even going *so far* as to have a mixed-race baby. Her daughters and their husband’s, both black, are upset and confused. Trisha Goddard, the host, attempts to get the mother to explain why she feels this way. The mother gives excuses, one being that she doesn’t know the men well and hasn’t really talked to them. Trisha asks the mother if she’s a racist. She says no. The daughters say it’s because she hates black men and thinks they are ugly. The mother disagrees, so Trisha asks her if she finds black men ugly, to which she stutters to find a concrete answer. The mother then goes to explain that the reason she doesn’t want her daughters to be with black men, is because they aren’t good to women. And, more importantly, because she was raised around, and associated with, only white people and wanted her daughters to have the same upbringing. As a result, she has no relationship with either of her daughter’s partners and has further gone to ruin and estrange the relationship she did have with her daughters.

³“Disgusted by Her Daughters Dating Black Men; I Hate Being A Black Man'.”, *YouTube*, uploaded by MagiMEgo, February 26, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCTh6JAJGyk>.

This mother has seen her daughter's partners. She has heard from her daughters that both men have done nothing, but take care of them. So, we must wonder where she would get such an idea from. Well, let's consider one thing, she claims herself as having raised her children "within [their] race" and as always encouraging them to marry and reproduce within their own race. From her own upbringing, as well as the upbringing she attempted to instill in her daughters, we can deduce that the mother has an allegiance to whiteness. This allegiance extends so far that the mother would be willing to risk her relationship with her children on it. We know for a fact she makes an active choice not to engage with people of color, suggesting a heightened importance placed on maintaining ties with whiteness and cutting ties with all other forms of existence. Because we know that she doesn't interact with people of color, and was raised around people who agreed staying away from other cultures was best, we know that the information riddling her mind isn't coming from an accurate and truthful source. Understanding this, we can conclude that her bias towards these men stems from stories, fables, tales, and irrational creations each coming from the historical antebellum white collectivity which produced many of the stereotypes we know today and got a myriad of black people lynched. This collectivity, held together by the fabric of sameness, fear, and insecurity, is what breeds the white Imaginary to be as extremist as it is.

Other, less overtly hostile instances can shed light on the way the Imaginaries works as well. A white person and a black person are walking to class. Both parties are looking straight ahead, listening to music, walking in opposite directions, passing one another. The white person bumps into the black person, apologizes very quickly, and speeds off. In the white person's mind, it is a simple interaction and a simple accident where you mistakenly didn't see someone,

resolved by a simple apology. However, in the Colored Imaginary, it is an interaction in which a white person didn't see you. And why would this culminate in someone's mind? Because the brain, where the imagination is created, understands a long history of white people dehumanizing and minimizing the lives of people of color. One of the more secretive ways this history often manifests itself is through a literal occupation of someone else's space. While they may not have been thinking "Oh, let me bump into this black person", they didn't see you because in their subconscious it wasn't important enough for them to have seen you or to have stepped out of the way if they had. They didn't think to see you, and you know this, because you understand a history in which your existence is often not recognized or treated as such.

Aside from history, two things makes the individual responses to this situation so different. This is experience and power dynamics. One cannot experience someone else's experience. You can imagine. You can try. But one cannot *experience* it. If one experiences a life in which they are not the victim of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., interactions will not be loaded with hidden messages because there is no hidden message for *them*. They belong to a class of people who don't understand these interactions, these messages as messages because such interactions do not happen to them. Their experience of the world is a world that caters to them therefore they cannot begin to fathom the exact opposite-a world that tries to destroy you in new and interesting ways, every day. This is an experience those who engage with the Colored Imaginary have dealt with at least once in their lifetime. The experience of being invalidated, unseen, unheard, and disrespected is something that happens to us time and time again. And, because people learn from experience, these experiences guide our understanding of our

communities' history, how each different community engages with the white imaginary forced on them, and our understanding of the ideologies we form as a result of these imaginaries.

But, even aside from the negative interactions amongst the two groups mentioned, smaller experiences outside of each other also affect these imaginaries. For example, culturally, at a predominately white institution like Bard college, people choose to talk at parties, sometimes without music, and often don't participate in as much dancing. Whereas you can ask most people at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and they will acknowledge that dancing is an exciting part of a party for them, or at the very least dancing is important at family functions, parties, etc. Most weddings, block parties, and other celebrations have someone dancing, whether it's a choreographed dance by the young ones in the family, or the drunk uncle asking what you know about the old song playing on the speakers. In the Colored Imaginary, functions and dancing often go hand-in-hand. Experience is what distinguishes these imaginaries, even in the smallest of ways.

This variety of experience is a testament to the extensive landscape of the Colored Imaginary. But again, because the Colored imaginary is so expansive and so many different community ideologies exist, it absolutely necessary that we delve into conversations about our relation to ourselves, to other people of color. Although we do engage with the White Imaginary, we also engage with ourselves. We are *mostly* engaging with our fellow people of color. Whether that's at home or at school, or at work, there is a conversation to be had about our interactions within our own world. We should know where parts of this collective Colored Imaginary come from, which parts of the imaginary are different for which communities, and how they differ. We should know how our own collective, and yet very, very distinct, imaginaries affect the way we

live life and interact with others. And this is why our exploration of the Colored Imaginary is so important to us. It presents us an opportunity we are rarely afforded. It is an opportunity to critically analyze the ways in which we think, cope, hope, and dream. We have the chance to step out and view ourselves *for* ourselves. Given the creative freedom we had, in conjunction with our own very active imaginations, we feel that is absolutely necessary to 1) acknowledge the existence of this Colored Imaginary, this psyche, this ever-changing space of mind and to 2) find out what exactly it is. It is time to color in the rest of the photo.

Creating Color Coded

The process with which we both engaged in for the creation of our project led to many of the ideas that are present on stage. Originally, as I was going to do my Sproj alone, I intended on writing a play about bees. I had hoped to talk about the way in which bees are absolutely necessary for growth on this planet in conjunction with a conversation about how necessary people of color are in relation to global culture. I also wanted to speak about the ways in which both aren't often recognized as necessary and are killed without any respect for what their presence has done for the world. Rishi intended to create a piece that featured Serena and Venus Williams and talked about black womanhood. As we embarked on the journey that was our Sproj we had decided to meet in the middle. This wasn't too hard considering our original ideas dealt with similar topics. At one point, we decided to talk about black women, but had no specific question we were trying to find an answer to. Our advisor mentioned that our Sproj should talk about both our experiences as people of color, considering we come from different backgrounds, and so we changed (or created) our question. It was here that we decided to explore the Colored

Imaginary and figure out what constitutes our minds and how these internal constitutions affect our outside world as well.

