

Discrimination and Privilege in Jackie Sibblies Drury's *Fairview*: An Intersectional Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Jackie Sibblies Drury's *Fairview* powerfully interrogates the complex dynamics of discrimination and privilege through a bold theatrical structure that challenges audience perception. The research investigates discrimination and privilege in *Fairview* through the lens of Intersectional theory, a framework designed to analyze the interplay of diverse social identities such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability and their cumulative effects on discrimination and privilege. Formulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw, the theory contests the notion that social disparities can be analyzed in isolation, positing that they are interrelated and frequently exacerbate one another. A Black woman may encounter both racism and sexism; however, her experience cannot be comprehensively comprehended by examining each kind of prejudice separately. Intersectionality highlights that systems of power, including patriarchy, white racism, and capitalism, are interconnected and must be collectively addressed to comprehend and oppose social injustice more effectively. Drury uses techniques such as silence, direct address, and racial casting reversals to unsettle viewers and force a confrontation with their complicity in systemic racism. Through characters like Beverly, who is burdened by the pressure to present perfection, and the anonymous white voices that later dominate the narrative, the play reveals how privilege operates invisibly and insidiously.

KEY WORDS: Jackie Sibblies Drury, *Fairview*, Discrimination, privilege, intersectionality.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

1.1 Jackie Sibblies Drury's Biography

Jackie Sibblies Drury is a theater practitioner who has contributed greatly to American artistry. She is known for her pieces that deal with multicultural issues such as race, ethnicity, identity, and even politics. Drury was born in Plainfield, New Jersey, where she was raised by her immigrant grandmother alongside her mother who, came from Jamaica. After attending a private school that had students from varying ethnic backgrounds and observing students being classified based on their race and socio-economic status, she decided to pursue her passions in art and writing (Yale School of Drama, n.d.).

In 2003, she graduated from Yale University with a Bachelor of Arts in Literature. Rather than pursue acting, Drury chose to focus more on playwriting. After earning her degree, she decided to sharpen her skills further by getting a Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting from Brown University (NYU Contemporary Playwrights of Colour, n.d.).

One of her works that gained her considerable attention was titled *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation about the Herero of Namibia, formerly known as Southwest Africa, from the German Sudwestafrika, between the Years 1884-1915*. She received appreciation for the unique style and narrative the play presented (BroadwayWorld, n.d.).

In 2018, Drury off-broadway premiered her piece *Fairview*, which centers around a family gathering that touches on race relations as well as societal views on the matter. Her work won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2019 due to its "dry and blunt representation of racism in a world where it is a taboo topic" (StageAgent n.d.).

Drury has received several esteemed prizes and accolades over her career. In 2015, she was awarded the Windham-Campbell Literature Prize for Drama and in 2019, she earned the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for *Fairview*. Furthermore, she received the Steinberg Playwright Award in 2019 and the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre Award in 2022 (Drury, 2013).

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1.2 Jackie Sibblies Drury's Fairview

Fairview is a play about Frasier family, a Black upper-middle class family. The family is preparing for Grandma's birthday. The mother, Beverly, is nervously trying to put everything in its right place and to make everything look perfect while her husband, Dayton, and their teenage daughter, Keisha, try to normalize the family dynamics. Jasmine is Beverly's sister, who also takes part in the preparation for the coming party. The first act of the play goes like a light-hearted sitcom-style comedy. The story goes on, however, not according to the expectations. The first scene is repeated, but this time with an unsettling tone and unseen white voices, deliberately exploring race, privilege, and the Black experiences as if the voices are external observers investigating the Frasier family. In this scene the audience feel that they have been eavesdropping on the white voices. In the final act, the play witnesses a crucial change in the story events by having the white actors on stage on other words they enter the Frasier's home and start to speak about their roles, forcing Keisha into strange conflict with racial objectification. In this act the fourth wall is completely broken giving Keisha the chance to address the audience directly, asking the white spectators to consider their own involvement in racial discrimination (Drury, 2018).

The play explores several complex and layered themes, which revolves around race, identity, power, and perception. The play deeply investigates how race influences personal and communal experiences. It analyzes the ways in which Black Americans operate through a society governed by white perspectives and anticipations, as well as the mechanisms of racism that function both explicitly and implicitly (Obenland, 2024).

This drama delves into many nuanced issues that touch upon sensitive aspects of American culture, especially the ones related to Black American families. The play suggests that Black people are constantly under surveillance are expected to conform to the norms set by white people. The surveillance is literal, as white characters watch and comment on the Black family, and it is also metaphorical, referring to the real life experiences of colored people being monitored in both public and private domains. Fairview demonstrates how white supremacy allows white people to trespass into the lives of Black people and dominate the narratives. The drama exposes white liberalism and how well-intentioned white folks, for some reason, take undue authority over Black lives. Drury utilizes dramatic techniques like breaking the fourth wall to involve audiences in the racial politics of the play. The format of the play challenges the spectators to question the reality of their perceptions and ask themselves whether they are seeing real life or a scripted one that has been prepared according to social expectations. The drama focuses on

the self-definition search in the context of unending externally imposed racial identity. The last scene of the play, where a Black character speaks to the audience, challenges the audience to consider who really defines the essence (Allen, 2018).

