Title: The Mystique of the Black Pastiche

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Abstract: Dear White People is a satirical movie released late in 2014 showcasing the lives of various black students as they navigate the politics of an integrated college campus caught in a controversial crossroads of racial diversity and social change. Based heavily around the main protagonist’s radio show, of the same name, the movie uses different bold, stereotypical characteristics of black culture, personified through various characters to show the fluctuating nature of black culture. These include, for the sake of this paper, the angry black man, the cultural pariah, the mulatto, the “I hate myself character”, and the opportunist. These characters also heavily critique the more researched black archetypes such as the mammy, the jezebel, the Uncle Tom, etc. Through these images, the message is revealed that in the black community what passes for identity is a series of stereotypes, discourses, or masks about one’s contemporary peers.

This paper aims to show how the different characters choose a characteristic or “mask” to adopt which creates factions that keep the entire black populace divided. Ultimately this leads one to believe that black cultural identity is constantly in flux and is based heavily on embracing or rebuffing a black trope. By presenting a content analysis of the film Dear White People using constructivism as a theoretical lens along with critical race theory as well, the study will explain the breakdown of each troupe at work and how the idea of one plays off of the others. This analysis will provide a clear look at how disheveled the concept of American blackness truly is.