The process continued into the rest of the project. As explained earlier, the cast was chosen purposefully as an all person of color cast. The cast was chosen the same way every cast is chosen. People auditioned for our show. Those we thought did a good job, we cast for our production. There were some people who we specifically asked to come audition and there were some who we didn't. There were some people who sang and there were some people who read for us. Regardless, everyone showed us a bit of themselves and in return we got to see if they would be a good fit for the show. Based on which part of the script we were rehearsing, we began our rehearsals by calling the actors we needed for the day. After the first read-through of the script that we had with the cast, we ultimately realized the script focused mostly on us. Because *Color Coded* is both about the individual and the community, we knew we had to make some edits to the script in order to be more inclusive of the people the show is about. Furthermore, we wanted to know what the cast, as individuals, would want from a show like ours. What would they hope to see? What would they hope to be talked about? While we weren't able to discuss and showcase absolutely everything the cast talked about, Rishi and I got to writing once again, finding ourselves with a very *interesting* draft of *Color Coded*.

The space is explored in 3 sections which lead us to the Colored Imaginary, the final destination. The three parts are described by us, generally, as the Reality section, the Fear section, and the Dream/Hope section. The Reality section deals with the realities of being a person of color-the normal, weird interactions we deal with and odd situations we are faced with. The Fear section deals with our very real fears, in a very surreal way. Clarification of experience is in the abstraction. The Dream/Hope section is where **The** Colored Imaginary lies. It is a

section in which we are finally able to put hopes that may not be possible in the real world onstage. The script indicates that the Dream section *is* the Colored Imaginary and the other sections are pit stops. This is not untrue. However, this space should be viewed like a cell. You may have to get through the cytoplasm on the endoplasmic reticulum or rough endoplasmic reticulum, but the nucleus holds the information we want. And, even though different, each of these parts is still a component of the cell. While each section in this space is different and we intended to use them differently, they each contribute to the examination of the Colored Imaginary as an insight into the collective imagination we engage with as people of color.

Color Coded
Leaving the Real World

Color Coded's discussion with the Colored Imaginary starts with a group of canvassers. These canvassers are part of an environmental group which goes door to door, telling people about their environmental cause and asking them to consider donating or signing a petition. The canvassers go door to door, to no avail, being turned away because of racial bias. The two field managers, Rishi and Kimiyo, cleverly named after yours truly, tell the rest of the canvassers to head back to the car and prepare to leave as Rishi and Kimiyo tally numbers for the day. As they begin to discuss the low numbers, and their disdain for the job, the Elephant of Race appears and convinces the two to travel with them into the Colored Imaginary. From there they continue their journey into the space, landing at three destinations, and experiencing a more surreal version of things that happen to people of color and the concepts we must often think about everyday.

The beginning section mentioned above has all of its strange elements because of ideas we originally intended to convey, and other times completely by accident. For example, the

choice to cast everyone as canvassers in the beginning was purely happenstance. Rishi and I were talking about both of our experiences as canvassers one day and realized that we had both, as people of color, experienced different types of racism at our environmentally-based jobs. Rishi experienced overt racism in which people were incredibly vicious to him. I experienced covert racism, in which all of the white people who were bad at the job made quota⁴ and I, a theater major trained in reading lines and performing them, never made quota. This we found particularly interesting considering the environment is typically a universal cause most people can get behind. Our time as environmental canvassers is further representative of how racism knows no bounds. And, because of these experiences, we felt this was the perfect part to play for two individuals who were about embark on a journey in which race is the main topic. We added multiple canvassers, however, because we wanted to include more of the cast and show that *Color Coded* is not just about Rishi and I, it's about all of us.

After this, we needed to find a device for making our way into Colored Imaginary from the real world. We jokingly talked about placing someone in an animal costume to take us straight into the Imaginary. But, when we went on costumes.com and saw the beautiful, elephant, costume we did, we knew we needed an Elephant of Race. And, as we really began to think about this character and this device, we realized just how important the elephant is symbolically for our work. The elephant is important in India and throughout Africa. For example, an article in the *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* journal describes Ganesha, the Hindu deity, as a God with an elephant head who is known as the “Lord of New Beginnings” (Ghose 38).⁵ It is one of the stronger animals, but also one of the sweetest. It is incredibly intelligent. The elephant is

⁴ Making “quota” means you’ve got the required amount of donations for the day/week.

⁵ Madhuvanti, Ghose. "Four-Armed Dancing God Ganesha with His Rat Mount." *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* Vol. 35, No. 2., 2009, pp. 38, Jstor. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40652402>.

revered. It is poached for its tusks. It is, furthermore, one of the only animals to cry and feel sorrow the way humans do. In addition, race is often considered the “elephant in the room”. Recognizing the elephant as a representation of strength, wisdom, beauty, and sorrow, we came up with the Elephant of Race.

The Everyday Realities

The Reality Section of the space appears after the beginning portion of *Color Coded*. In this section, I walk into the space. Half of the stage is dedicated to each of our experiences in this new world. As I enter, half of the stage lights up and comes to life, revealing a *Dance, Dance, Revolution!*⁶ style game show. There are contestants already on DDR mats as I come to mine, two of which are wearing white masks. The host speaks, and we begin dancing. More rounds continue and, after each one, the people on mats are allowed to take a break to eat food given to them in a bag by the game show host. The people with white masks are given water and fruit, the rest of us are given a sugary drink and chips. As the rounds continue the music and the dancing increases in speed. Shortly after my half of the stage lights up, Rishi’s side comes to life as he enters a family sitcom. He is caught up in the show, acting as the adopted son of caucasian Sandy and Terry, both of which are wearing white masks. Pilar, another person caught up in the crazy *Colored Imaginary*, enters and interacts with Rishi. Sandra and Terry spew microaggressions throughout as Rishi is forced to speak in an Indian accent for the duration of the show. After getting tired of this, we both exit and attempt to make it to the next portion of the space.

While Rishi and I wrote most of the play together, we definitely spent individual time on certain portions of each section to determine that each of our experiences were unique and true to

⁶ *Dance, Dance, Revolution!*, Xbox console version, Konami, 1998.

our identities. Rishi's section, which features him as the comic relief of a sitcom, is a commentary on the way in which Asian men are often typecast as nerdy, shy, or emasculated in some way. You can see this, for example, in the abomination that is *The Big Bang Theory*.⁷ Like many shows, the only South East Asian man, Raj, speaks in a heavy accent, is very smart, and can't talk to women. We wanted to discuss how part of the reality of being an Asian man is knowing the box people are trying to place you in, as well as the varying stereotypes perpetuated that aid in the creation of the idea of the "model minority". This is a minority dictated to be smarter than most minorities, but emasculated enough so as not to be threatening. His experience in the space is the visualization and dramatization of microaggressions which happen to those in the "model minority" category, and showcase the way in which different groups attempt to place Asian people between racial lines.