The article looks over the ways in which Fairview analyzes discrimination and privilege, especially in the context of intersectionality. Focusing on the interplay between race, class, and surveillance in the play, this study seeks to understand how Drury dismantles systemic structural and relational oppositions. With the aid of intersectionality as a framework, the conversation draws attention to the ways that embedded representations of marginalized identities are critiqued in relations to the construction of the metatheatrical play.

1.3 Thesis Statement

Drury's Fairview, demonstrates how racist surveillance is deconstructed and released by using the metatheatrical tactics and the audience confrontation. It invites its audience to reflect on their own positions and biases.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Fairview analyzes racist power, interrogates spectatorship, and reveals intersectional oppression through metatheatrical methods. The theoretical framework is fundamentally based on intersectionality, critical race theory, and performativity, establishing it as a pioneering criticism of racial visibility and privilege in modern theater.

2. INTERSECTIONALITY

2.1 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Race is a social construction that structures power and privilege in many modern societies. Race delineates power and privilege within cultures by influencing access to resources, opportunities, and social standing. This occurs via historical legacies, institutional frameworks, and cultural narratives that establish and perpetuate racial hierarchies. Race continues to be a fundamental organizing factor of power and privilege inside countries, affecting economic position, political representation, cultural acknowledgment, and social mobility. Rectifying these disparities necessitates systemic transformation, encompassing governmental reforms, alterations in cultural narratives, and proactive endeavors toward racial justice.

In the course of this study, the concepts will be examined within the context of the historical and social narrative, political depiction, economic position and the cultural appreciation of the American society and this indeed leads to connect privilege and power to the White groups and discrimination to Black groups. In the

modern American history, the term "White privilege" has been used to represent specific privileges that white groups enjoy due to their Whiteness and White identity. The term White privilege, as a conceptual tool, can only be understood in relation to Critical Race Theory, specifically the notion that racism is central and endemic, through Whiteness as property and interest convergence (Bhopal, 2023).

Critical Race Theory is an academic movement aimed at comprehending the reproduction and maintenance of white supremacy as a legal, cultural, and political phenomenon, predominantly within the United States context (De La Garza & Ono, 2016) while (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) believe that Critical Race Theory is a movement that includes a collection of activists and scholars that involve in examining the dynamics between race, racism, and power. The movement addresses several themes similar to those explored in traditional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses, while situates them within a broader context. Perspective including economics, history, context, collective and individual interests, as well as emotions and the unconscious. In contrast to conventional civil rights, which advocates for gradual development, critical race theory challenges the fundamental tenets of the liberal framework, encompassing equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationality, and impartial norms of constitutional law.

Another perspective underscores the idea that Critical Race Theory serves as a method for examining race and racism within society and their effects on individuals. Critical Race Theory was formulated by Harvard Law School Professor Derrick Bell in the mid-1970s as part of Critical Legal Studies and further refined by other legal academics, including Kimberlé Crenshaw, who introduced the term, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas. Critical Race Theory has multiplied into several disciplines, functioning more as an analytical framework than a static academic discipline, so evolving in tandem with the society it examines (California School Boards Association, n.d.).

What are the beliefs of critical race theorists? It is unlikely that every member would agree with all the principles articulated under the list of the Critical Race Theory core principles; but, many would concur with the following assertions (California School Boards Association, n.d.). The first principle of Critical Race Theory may appear self-evident, yet it remains fundamental to the critical and academic endeavor of Critical Race Theory: Race continues to be significant (Orbe & Allen, 2008). Considering race as a fundamental element of academic inquiry is one of

the principal characteristics of CRT work. Notwithstanding the concept of a "postracial" America, Critical Race Theory researchers assert that white

supremacy is an inherent aspect of American existence (Olson, 2004). Critical whiteness studies are fundamental to Critical Race Theory research in communication. Such studies elucidate how white supremacy structures the circumstances and substance of communication between people of colour and dominant ideological institutions, including the media, religious, and educational systems (De La Garza & Ono, 2016).

The second principle of Critical Race Theory is the importance of narrative and storytelling as an analytical tool. Critical Race Theory attacks legal scholarship for its failure to include people of colour and for not undergoing structural changes to accommodate diverse viewpoints. Hypotheses arising from the transformations necessitated by such studies. Researchers at Critical Race Theory have tried to make these kinds of changes by collecting stories from people of colour, which are similar to testimonies that are used in law studies. These "counter stories" challenge conventional cultural and personal narratives that reinforce the marginalisation of individuals of colour. From the standpoint of Critical Race Theory study, mechanisms of knowledge production are frequently utilised to disgrace or refute the personal experiences of individuals of colour with racism. Amplifying individuals' narratives serves to affirm "experiential knowledge," or the lived experiences of people of colour, while challenging institutional commitments to sustaining a colour-blind frontage (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Critics of Critical Race Theory contend that these narratives may submit to essentialism; however, proponents assert that the process of knowing is significantly more intricate than mere theorisation, and that counter story represents one of the few methodologies that appreciates the unique and individual experiences of people of colour.

