

Week #3

Ellen's Voice

- Book written by couple who escaped slavery. Light skinned, she dressed as a man, with her husband as her slave.
- Don't hear her voice in the first half of the book.
- Differing opinions about how involved she was in the writing of the book
- In McCaskill piece- a lot of jargon.. phrase "pen penis" was used. Male using the pen as a way to enforce hetero norms.
- In the 1980's publishers started listing both William and Ellen..previously just William as the author.
- Echo early psychoanalysis like Freud..talk a lot about male genitalia
- As a woman of mixed race, is that why she kept quiet, because everything she said would be under a microscope?
- Put themselves up in the world's fair as an exhibit in London
- Her consent wasn't valid because she wasn't treated as an equal.
- Or can you make the argument that given all the inequality in the society, can anyone's consent be valid under the constraint of equal power dynamics
- Does this assume too little of people? It's demeaning and implies they are incapable of free will.
- When she was a slave can she reasonably consent?
- How can we judge looking back a hundred years?
- Femininity prevents her voice from being heard. Conforming ideal about how a woman behaves in public.
- Early women's rights activists were initially freaked out by having to talk on stage b/c they were unfamiliar with that role.
- There are versions saying Ellen was the aggressor and instigated everything and convinced William.
- Rumors that she is tired of freedom and wants to be a slave.
- Ellen wrote a letter to contradict this.
- They ended up going to Africa, which was somewhat common for slaves who escaped to Britain.
- She taught; working with youth and families
- They passed away in the last 1800's.
- By social definition she was black, but she could pass as white.
- Lighter skinned blacks better educated and had different dialects
- She was a house slave, so was able to maintain lighter skin by not working in the fields.
- William denounced Americans as "notoriously mean" to people of color
- Classic escape story leaving the South and getting into North. Were there racial equalities in Britain once they got there? The story is really about America, not England.

- In the book an innkeeper says she is sympathetic to “colored people” but the Crafts couldn’t stay there because she would lose customers. Is she hypocritical? Can we judge her from 2009? Is she just using the part about losing customers as an excuse?
- Invisible vs. visible minorities. Ellen negotiates, because in some ways she is an invisible minority w/o William by her side.
- What is black? What is white? What is male? What is female?
- She never solidifies what is black or white? But solidifies gender when she dons female clothing and acts demurely.
- An element of performance, which makes their escape work.
- Judith Butler, gender is a performance that we put on.
- Cross dressing slave escape is not unique.
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ES.269 Passing: Flexibility in Race and Gender
Spring 2009

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