Dance, Dance, Revolution! was my main inspiration for this section because of how tiring this game is. By far one of the most fun games I have ever played, it is also one of the most physically taxing. The game works by presenting the player with a series of arrows, each of which they can stomp on the mat under their foot. They stomp to the beat of whichever song is playing. The levels range from easy to extreme, increasing in intensity and speed. Dancing one round with a three-minute song may feel like ten minutes. This, for me, is a perfect representation of the realities of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual labor black people-and especially women- are constantly having to do. Whether that is educating someone who's made an ignorant comment, taking a stance against an injustice, or taking the day to ensure you have fun and restore your energy, some kind of work is involved. Some days the

⁷ Lorre, Chuck, writer. *The Big Bang Theory*. CBS. September 24, 2007.

waters are calm, other days they are intense. Regardless, because of our identity and history we must always keep moving, even if the music gets a little faster. I included the snacks and water in the game to discuss food accessibility. People tend to forget the little things, how the lack of nutritional options in public lunches vs. private school lunches or how some communities have more McDonald's placed in them than grocery stores, is purposeful and that it can affect people's performance. But, more importantly, I wanted to make note of how, even with obstacles such as these, black people can still put 110% into any work they do.

Fear

Our exploration of the Fear section of the space magnifies the fears we have about injustices and obstacles of power we face. After the end of the Reality section, Rishi and I are back in the ether of the Colored Imaginary. Rishi is ruffled by his experience in the Reality section, I seem less affected. We look for the Elephant in the darkness, after which bodiless voices begin to whisper our names. The Elephant begins to look for us, but due to the confusion of the voices and the darkness, we ultimately get lost and end up in the Fear section of the space without the Elephant's guidance. The Elephant of Race is frightened and we embark on our adventure.

The section begins in a dark space filled with passersby wearing masks. Rishi walks through them, and no one notices him until he accidentally bumps into a lady and her child. Everyone stops and watches him. The mother pulls her daughter away and Rishi walks away, apologetic and frightened. The people begin to walk again, one by one slowly following Rishi. The mother and the baby separate, revealing they are two members of the space who have been

plotting on Rishi. Some whisper to each other, more members of the crowd add on until, eventually, they corner Rishi. At the last moment, he evades them and runs off the stage.

The Fear section continues into my experience in the Colored Imaginary. This portion of the Fear section begins by introducing the Heart-Bellied Heetches, beings of the space with hearts on their abdomens. It then introduces the Heetches without hearts, upon which I realize I don't have heart on my shirt. The narrator of this space, with a Dr. Seuss-esque rhythm, continues to discuss issues that arrive within the community based on whether or not you have a heart on your chest. One of the Heart-Bellied Heetches leers at the Heetches without hearts nose's. The other blames the lack of unity among the Heetches on a supposed lack of education and initiative amongst the Heetches without hearts. A Strange Man appears out of nowhere with a machine he claims can give the Heetches a heart if they don't have one, for a fee. The Heetches without hearts pay him, go in, and exit the machine with a new heart. My character is hesitant of the entire situation. The Heetches with hearts are upset about this, no longer feeling unique, to which the Strange man offers for them to enter the box and purchase another heart for themselves. They exit the machine with two hearts and begin to gloat. The Heetches without hearts, in an attempt for equality, enter the machine to add another heart. This prompts the Heart-bellied Heetches to continue, and, in a craze, they all rush into the mystery machine for more and more hearts. But, because of the machine's construction and inability to handle such rapid use for such a prolonged period, the machine begins to break from the inside, ripping them all to pieces. Strange Man takes his box and exits, after which he laughs about how the Heetches will never learn that he's the one taking advantage of them, as a result of the blaming and separation that occurred among them.

The Fear section reaches its end by transitioning back to Rishi's experience of the Colored Imaginary. The masked people run to the edges of the stage as Rishi runs upstage center and pleads for them to leave him alone. As the masks watch, another Bodyless Voice speaks overhead, asking why Rishi is letting them terrorize him. He tells Rishi he doesn't have to face such trouble and prompts Rishi to join them, stating that he knows "exactly what [the Body-less Voice] means". Knowing that the masks want him to join them, it is then revealed that Rishi has had a white mask in his pocket the whole time. He considers the Bodyless Voice's proposition and decides to wear the mask, so he no longer has to feel the fear he is feeling. Immediately, the masks rush to circle Rishi as he puts his mask on, fully transforming him into his new self.

Rishi's portion of the Fear section showcases him in a world of confusion. Up until this point, Rishi has been a little shaken by his experiences in this Imaginary. We wanted him to represent the *other* who could walk among the white masks. Using some initial viewpoints exercises, we choreographed the scene to have them not notice Rishi. This is because his experience as a person of color lends him as one of the *others* that can walk amongst these people. That is, until he bumps into the baby-until he, as *other*, gets too close to their world. Rishi had written for the Bodyless Voice to instigate him, and ultimately lead to Rishi's big reveal-that he's had a white mask the entire time. We agreed it was best, as we wanted discuss the amount of privilege he has as an Indian man, versus me as a black woman. Placed in the box of the "model minority", we recognize that there are different dynamics at play for each of us. He has had the ability to walk amongst those who consider him other, to take the easy way out, mesh with your oppressors, and give in to the negative experiences we can have as people of color. Like many people who denounce their heritage out of fear, he wears the mask and takes a

path that he feels will protect him more as a person of color, but will, without doubt, separate him from his fellow people of color.

The Fear section was particularly important to me because of my interest in horror. I pleaded that we have this section. Horror is not the every day, but every day you have the potential to experience horror. In the technological age, the news is at our fingertips, and thus so is tragedy and fear. The Heetch story I'd written was inspired by Dr. Seuss' *The Star-Bellied Sneetches*.⁸ This story follows a group of creatures, some with stars on their bellies and some not. Internal strife ensues among the Sneetches, due to an unfair hierarchy based on who has a Star on their belly. A man with a machine appears, he tells them about the fee. This machine, however, allows the Sneetches to add *or* subtract a star. They have a less, crazed frenzy than I had, but a frenzy nonetheless, and ultimately ended up realizing their differences were foolish and that they should come together as Sneetches, stars or not. Although Dr. Seuss' story doesn't talk about race specifically, which we know because he was a racist,⁹ it does talk about equality within a group. Reading this, I was obviously inspired, but the subject of race coupled with my interest in horror lead me to take a different route.

My experience discusses the fear of in-community fighting and blaming others in the community for our issues. Furthermore, it ultimately explores the fear that the outside force that is *actually* to blame for these issues is benefitting, systematically and financially, from it. The Heart-Bellied heetches, who comment on the physical appearances and supposed ignorance of the Heetches without hearts, are representative of people within the community who 1) chastise people of their own for not adhering to a more Eurocentric beauty standard, as a result of their

⁸ Seuss, Dr. *The Sneetches: And Other Stories*. London: Collins, 1998.

