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**A Proposal to Research the Common Struggle of Minorities in the Workforce expanding
to Day to Day Life**

Introduction

Being an African American in the 80s, oppression was a common day to day part of life . Whether it was racial profiling, police brutality, or ignorance in the work environment, a constant sense of frustration arose from the black community. As a result, some turned this frustration into controversial masterpieces, as did Bill Gunn. Unfortunately, this oppression is still well alive today and has created protests such as the Black Lives Matter Movement and counter ideologies such as the All Lives Matter social construct. This exhibit will explore the common sense of frustration that continues to arise due to oppression and how the need to stand up and fight the popular opinion becomes more and more prevalent. The proposal will also include a statement, objective, annotated design plan, and annotated bibliography to show the depth of research and injustice.

Statement of Purpose

My exhibit will highlight a key issue that has plagued our society for years. Social injustice in the workforce and in the daily lives of minorities. It has affected the LGBT+ community, women, people of color, and more. This exhibit is a great example of showing how the problem has not really improved. The character Sam Todd from *Rhinestone*, demonstrates the frustration and injustice that can appear in the workforce and how he cannot simply let his boss, Cubby,

demean and belittle his work. For example, Cubby calls Sam a “peasant” [Gunn pg. 40] and allows the producer, Sol Rayburn, to move on to tell him Sam his script is a “piece of shit.” [Gunn pg. 75] Sam reacts by defending his piece and explaining how it is hard to write a piece about a Black athlete while not getting connected to the piece because he too, is black. Cubby doesn’t understand and shrugs off his explanation by telling Sam “let’s not bring race into it.” [Gunn pg. 47]

Gunn created such a great example of a hostile work environment that shows how one man must attempt to work around his obstacles in order to have his script published. By connecting *Rhinestone* to the Black Lives Matter Movement, it is easy for readers to see the similarities, beyond the workforce, between what was happening 30-40 years ago and what is still happening today.

Objective

Bill Gunn portrays the everyday ignorance that occurs in society to show the necessity of standing up against the oppression enforced by the majority. This issue and tense setting affected minorities ability to work and live their lives. In *Rhinestone*, Gunn shows examples of conflict, ignorant comments, and refusal to accept negative opinions, represented by black screenwright, Sam. Unfortunately, racial tension and ignorance is still well alive today, as can be seen in the Black Lives Matter Movement vs. All Lives Matter reactionary response. The objective of my exhibit is so show the obstacles African Americans face and how drastically it affects their lives. My goal is also to show how after all these years the same issues are still relevant, proving how little progress our country has made socially.

Plan of Action

Resources I will use:

- Journal/ Magazine:

- Book
- Criticism
- Archive/Artifact
- Ethnography
- Pop Culture

Why will you consult these particular resources (How do your chosen resources help you achieve your objective? What particular qualities/subject matter do these resources possess/deal with?)?

I chose a Journal because a magazine article giving an opinion on one of Gunn's, notoriously controversial, plays would be helpful to show how society or a member of society reacts to a play that may or may not line up with their views. Similar to how society has different reactions to the Black Lives Matter Movement. I think a book would give a detailed analysis of Gunn's life or work to help support why he decided to follow the path he did and where he drew his inspiration from. A criticism would be helpful so I could see and attempt to understand the point of those who don't agree with Gunn's views. I plan to use an Archive visual from the past and present to compare the two and show how things haven't really changed that much, from a social justice standpoint. I would love to use an Ethnography because I have a hard time understanding views that contradict mine when it comes to social justice, since I am so passionate about it. From this I could create a more well rounded exhibit. I will attempt to find social media coverage of anything about Bill Gunn because I am curious to see how a newer generation reacts to him and compare that to how the older generation reacted.

What resources will you not consult (Why did you reject these resources?)

I will not consult an oral history and comparative analysis. There is no oral history of Bill Gunn, to my knowledge, but of course if I come across one I will change my mind and use it. I will

not use a comparative analysis because I am using enough resources that give me different points of views to form a comparative analysis relating to the overall theme, which I believe will be more useful.

Name two resources (by title, author, type, and any other identifying traits) that you have already consulted and provided a detailed description (using quoted passages) regarding why these resources are essential to your exhibit.

