

Dance 2367H

Paper 3.2

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An Intense Party for Revolution

100% POP is more like a party celebrating blackness than a performance. 100% POP is the creation of Nora Chipaumire, Zimbabwean choreographer who currently lives in the US. Chipaumire explores the idea of being African American and black culture in her repertoire. The advertising for performance was very vague as was the description on Chipaumire's web site, so I did not know what to expect that night.

As we walked into the dark performance space we were asked to stand in a large circle. There were three DJ booth decked out in red and blue siren lights. The DJ I stood behind was of African descent and wore only a black tutu and sporty knee-high socks. When the music began to play, I realized why there were ear plugs available to the audience in the lobby. A woman began talking to the music, her booming voice seemed to come from everywhere. The objective of the performance of confronting racism was made very clear by the woman with her repetition that "every nigger needs a revolution" and that "nothing but ourselves can free ourselves".

The DJ in front of me began doing very small but effortful isolations in time with the cacophony of music, showcasing his strength. Then the woman, Nora Chipaumire, came out of her hiding place and began dancing the same movements. The man in the tutu joined her in the center. They alternated moving their arms, bending one hand in towards their face and extending the other diagonally upwards. It seemed as if they wanted the audience to join in,

but it was clear from the faces around me that the audience was confused. Some of the braver members of the audience who happened to be African American joined in. The two dancers in the center began to contract their torsos low to the floor, letting the music that was reverberating in everyone take over them. Then the two dancers left the center of a circle and came back with large black flags fluttering behind them. The dancers placed these flags in their holder and began modeling ironic ballet poses forcing the audience to look at them.

They beckoned to the audience to join them in partying and being free. The stubborn audience pretended to not understand and uncomfortably bounced in time to the music to placate the performers. The performers made the audience participate by snapping and waving their phone flashlights. They danced wildly in the center, feeling the music, and letting it fling their bodies in syncopated steps. And then the music began to repeat itself, and it suddenly dawned on me that this overwhelming extravagance might not stop until everyone gave in, freeing themselves, and joining the dance. A man in a smaller tutu began inviting people to dance with him in the center. The first people to venture to the center were the brave members of the audience who had been dancing in their spots for the last 20 minutes. Then the man in the tutu asked an older white woman by dancing a step where his arm made a semi-circle, his knees bouncing to the deafening beat. The woman joined in by attempting to replicate his movement.

More people joined until there was a large group in the center dancing. They formed their own little circle and people began showing off in the center, hip-hop style. Every person in the outer ring felt a jealousy for those dancing but did not go because of their fear. Suddenly the meaning of Chipaumire's strange idea of a dance performance become very clear. The

world is too scared to end racism and fully accept the black community, just like a majority of the audience was too self-conscious to dance in the center. She implies that by dancing we would free ourselves and be brave display our true selves.

After the performance I needed silence, I needed time to think. My senses were overwhelmed. I welcomed dark cool air and the silence as I stepped outside. I did not really enjoy the experience, but I value the message it conveyed. The performance made me realize how even not acting can promote prejudice. I think I should take a more active part in helping dissolve boundaries. Chipaumire's message applies not only to racial minorities but to all minority groups.

100% POP is ingenious, albeit a little aggressive. Chipaumire forces unsuspecting audience members to be close to blackness and encourages them to join the revolution. The audience is not able to draw an impersonal wall between themselves and the performance—the throbbing music, the sweat of the dancers, and the shaking floor make it impossible. Thus, they are forced to reckon with their own insecurities and prejudices. Chipaumire does not tell the audience that they were raised with prejudice, instead she makes them experience it. She reverses the historical trope and confronts the other group with a little discomfort so that they are freed to question their thoughts. This was my first college party, and the experience was unforgettable. While Chipaumire's creation might not adhere to personal preferences it is definitely worth the experience.