⁹ Kurashige, Scott. "Exposing the Price of Ignorance: Teaching Asian American History in Michigan." *The Journal of American History*. Vol. 93, No. 4, 2007, pp.1181, Jstor. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25094608>.

own self-hatred and 2) are people within the community who are at an economic and educational advantage. The Heetches without hearts are representative of people within the community who are constantly working and don't want to interact with the Heart-Bellied heetches because of their inability to see all Heetches as equal, regardless of them being from the same community. The Strange Man represents this outside force which, literally takes everything the Heetches have, from money to their actual skin. He further represents a force that is willing to take advantage of a group of people, even let them die, to fill his pockets, not unlike big companies, or the banks, or the government. His machine is representative of a system that claims to work for a group of people, but is constructed in such a way so as to destroy them. The machine, which promised the Heetches what they thought would be some better quality of life, or equality, or uniqueness, ripped them apart until you could not tell which Heetch had a heart-belly to begin with and which didn't.

Our Dreams and Hopes

As mentioned earlier, the Colored Imaginary is explored in three parts. Each part, or section, is a part of the Colored Imaginary, but ultimately leads to the heart of the space, **The Colored Imaginary, the Dream and Hope** section. This section begins after the transition, in which the Elephant of Race finds me, explains that I was lost in the space for 6 months, and that we have now reached the Colored Imaginary. I am shocked, but shortly after frightened, wondering where Rishi is. He appears in a suit, with a different demeanor and different tone of voice. As we speak, he explains that once he chose to give in to the Fear section and joined the masks, his life has become much better off. He feels that people within the space are responding to him better, even so much as to make him one of the people who runs the space. I get upset and

ask how he made his transition and why. This sparks an argument. He responds by telling me about how terrifying his experiences were in the Colored Imaginary and how I wouldn't understand. To this, I get incredibly angry, explaining that my trials were as much if not much more terrifying and how, as a black woman, I didn't have a choice in whether or not I could experience them. In a last attempt to reach out to the friend taken by the mask, I ask him to remember all of the beautiful things about being a person of color. The Colored Imaginary erupts with beings in the space dancing and performing, as we travel through them. Rishi ponders and questions, before asking me and the others to leave him and enter **The** Colored Imaginary. I am swept away by the beauty and love present in the Colored Imaginary and, although it is hard, I ultimately leave. Rishi stands alone, hesitantly affirming his decision.

When Rishi and I began to write this section, we felt the cast's input was absolutely necessary. In our exploration of a collective Imaginary's Dream space, we needed to know what each *individual* would want in a person of color's dream world. We compiled a large list of words and phrases from the cast, including "peace within the community", "no pain", "sun", "colorful", "conversation", and "no colonialism", for example. From what we gathered, everyone's collective dream space was one in which people are allowed to live freely, with love, compassion, and joy. Hearing these things from our cast, along with ideas we'd already had, we knew that we had to make this section the most beautiful. To start, we decided the cast should each wear one different color, so as to make the Colored Imaginary what it is-colorful. I suggested we play Donna Summer's "Happily Ever After", because of its dreamy, disco, sound, because it was made by a black woman, and because of its irony as the ending song. Through color, sound, and movement we transformed a confusing space into a magical one. When the

audience looks at the stage, they should see the pure joy that is being a person of color. This is the representation of the truest forms of ourselves and of this Colored Imaginary. This is the manifestation of all the wonder that is being a person of color, without the constraints of power affecting us. Rishi's hesitant choice to maintain his new life discusses the sense of community one can miss out on if they decide to detach, out of fear for themselves. Rishi's character is a type of person many people of color know or have been friends with in the past- an *other* who tries to other themselves from the *other*. His choice and our interactions just before are a conversation about our friends who go to the dark side and questions how far, in these situations, one can go when trying to maintain a friendship with someone who has toxic and oppressive ideologies, and whether one should remain in the friendship for the sake of educating them or engendering community. The choices we both made further discuss how differences in the dreams and hopes of people of color can begin to differ as new experiences are ingrained into our collective and individual imaginaries.

Conclusion

Color Coded is made for people of color by people of color. Rishi and I wrote the script, I created some of the music, we both acted in it, and everyone who was involved has a different cultural background, year of completion in college, and series of varied interests. We wanted only people of color. We broadcast so many different skin tones on stage, as well as the image of community amongst different cultures, to convey just how many mindsets and ideologies contribute to the existence of our Colored Imaginary. Furthermore, we wanted to embark on a community effort in which the students of color at Bard no longer have to feel ostracized from Bard theater. At Bard, most theater shows produced, both student and department productions,

are comprised of mostly white students or written by a white person. More often than not, it's both. This play was a chance for us to connect with our fellow people of color throughout the school, bond over our creative endeavors, and potentially make something that would not only be entertaining, but leave the audience with questions and conversations about the way *we* move through the world and some of the events that influence us.

Placing the two imaginaries we are now aware of in dialogue with each other, we can understand the white imaginary is based in inferiority complexes and fear. The Colored Imaginary, however, is concerned with survival, awareness and love. The Colored Imaginary is concerned with survival because it is a necessity in the white, imperialistic, racist, hegemonic system we are living in. However, it is also contingent upon awareness- being aware of where you are, being aware of others, and being aware of yourself. Whether it's physical awareness or introspection, the Colored Imaginary encourages cognizance. More importantly, however, the Colored Imaginary is concerned with love. As quickly as the space could frighten us, it could welcome us with open arms, lighten our souls, and make us forget that the world is so broken. Like the love of people of color, it is unlimited and inimitable. Like nature, it is beautiful and a force to be reckoned with.

As the reader, and hopefully a former audience member, you now have an understanding of what collective imaginaries are and what the differences are between the ones you now know. Even so, let us not allow identity politics and the recognition of collective imaginaries to make the fallacy of concluding each person of color thinks the same way. Instead, understanding that collective imaginaries do exist, also remember that each person of color is a unique individual. While a collective imaginary may form as the result of shared experience, fears, hopes, and

realities are different for every one of us. Our exploration of the Colored Imaginary is only the tip of the iceberg.

Color Coded

By Kimiyo Bremer and Rishi Mutalik

Cast of Characters

Kimiyo:	Kimiyo Bremer
Rishi:	Rishi Mutalik
Elephant of Race:	Avalon Qian
Anyia, Sandra, No Heart 1:	Anyia Andrews
Austin, Competitor 1:	Austin Clark
Sabina, DDR Host:	Sabina Diaz-Rimal
Terry, Heart 1:	Jeszack Gammon
Strange Man, Bodyless Voice:	Charlie Mai
Alicia, Pilar, Narrator:	Alicia Rodriguez
Taty, Competitor 2, Heart 2:	Tatyana Rozetta

Scene 1- In the Neighborhood

Everyone is standing in front of a door with canvassers clothes on. They don different colored t-shirts with environmentalist group logos and plain bottoms. A different colored light shines on each of the canvassers as the play begins. This part is to include a rhythmic element.

Knock knock

ALL

Hi

Ding Dong

ALL

How are you

Knock knock

ALL

My name is-

Wrong buzzer. Ding dong.

