Black Matters
Spring 2017

Assignment #2
Due as a <u>WORD</u> file

In her lecture on *The Bluest Eye,* Prof. Helen Lee taught us, quoting Morrison, that:

> "... literature ought to be both political, and beautiful... Fiction, then, provides social criticism. It disrupts and disturbs our complacency, our presumptions. It opens up the truth of experience. Stories give us a way to live, to grapple with the hard questions. Stories make us bigger. Stories help us to see ... and to steer."

Then, Prof. Lee defined the "Master Narrative" as:

> "The ideological script imposed by those in power which defines what is legitimate and beautiful and worthy and correct and normative."

Please select a couple of your favorite readings from the syllabus to date, and identify one "Master Narrative" (aka "M.N.") in these texts (whether or not this "M.N." is *explicitly* defined, as in Rosina Lippi-Green's texts or *indirectly* alluded to, as in *The Bluest Eye*). Then, pick one theme that this Master Narrative speaks about and that relates to some *specific* aspect of your own life or that of some group that you're familiar with.

The goal of this *argumentative essay* is to think constructively about events in your life when you yourself were "complicit" in, and/or a "victim" of, the Master Narrative. The terms "complicit" and "victim" are from Prof. Lee's analysis of *The Bluest Eye*. As Prof. Lee argued in class, we can sometimes unconsciously contribute to the reinforcing the M.N. and even unwittingly be "complicit" in our own "victimization" by the M.N.

But now that we're #WOKE, we can interrogate this Master Narrative and our role in it—as "accomplice" or "victim" or both.

So the key question is: How can you, using what you've learned about "Black Matters" to date, help interrogate and perchance undermine the Master Narrative that you've identified. Please be *concrete and specific* as to which insights from the course will help you counter *which* aspects of the M.N. that you've identified, and *how exactly* you can counter this M.N. Of course, this is a somewhat *open (even life-long) project,* so there's no "right" and "wrong" answer" as long as you can elaborate a coherent argument *and* plan in your essay, based on both real-life events and scholarly knowledge—to be eventually put to actual use as you learn to "read the word and the world."

Guidelines:
1. This is an argumentative essay, not a piece of creative writing.
2. Length of essay as **WORD document**: **1,000 words <u>including title and bibliography</u>**.
3. Include your name, the course, the date and a title on the first page. Be sure to double-space, use a normal 12-point font and 1-1.25 inch margins.
4. Number your pages.
5. Quote and analyze specific passages from the chosen text to support your argument.
6. Please support any assertion with specific references to readings, **and make sure that your citations include page numbers and bibliography as necessary.**
7. Cite quotations correctly. Consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* This is the industry standard. Parenthetical references are fine for a short paper like this.
8. Refer to the **General Writing Guidelines** handout on Stellar as you work on your essay.

It's crucial that you make <u>explicit</u> reference to relevant passages in the class readings—as many passages as are relevant—and that you cite these passages appropriately. Please check the grading rubric on Stellar which will help you in meeting the expected standards.

24.912 Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies
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