Author: Melissa Anderson **Type:** Article **Title:** "In Two Urgent Reprints, Gunn Fights for His Singularity"

This source is important because it has quotes about the outcome of Gunn's general writing, For example, "Gunn's work was often savaged by the press." [Anderson, pg.1] Gunn was "a man who spent his life trying to expand, if not trouble, the very meaning of "genuine black success." [Anderson, pg.1] It also has a specific response from Gunn to the critics, "Another critic wondered where was the race problem. If he looks closely, he will find it in his own review." [Anderson, pg.1]

Author: Keith Corson **Type:** Book **Title:** Trying to Get Over: African American Directors after Blaxploitation, 1977-1986

This source is important because it discusses Gunn's reasons and inspiration for writing *Rhinestone Sharecropping*, "Gunn used the fictional veil of his novel *Rhinestone Sharecropping* to sum up the mood of the film industry in the immediate aftermath of the blaxploitation cycle." [Corson, pg.8] "The novel provides a succinct analysis of the film industry and the circular logic of white producers and executives." [Corson, pg.8] This source is great because it gives me a direct view to background of *Rhinestone Sharecropping*.

Annotated Bibliography

Anderson Melissa. "In Two Urgent Reprints, Gunn Fights for His Singularity." *The Village Voice*. Dec 29, 2015. N.p. Google Scholar. Sept. 27, 2016

This secondary source is a summary of Gunn's work, experiences, and inspirations. This source is helpful because it gives quotes that Gunn and other playwrights used to describe their experience in the film industry. For example, Gunn expresses his frustration with the roles offered to him. Meaning there were little options, most were given to Sidney Poitier and if Sidney Poitier turned them down the role would be flipped for a white man. This source is helpful to me because it has direct quotes from the author of my play. It is also very helpful to my thesis because it shows that Gunn really stuck to his views and stood up for what he believed by taking a break from acting to become a controversial novelist and playwright.

Corson Keith. "Trying to Get Over: African American Directors after Blaxploitation, 1977-1986." Austin : University of Texas Press, 2016.

This secondary source explains Gunn's reasoning and inspiration for writing *Rhinestone Sharecropping*. This is helpful to me because the play I chose is *Rhinestone Sharecropping*. Through exploring the the inspiration to *Rhinestone Sharecropping*, I will be able to make a better connection to my artifacts and the Black Lives Matter Movement because I can compare the root cause of each and go on to show the parallels within them.

Finley, Stephen C., and Biko Mandela Gray. "God Is a White Racist: Immanent Atheism as a Religious Response to Black Lives Matter and State-Sanctioned Anti-Black Violence." *Journal of Africana Religions* 3.4 (2015): 443-53. JSTOR. Oct 9, 2015

This secondary source explains the racism and anti-blackness that is hidden behind law enforcement. It goes on to use examples from the Police brutality murders that have taken place over the past few years. This source is helpful to me because it is showing how a lot of the incidents that are taking place are not due to the actions of black people, it is simply due to the

ignorance and racism that has been passed down from generation to generation. This is helpful to me because it helps my thesis by showing that the day to day struggle for African Americans is heightened since they could be killed any day for doing literally nothing but being black.

Van Peebles Melvin and Mario. "No identity Crisis, A Father and Sons own story of working together." *Film Quarterly*. 44. 4.1991.30-31.JSTOR. Sept. 27, 2016

This secondary source gives reviews of novels and plays similar to and, Rhinestone Sharecropping. It does not touch much on Rhinestone Sharecropping but it is an unbiased review of the play by two men of color. This source is important because it shows how race is not completely influencing views and opinions of the play. This helps my thesis by proving people aren't just following the majority, they are truly saying and standing up for what they believe by criticising the work that represents their struggles. They are doing so by saying it could be more legitimate if examples directly from Gunn's life were used.

Young, George and Butler, Judith. "What's Wrong With All Lives Matter." *The New York Times*. Jan 12, 2015. N.P. Google Scholar. Oct 1, 2016.

This secondary source is an Interview conducted with Judith Butler where she explains the how the value of Black Lives throughout history and still today have been viewed as lesser by society. She goes on to explain the All Lives Matter Social Construct and how for some it is a way to show their power and state their dominance over the Black Lives Matter Protests. This is helpful to me because I can use it to explain Black Lives Matter and prove that blacks in America have always been viewed as lesser. This also helps my thesis because it is saying that the whole All Lives Matter Construct is simply another ignorant obstacle standing in the way of Blacks gaining the equality they rightfully deserve, similar to the obstacles Sam Todd was facing.