ALL

And we're with-

Knock knock

RISHI

Citizen's Campaign for the Environment.

KIMIYO

Right now we're working to ban fracking in our state.

SABINA

We're here today fighting EPA budget cuts and we're doing this through a letter drive and fundraiser.

RISHI

Take a look at our goals here.

TATY

I'm sorry...No sir we are not selling anything...we're trying to mobilize your neighborhood.

Wrong Buzzer

KIMIYO

As I'm sure you already know, fracking is an extremely dangerous form of oil drilling that wastes hundreds of gallons of water and poisons our lakes, rivers, and oceans with harmful chemical-

AUSTIN

In the worst drought California has seen in years, we cannot afford to waste any water. That's why Citizen's Campaign is lobbying to get Governor Brown to stop fracking!

ALICIA

Let me tell you more about the campaign..as you may know the EPA is facing a 35% budget cut by the new administration and that greatly affects our water our air and-

RISHI

We're doing everything in our power to fight these budget cuts. Is this work you agree with?

Wrong Buzzer.

SABINA

Sir. I'm sorry- If you want me to leave I'll just-

TATY

Yes! Citizen's Campaign is real. I've actually interned with them in the past.

ANYA

This is a lovely neighborhood.

RISHI

We are just trying to raise money to lobby. I have no intention of exploiting.

Wrong Buzzer.

KIMIYO

Well- That's perfectly fine! You're also free to donate as much as you can-

ALCIA

I can show you my permit-

AUSTIN

No you don't have to be a member, but most non-members are donating \$20.

KIMIYO

You can also do \$10. Anything hel-

Wrong Buzzer.

TATY

Actually we DO have a legitimate website! I have a brochure right-

RISHI

Nice dog. What's his name?

ANYA

We're supposed to be in the neighborhood again.

Wrong Buzzer.

RISHI

I'm sorry hers.

KIMIYO

Even \$5?

RISHI

Celeste.

SABINA

I'm sorry could you refill my water bottle for me.

ALICIA

The website is right here. Would you at least be willing to sign a petition?

Wrong buzzer.

AUSTIN

I am sorry I upset you, sir.

ANYA

I didn't know your kids were sleeping.

RISHI

I am sorry to bother you I will leave. I am leaving-

Wrong buzzer.

Goodbye

Wrong buzzer.

Thanks again, sir.

Wrong buzzer.

Sorry for the inconvenience

Wrong buzzer.

Still going

Wrong buzzer.

I'm fucking going!!!!

Wrong buzzer.

KIMIYO

Thanks have a nice day. Bitch.

A bunch of canvassers walk across the stage exhausted and discouraged.

ALICIA

40

KIMIYO

30

SABINA

53.24

KIMIYO

They couldn't give you a quarter.

SABINA

Watch it

KIMIYO

What about you guys?

TATY

I got a "How do I know you're not gonna pocket this"?

KIMIYO

And you guys?

AUSTIN

70

ALICIA

Fuck.

SABINA

Goddamn it

AUSTIN

What?

ANYA

She was winning

KIMIYO

Andddd

RISHI

90

EVERYONE

FUCK

RISHI

Cents

KIMIYO

AYYY look at you that's a 50% gain from yesterd-

RISHI

Okay guys its getting late- You should all head home. Great job this week. We're just gonna go over the numbers for today.

The rest exit to head to the car. Kimiyo and Rishi take out their clipboards. They embrace out of exhaustion.

KIMIYO

One more week.

RISHI

I know.

KIMIYO

One more week. That's all we have before they start laying off people.

RISHI

We need to talk to them, Kimiyo. There's been so many incidents with everyone. I can list all the fucking people who literally spat in my face.

KIMIYO

They're not going to listen.

RISHI

I'll quit.

KIMIYO

Do it.

RISHI

I swear to god I'll walk right up and say "FUCK you."

KIMIYO

But Rishi, they might give you a bad review.

Laughing.

"I don't know why you'd quit! You're so good at this!"

RISHI

"You're the BEST at it! One of the best we've ever had!"

KIMIYO

They don't care. Even if we tell them we're concerned about people's safety.

RISHI

Whatever. I'll be glad when we're done with this. We can find some other job.

KIMIYO

Word. Fuck these racist homeowners and fuck our neoliberal bosses for pretending they can't see what the hell is going on. They can all suck a d-

The Elephant of race pops out from behind a tree

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Fear not, it's ME! The Elephant of Race! I've heard your lamentations about not being treated the way every elephant should!

KIMIYO AND RISHI

What the fuck.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

I know you're alarmed but I'm here to help you, racially.

KIMIYO

Did we smoke? I can't remember.

RISHI

I don't think so!?! *To the Elephant* Explain yourself please.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

I come from a land of magic. A land where the sun shines bright, the peace is plentiful, and the food is seasoned. BA DUM TSSS My purpose is to give all the little brown children a chance to understand their consciousness. What it means to be them. I have but one joy in life and that is to see to the comprehension of one's own power in the sweet and the strong.

KIMIYO

But why an ELEPHANT of race?

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Because the Elephant of Gender wasn't necessary. Now are y'all gonna come with?

RISHI

Where exactly are we going?

KIMIYO

And what are we gonna do there?

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Its become clear to me that you both feel lost and enraged by how people are treating you. And you have every right to be. So I just think this is the getaway you both need right now.

RISHI

How long are we gonna be gone?

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Only a quick visit! We are going into your imaginations.

KIMIYO

Booooo

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Shh. A world of the imagination not yet colonized, revised, and synthesized like the one you guys are currently inhabiting.

RISHI

Ok I'm down.

KIMIYO

Uh, what? You're gonna trust them?

RISHI

Why not? Its just a person in an elephant costume.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Hey, I've got my papers.

RISHI

Plus this day has been trash. This shit sounds fun and ridiculous.

KIMIYO

Seems sketch to me, but if you go I'll go.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Alright alright, let's get out of here!

Scene 2-The Spaceship

A spaceship lights up in the back. The Elephant of Race leads Kimiyo and Rishi on to the spaceship. As they enter the spaceship takes off and they begin their journey.

KIMIYO

This is crazy!

RISHI

So how long will it take?

ELEPHANT OF RACE

It's going to take some time. We've gotta get through all this goo first.

KIMIYO

Goo?

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Goo AND the vapors.

RISHI

Vapors?

ELEPHANT OF RACE

The goo and the vapor are what keep our gravity in check. Without them, we'd all crash and die!

Ha! Ha! Ha! Oh by the way here's the music remote. Go ahead and choose some tunes.

Elephant gives remote to Rishi. Rishi presses the button and “Honkey Tonk Badonkadonk” by Trace Adkins comes on. Rishi and Kimiyo make a face.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Hey every Elephant is different. I got volumes.

Rishi hands remote to Kimiyo. Kimiyo presses the next button. Erykah Badu's “Hollywood” plays.

KIMIYO

Ayyyyy

ELEPHANT OF RACE

So where y'all from.

