

Abstract

Title of Document: Spitfire: Framing “White Rage” in Response to Black Rhetoric
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On March 26, 2014, for the first time in intercollegiate competitive debate history, two African American women won top honors and named champions of the Cross-Examination Debate Associations national tournament. Using this incident, this dissertation explores the press reports published about this historic moment. Through a collection of 19 artifacts, this dissertation demonstrates how American culture emboldens the white gaze to impose a culture of cultural oppression, and intellectual repression of Black thought while victimizing Western culture, toward the erasure of the celebration of Black women. This rhetorical analysis considers the 2014 Cross-Examination Debate Associations final tournament outcome to explore press reports as an exemplary case of how American cultural standardization edifies the white gaze and its rage in reaction to Black rhetoric.

Pulling from Whiteness Studies, this dissertation presents a history of intercollegiate competitive debate alongside a history of the development of

American culture to frame unmarked whiteness as problematic. Citing this historic moment, this project notes much of the media response to the tournament outcome presented critiques of the debater's arguments and speech style and focused on the male debaters, toward the erasure the women who were the champions.

This project uses exnomination, abstract liberalism, American Africanism, and cooptation to frame the rhetoric of whiteness as *rage* and demonstrates how this rage acts as a violent terror tactic that passively and aggressively coopted the Debater's strategic use of the "n-word" to create symbolic dissention that elevates the Black male debaters while simultaneously silencing and erasing the Black women debaters. It is the goal of this project to demonstrate how whiteness operates in reporting of this historic moment, and to exonerate the women who, through the rhetorical violence of white rage, were virtually erased in the process.

Keywords: rhetoric and culture, rhetorical analysis, Africana/Afrocentric Studies, Whiteness Studies