

Spring 5-2-2018

Race in Romance: Racialized Femininity and Intimacy between Asian Female and non-Asian male

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Recommended Citation

Kim, Minju, "Race in Romance: Racialized Femininity and Intimacy between Asian Female and non-Asian male" (2018). *Media and Cultural Studies Honors Projects*. 7.
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Artist Statement

Race in Romance: Racialized Femininity and Intimacy
between Asian Female and non-Asian Male.

Minju Kim

Documentary Film (17 min.)

Project Advisor Morgan Adamson

Media & Cultural Studies Department

25 April 2018

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Minju Kim

Documentary Film (17 min.)

21 April 2018

“Race in Romance” is a short film about romantic intimacy between Asian female and non-Asian male. The basis of the film starts with a premise: “Having an intimate relationship with another person is seen as a decidedly private activity in our culture. Yet desire and passion for other people is shaped socially and culturally, and often reflects a person’s desire for self-realization and a social identity.” Our views of ourselves transform through the exchange and confirmation of our recognition.

Kumiko Nemoto, the author of the book “Racing Romance,” argues that interracial marriage and relationships are often simply celebrated as part of multiculturalism or anti-racism. The problem with this color-blind view of interracial relationships is that it lacks critical engagement with the complexity of racial and gender dynamics and inequalities inherent in relationships. Traditional gender studies and women’s studies deal heavily about the impact of gender in heterosexual relationships, but race is never discussed as frequently in these romantic settings. Furthermore, many of existing literature were focused on men, instead of women themselves. This approach often reduces women to mere victims of stereotypes, and strips away their agency as individuals with unique opinions and perspectives about the issue.

I wanted to make a film that addresses the issue of yellow fever centering women’s experience. Rather than focusing on men, “Race in Romance” brings light on how different women negotiate this situation in different ways. Through this process, the film stimulates more open conversation and encourages women to gain more agency on the subject.

Also, more personal but equally as important, I wanted this film to document my personal growth through seeking and communicating with other women negotiating their interracial intimacy. In a way, this short film was a tool for my self-identification and resolving my own conflicts dealing with my identities.

Stylistically, “Race in Romance” shares many characteristics of essay film genre. For example, first-person point of view voice-over resembles that of “Bright Leaves” by Ross McElwee. In the beginning of his film, McElwee narrates why and how he decided to make the film. In the same way, “Race in Romance” explains how the film came to be, and how it’s related to the filmmaker. For McElwee, he was using film to document his journey of learning about his great grandfather and his impact on tobacco addiction in the United States. For me, the film was about finding a community of women who were experiencing interracial intimacy.

AKA Don Bonus also inspired the style of the film. The filmmaker, Don Bonus, is a Cambodian American high school student living in Tenderloin district in San Francisco. He records everyday life as an immigrant, often appearing on camera himself as well. Chronicle of a summer also inspired the making of the film. The way Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin appeared on the film, and how the interviews collectively told a story about a broader social atmosphere of France really intrigued me. I don't think "Race in Romance" fits perfectly into any single category. Rather, it has some characteristics adopted by multiple genres, that I thought would contribute to the general message of the film.

To conclude, the film Racing Romance is an attempt to document the way in which Asian women negotiate with fetishization and their identity. It doesn't try to teach people, or showcase a groundbreaking discovery. Instead, it attempts to present the variety of experiences that women have with interracial intimacy. However, these differences did not hinder me and the interviewees from connecting instantly and opening up a conversation that was long awaited. "Race in Romance" is a collection of these relationships and connections, rather than a single unifying story.

Credit

Music

"*Heliotrope*" by Blue Dot Sessions, under a Creative Commons Attribution license.

"*El Tajo*" by Blue Dot Sessions, under a Creative Commons Attribution license.

"*Cicle Ariel*" by Blue Dot Sessions, under a Creative Commons Attribution license.

"*Hallon*" by Christian Bjoerklund, under a Creative Commons Attribution license.

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