RISHI

Connecticut.

KIMIYO

California.

RISHI

We were best friends in college. And then we both got jobs working as environmental canvassers.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Canvassers ay? Hows thats been.

KIMIYO

Those margharitas aren't gonna pay for themselves

RISHI

Its been pretty fucked. Homeowners say a lot of shit to people of color. And sometimes they make threat.

KIMIYO

Yeah, but no matter where you go that's gonna happen

RISHI

I mean not neces-

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Well- hate to interrupt the tune but we here. If it was to me we'd go straight to our destination but they force us to make this detour. I was instructed to have you (*pointing to Kimiyo*) go this way and you (*pointing to Rishi*) go that way.

Kimiyo and Rishi start to leave.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

WAIT after you are done come back here. Do not go on your own. Without my knowledge of the terrain, you can end up in some terrifying places...Have fun!

The elephant moves the spaceship offstage. Rishi and Kimiyo stand on the stage

RISHI

I guess you go in now.

Scene 3- On Television

Kimiyo walks into the space on her side. People are very still on DDR mats. She sees one is empty and steps on it, everything immediately comes to life. Everyone is eating candy or good food from the bag next to them.

KIMIYO

Nice. Candy.

DDR HOST

Hello and welcome back TO "So You Think You Can Not Not Dance?"

KIMIYO

What?

DDR HOST

Dancing is the name and surviving is the game. Last as many rounds as possible and you can continue your journey! If you don't, you must stay here with the others and continue competing on the show until the end of time.

KIMIYO

I think I can handle a little DDR. *looking to one of the competitors* How long have you been here?

COMPETITOR 1

57 years.

COMPETITOR 2

I don't even know.

KIMIYO

Oh helllllll no.

Kimiyo lunges to leave, but the music and the competition begin. Kimiyo begins to dance through the round. Rishi walks to his door and knocks.

RISHI

Hello??

Rishi realizes the door is open and walks in. When he walks, he here applause from a studio audience. He has entered the world of a sitcom.

SANDRA

Parshuram, you're home!!

TERRY

We missed you son!!

RISHI

Oh I missed you too!! *to himself* What the fuck!? why did I say that? Why did I just like that?.

SANDRA

Parshuram, you're such a good boy. We want to talk to you about something. Either you or Billy is in trouble

audience: OOOOOH

RISHI

Why. What the fuck is going on?!

TERRY

Son we found a condom in the laundry room? Was it you?

RISHI

Oh YOU KNOW IT wasn't me.

Audience laughs

SANDRA

Oh we know!! We just wanted to make sure honey.

TERRY

But you shouldn't be afraid of girls, son!

RISHI

I just am!!

TERRY

I know!!

SANDRA

You're still our perfect adopted boy.

RISHI

Love you mom and dad! WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS!?

Suddenly the theme song is projected on the screen

DDR HOST

Alright that's it for Round 1! Competitors reach into your brown bags and pull out the helpful nutrients provided by our sponsors.

They all begin to pull things out of brown paper bags next to them. Those with white masks on will pull out water bottles. Those without masks will pull out gatorade and soda drink bottles.

ALL COMPETITORS

Thank you for our nutrients. MMMMMMMm.

Everyone takes a collective sip

KIMIYO

Hey can I get some water the sugar in this is going to make me so thirsty and I can't dance if I'm
ti-

DDR HOST

Round 2, it's time for you! And, GO!

COMPETITOR 1

I can't DO THIS.

COMPETITOR 2

SHUT UP AND DANCE!!!!

*The music starts up again, slightly faster than last time. The second round begins. Everyone is
dancing for a long time, then the music stops.*

Sandra

So Parshuram, tell us about your day.

Rishi

Kimiyo. KIMIYO.

Kimiyo

Yes, YES I hear you. What's going on.

Rishi

I don't know I'm in some terrible 90s sitcom and everytime I try to speak these LINES come out
in this accent and these assholes laugh. And these freaks are calling me their son!!!

Kimiyo

Well I can't help you right now so just keep doing that I guess.

Rishi

Are you FUCKING KIDDING ME.. fine.I had a great day, MOMMY and DADDY. I measured the circumference of all of the fruits in the kitchen and then at school I measured the inside of all the lockers.

TERRY

Why the inside son?

RISHI

Because everytime I got stuffed in one I figured, might as well measure it!!!

Audience laugh

DDR HOST

You know what that means. It's feeding time!

ALL COMPETITORS

Thank you for our nutrients.

begins eating

KIMIYO

Hey how come they're getting all the good stuff?

DDR HOST

Some competitors come into the dance with all the tools the tools they'll ever need. Others have to make due with what they've got.

The music starts up again, only this time its going incredibly fast. Everyone is dancing very fast, almost to the point of exhaustion.

COMPETITOR 1

I can't do this I need to stop I need to PLEASE GOD MAKE THEM STOP.

COMPETITOR 2

gotta keep- gotta- DANCE

SANDRA

Now Parshuram. Connor's friend Pilar is coming over to study now. Promise you won't freak out like last time.

Audience Laughs

RISHI

Oh I won't.

Door bells rings

TERRY

That'll be Pilar.

Rishi collapses on the floor.

RISHI

WHAT THE FUCK WHY I AM ON THE FLOOR.

KIMIYO

Rishi are you okay?!!

RISHI

NOO. PARSHURAM IS FREAKING.

KIMIYO

Oh shit.

TERRY

Oh Parshuram calm yourself just think of those elephants from Bombay.

PILAR

Hola Mr. And Mrs. Darvus..Ummm What the f-

RISHI

AHHHHHHH HALLO PILAR-

PILAR

Who are you? And why are you speaking like that?

RISHI

I'm trying not to but they're making me.

PILAR

How the fuck did I end up on Full House.

RISHI

This isn't Full House!! Its some other show I don't know but I can't get out of it. PILARRR

PILAR

Well I'm not speaking any of this nonsen- Its been a long day but I'm ready to dance with someone. How about you..Para-shuram.

RISHI

OH GA TO NA. WHY THE FUCK ARE YOU ASSHOLES LAUGHING

PILAR

Oh he is so adorable.

SANDRA

Oh my god- Look at these two Terry. I think I see something brewing. Imagine if they get married.

TERRY

Sandra can you even imagine what our grandkids would look like

Audience laughs

RISHI

KIMIYO WE NEED TO GET THE FUCK out of here

KIMIYO

I don't want to do this anymore! Things are getting weird...

RISHI

Don't you think I know that?

KIMIYO

On the count of three we dip, ready?

KIMIYO AND RISHI

1, 2, 3

Scene 4- In the Darkness

Kimiyo and Rishi run out of their television shows. The television show members walk backwards as Kimiyo and Rishi run appearing to gradually vanish into the different.

KIMIYO

Well, that was ridiculous.

Rishi is silent.

KIMIYO

What?

Rishi remains silent.

KIMIYO

Rishi what's wrong?

RISHI

I don't wanna talk about it.

KIMIYO

Was the sitcom that bad?

RISHI

I don't want to talk about it. Lets just get out of here.

KIMIYO

Word..Where are we though.

RISHI

I don't know. Where's the Elephant of Race?

KIMIYO

I don't know.

RISHI

Hello?

KIMIYO AND RISHI

Hello?

RISHI

We should have never even come to this fu-

Dark. Lights swing like pendulums. Rishi and Kimiyo get lost within the space and subsequently try and make their way to the Elephant.

KIMIYO

Shh.

RISHI

What?

BODYLESS VOICE

Rishi

RISHI

What!

KIMIYO

I think it's the Elephant!

RISHI

I don't think it is

BODYLESS VOICE

Kimiyo

Kimiyo and Rishi walk curiously around the space.

KIMIYO

Be still I can't see anything!

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Hey you two!

RISHI

Hello?

KIMIYO

Hello?

The Bodyless Voice continues to whisper their names as the two get lost. The Elephant of Race appears in an attempt to gather them.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

We need to head back on the road, it's already gotten dark out-

BODYLESS VOICE

Rishi...

RISHI

I know! I'm coming!

ELEPHANT OF RACE

That's not me!

BODYLESS VOICE

Kimiyo...

KIMIYO

Heard ya loud and clear! I'm on my way!

Rishi is walking across the stage and is surrounded by people with white masks on. As he walks, he nearly bumps into a mother and a child with their white masks facing forward. The mother guards her child and moves him away from Rishi. As Rishi walks, people follow him from behind. When he turns back to look at them they disperse. As he moves across the stage all the

people with their white masks facing forward look at him. Rishi becomes more aware of all the people moving around him but only proceeds to move faster. He soon feels people chasing him and surrounding him.

Kimiyo enters the Fear space. As she enters, she is now in lime green clothes. A voice begins to speak overhead as she enters.

BODYLESS VOICE

Kimiyo...

KIMIYO

Hello?

NARRATOR

The Heart Bellied Heetches had hearts on their chests.

Spotlight on those in lime green with hearts. These are the heart bellied heetches.

NARRATOR

The Heetches without Hearts had none on their breasts.

Spotlight on those in lime green without hearts. These are the no heart bellied heetches.

NARRATOR

There were some Heetches who could run in between, but they found it hard to find themselves seen.

Spotlight on those in lime green with half hearts. These are half-bellied heetches.

NARRATOR

The hearts were cool. Or maybe they weren't.

KIMIYO

C'mon we're all wearing lime green. Can't we all just get turnt?

The Heart bellied Heetches roll their eyes.

NARRATOR

Those with the hearts had some real-and some not. Some wanted to share the old things they were taught. Like one who said

HEART 1

Your nose is too green! Wipe it away so no one will be mean!

NARRATOR

Or another who said

HEART 2

The reason the heetches will never reach peace is some heetches are educated and some heetches are beasts.

NARRATOR

Those without hearts and those with just half wished they could pass this whole thing with a laugh. But sadly they couldn't, for it is a fact- the heetch dynamics in play were strong and intact. Was it hearts that they needed? Or something much bigger to be planted and seeded? They wanted change. And they wanted in NOW! Then something rolled in with a rather large POW!

NARRATOR

A strange looking stranger rolled in a box. He announced to the Heetches, as he got up on top

STRANGE MAN

Friends, Heetches, Countrymen

NARRATOR

In a voice filled with charm

STRANGE MAN

I am here to help you! I mean you no harm! You need what you need and I've got what you want. I promise I've brought this, not to just stunt. But to show you a world when you become what you dream, of course selecting from the small pool of options you can see.

Everyone leans in to squint and read the paper he holds. Strange Man folds it up. The Strange Man opens up the box and this machine looking thing comes out.

STRANGE MAN

A collective price of \$200, for you all to have a heart. Fifty dollars each if each Heetch pays their part.

NARRATOR

They all ran inside with eager Heetch faces. It blipped and zopped and moved in a few places. It zooted and booted and klanked all around. Till the whole thing stopped, and didn't make a sound. The heetches came out where they'd come from the start, except this time each Heetch had their own heart!

NO HEART 1

Now look at us Heetches! We all look the same. Now maybe we can get some Heetch fame!

HEART 1

Plain Heetches. What nerve! I earned my heart. Now you can go pay and get one from some tart?

NARRATOR

Strange man slithered near with a smirk on his face. He said

STRANGE MAN

My Heart bellied comrades! Come with me! Let's touch base. You're clearly down. And I know what to do! Just trust in me and I'll follow through. For a small collective fee you can have two hearts and become an even better work of art.

The OG hearts fly into the machine on the other side. It kerplunks and the others come out.

NARRATOR

With their eyebrows up and noses in the sky. The two Hearted Heetches catwalked on by.

HEART 2

You have more work to do if you really want to shine. That's why us heart bellied heetches have two upon thine.

NARRATOR

The other Heetches got rightfully upset. Needing two hearts now, as a safety net. Then appeared our strange man, as he always does. He pressed a button and machines began to buzz. Everyone rushed with their eyes ablaze.. The heart bellied heetches were in such a craze. In! Out! Up! About! In again out again. Out again in again. They paid him money again and again. The hearts they kept coming and they wouldn't end. Through day and through night the machines were screeching. They didn't realize it was their skin it was eating. But much too late the heetches figured this out. They tried to scream. They tried to shout. And if their strength they tried to prove, another limb was yet removed. The bodies were moved and mashed all around. A mix up of colors, of red and of brown. And once he had collected all of their coins, our Mr. Strange Man with his box did rejoin. Putting a hat on his head, he laughed as he sped; in his car up the beach "They will never learn. No you can't teach a Heetch"

The man exits, Kimiyo and the crowd of Heetches part and exit as well. As they part, Rishi is revealed and the white masks are revealed. An exhausted Rishi runs to the front of the stage.

RISHI

I don't like this. I don't like this. Get the fuck away from me. I need to get out of here. Please leave me alone.

BODYLESS VOICE

Why don't you join them.

RISHI

What?

BODYLESS VOICE

Why are you letting them do this to you. You don't have to be like this. Join them. You know exactly what I mean.

RISHI

But I. I can't...I couldn't

BODYLESS VOICE

Then you're weak.

Bodyless voice continues to whisper 'Weak'

RISHI

I'm NOT weak. I'm not weak. I just....I.... I never thought about it..

Rishi looks around at the people in masks. He's frightened but intrigued.

RISHI

I've just never thought..

A few seconds pass and Rishi gets up. Suddenly all the people surround him and run around him. They then open up to reveal Rishi in a white mask. He's joined them. Blackout.

Scene 5- At Paradise

Lights come up on the Elephant of Race who has just found Kimiyo.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

KIMIYO!!! KIMIYO!!!!

KIMIYO

Where the FUCK were you.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

I told you guys not to leave my sight!!

KIMIYO

What was that? I mean- I saw those Heetch people get-How long was I in ther-

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Six months.

KIMIYO

Six months?

ELEPHANT OF RACE

I'm so sorry Kimiyo- I was looking for you but this universe is surprisingly big and hard to get around. All parts of this imaginary will spend a lot of time trying to make you aware of the way your world works. But the scarier parts can make you feel like you should give up your tusks

without a fight. Remember, your tusks are ivory. And ivory is one of the most valuable things in the world. but the GOOD news is.....WE'RE HERE.

KIMIYO

What.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

We've reached! Look over there.

Bright lights can be seen in the distant with silhouettes of people walking around. Alicia is heard singing in the background.

KIMIYO

You mean I was right outside here the whole time!!

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Yes!!

KIMIYO

Wait wheres Rishi.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Oh well he's..

KIMIYO

Oh FUCK he's dead. He's dead.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

No Kim-

KIMIYO

I knew this would happen. I said I didn't-

ELEPHANT OF RACE

No Kimiyo he's--

Rishi is revealed in a black suit. He appears different than before in both manner and physical appearance.

RISHI

He's fine.

KIMIYO

Rishi.

RISHI

Hello.

KIMIYO

What happened? Are you okay? Look at you!!!

RISHI

I know.

KIMIYO

Where were you all this time.

RISHI

Well I've been many places actually.

KIMIYO

Let's hope they were better than where I went! Well I'm glad you're safe. Also, I don't know if the Elephant told you but our destination is right there? We made it! We should--

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Kimiyo

KIMIYO

What.

RISHI

Oh, yes it is.

KIMIYO

Well let's go..

RISHI

Oh. I'm not going in there.

KIMIYO

Why not?

ELEPHANT OF RACE

Kimiyo. Rishi's been-

RISHI

Can you leave us alone for a second.

ELEPHANT OF RACE

umm I..

RISHI

Go.

KIMIYO

What's going on?

RISHI

You know this world is really large. There's so many little universes and obstacles and places like that. You'd be surprised to see how much there is.

KIMIYO

Yeah lots of fucked up shit. What the fuck is going on, Rishi?

RISHI

Nothing's going on. I don't think its necessary for you to get that way with me.

KIMIYO

I don't understand. Where did you go when we got split up. What happened to you back there?

RISHI

It doesn't matter what happened then. All that matters is what I am now.

KIMIYO

And what are you now?

RISHI

One of the leaders here.

KIMIYO

You're running this place??

RISHI

Yes.

KIMIYO

You.

RISHI

Yes.

KIMIYO

Running THIS place.

RISHI

Yes.

KIMIYO

Why?

RISHI

If you can't beat 'em, join them.

KIMIYO

What are you talking about?

RISHI

Exactly what I'm saying. I didn't want to be like that. This place can be so much. It can make you weak or it can make you strong. So I chose to be strong. I chose to join them. And its amazing all the opportunities I've got. They've recognized all the good things about me. How I lead. How I look. How smart I am. They really love how smart I am actually. They always talk about it.

KIMIYO

Who the hell is them? And what do you mean you just *chose*? I didn't know we could just choose not to.

RISHI

Well some of us can't. But I could.

KIMIYO

Rishi do you know what I've been doing for the last six months. Where I've been?? In literal HELL. In loony fucking toon hell. I saw people killed! I-

RISHI

I know where you've been.

KIMIYO

What do you mean.

RISHI

I mean I've known where you've been.

KIMIYO

You have? And what the fuck were you planning to do about it.

RISHI

Thats unfair.

KIMIYO

No I'm serious. You apparently have all this power. What were you planning on doing?

RISHI

Thats not how it works.

KIMIYO

Bullshit. You're a fucking coward.

RISHI

Oh fuck off. I'm not a coward. At least not anymore.

KIMIYO

You had a choice Rishi and you chose not to. I didn't get a choice. I don't get a choice. And if I did, I would have done some shit.

RISHI

That's bullshit and you know it

KIMIYO

No its not.

RISHI

Oh yes it is. If you were in my position you would have done exactly what I did.

KIMIYO

If thats what you want to believe.

RISHI

Kimiyo, do you know where I was when we split up. I was being chased. Chased and threatened and fucking taunted and it wasn't anything new, you know. It was the same shit that happened at every door. And I know those things pissed you off but they infuriated me. So amidst all this bullshit, I was offered a way out and I took it. And since then, I've had the time of my life. I'm powerful and important and people recognize that and I don't have to fucking beg for respect anymore. I live well, I'm not looked down on and oh guess what people want to fuck me now. So do you think I'm going to choose to remain a victim. Fuck no. Why would I ever wanna be anything less than this? Why would anybody? So don't you dare act like you wouldn't have done the same thing because we both know you would have.

KIMIYO

I wasn't infuriated? I wasn't INFURIATED? I watched people stuck in a purgatory of physical exhaustion. I saw people shredded up into tiny little pieces. I was, over and over again and narrowly escaped. I sucked it up. I sucked it up because I didn't have a choice. Because I never have a choice. Because that's what I have to do if I want stay strong. Not even in this fucking space does my black ass get the benefit of being somewhere that doesn't make me work the skin off my back. And by the way all the shit you described, I dealt with it and way worse. Way worse. But, I've done everything in my power to drown it out or fight it because we need to get home, and we need to get through this, and because you're my friend, but I would never turn my fucking back the way you have.

RISHI

Well then you're weak.

KIMIYO

Who are you?

RISHI

You can say what you want now but its not gonna change where you stand or where I stand. I made my choice.

KIMIYO

So thats it huh. You're just gonna be a politician of this hellhole and I'm never gonna see you again.

RISHI

Why would I leave a place that treats me well.

KIMIYO

Cause it's not you!

RISHI

You can go there if you want, Kimiyo.

KIMIYO

Are you serious.

RISHI

I'm not stopping you from that.

KIMIYO

But what about your friends? What about your family? What about
*Suddenly, the world of people of color envelop Rishi and Kimiyo. Both of them look around
 overwhelmed at the variety and beauty of what they are seeing. The lighting looks like sunshine.
 A myriad of people of color surround and circle them engrossed in their own realities. Anya is
 playing. Alicia is singing. Avalon is dancing. Austin walks out writing a book. Jeszack is
 scratching beats. Taty and Sabina are folding fabrics. Rishi watches conflicted but moved. All of
 these things change as the members of the space begin to perform new things.*

RISHI

You can go.

KIMIYO

Rishi-

RISHI

Just go. I love my life. I love that I make money. I love that people look at me. I'm a winner now
 and I'm not going to abandon that for some world. I'm sorry we're parting ways, but that's just the

way it has to be. Because I love my life. But, thank you for this. It's--nice to remember those things I'd forgotten. The smells and the sounds...But no thank you, I love my life. I love my life.

Rishi loosens his tie.

THE END

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