The third principle of Critical Race Theory involves a critique of liberalism. Furthermore, liberalism is not connected to progressivism. It is connected to incrementalism. Because of this, Critical Race Theory wants deeper changes to institutions rather than just improvements. The long march lasts too long. In addition, it doesn't work when there is widespread racism and ethnic ethnocentrism. One main reason for this is that liberals depend too much on reform and making human rights rules. Most of the time, Critical Race Theory experts don't believe these ideas because they don't take into account the deep racism that people of colour face in society. Because of the problems with the civil rights movement, some Critical Race Theory experts don't believe in slow or steady change. Instead, they support more extreme and revolutionary plans (De La Garza & Ono, 2016).

The fourth principle of Critical Race Theory is a dedication to social justice. The initial work of Critical Race Theory started as a critique of legal institutions and

juridical paradigms. The Critical Race Theory research is sometimes characterized as a political and intellectual movement; hence, several Critical Race Theory theorists align themselves against dominant ideological and conversational frameworks. The discipline of communication contributes to this movement by racial critiques of media (Yosso, 2002), examinations of social and political movements (Anguiano, Milstein, De Larkin, Chen, & Sandoval, 2012), institutional analysis, and a dedication to amplifying marginalised voices (Holling, 2014).

The fifth principle of Critical Race Theory research emphasises the significance of interdisciplinarity. Critical Race Theory academics acknowledge a historical connection between the generation of academic research and the preservation of white supremacy. From its beginning to the present, Critical Race Theory research has a marginalised position in academic publications, both by necessity and by design. Consequently, Critical Race Theory academics have acquired the ability to navigate disciplinary barriers to identify chances for engaging with pertinent bodies of literature and distributing their knowledge to others. The transition to interdisciplinarity is crucial for the wide distribution and adoption of Critical Race Theory scholarship across many academic fields, hence enhancing Critical Race Theory sustained significance as a theoretical framework (De La Garza & Ono, 2016).

2.2 Performance Studies & Metatheatricality

In his 1963 publication *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*, Lionel Abel used the concepts of "metaplay" and "metatheatre" to categorize plays exhibiting philosophical self-awareness, portraying life as "already theatricalized" with characters cognizant of their own theatricality. This form of playwriting predates the technical vocabulary currently used to define it, as indicated by his study and subsequent research. Although Abel starts his analysis with Jacques' "All the world's a stage" monologue from *As You Like It*, his examination encompasses a diverse array of authors, including Molière, Calderón, Beckett, and Genet. Nonetheless, the majority of study following Abel has focused on Shakespeare. Some individuals continue to appreciate metatheatre, while others deem it self-indulgent and antiquated. The shape endures nonetheless. Historically, the form has had a genuine purpose: to assess the state and reception of the art form (Drama Daily, 2009, p.1).

Metatheatrical performances on the popular theater contest the conventional differences between high and popular culture, both in the nineteenth century and in contemporary times. Metatheatrical theatre is typically seen as an aspect of high culture, rather than contemporary culture. Discussions of metatheatricality in

nineteenth-century popular theater either convey astonishment at its 'modernity' or entirely deny its presence. For the self-consciousness and self-reflexivity of theater, which pertains to its creation, performance, or its dramatic and theatrical illusions, is considered fundamentally literary: intricate and artistically nuanced. These attributes are typically denied to popular culture, especially the popular theater of the nineteenth century, and are predominantly ascribed to the 'stage play realm' of Renaissance theatre or the Modernist avant-garde. Nonetheless, comprehending the metatheatricality of melodrama offers a unique perspective on the self-perception of the nineteenth-century English theatrical profession, its conventions and peculiarities, while also indicating the extent of the audience's complicity in the entire theatrical endeavor. The self-image of the Victorian theatrical profession offers insight for contemporary readers and critics, demonstrating a level of complexity and self-awareness often not attributed to popular culture or the Victorian audience specifically (Newey, 1997).

Jackie Sibbles Drury's three-act play, *Fairview*, is an employment of audience manipulation and self-reflexivity forces an engagement with racialized spectatorship, challenging traditional concepts of passive viewing and involving the audience in the frameworks of racial representation. Through the use of metatheatrical techniques such as direct address, programmed spontaneity, and performative doubling, Drury deconstructs the idea of theatrical neutrality, urging audiences to examine their own positions within racialized power dynamics. This interaction challenges conventional audience expectations and underscores the performative essence of race, illuminating how racial identities are produced, perceived, and enacted in theatrical and social contexts (Willis, 2021).

Drury employs Structural Metatheatricality in the play many times, initially in Act I, where it imitates a conventional sitcom-style Black family drama, so inducing a sense of familiarity in the audience. Then Act II discreetly replays the first act where a group of invisible white actors provide commentary through voice-over, revealing voyeuristic racial relations. The same thing happens in Act III which entirely dismantles the fourth wall, inviting white audience members to physically join the stage as the protagonist, Beverly's daughter, Keisha, articulates a poignant speech concerning racial identity and the weight of surveillance (Pearce, 2021).

Fairview not only embodies discrimination and privilege but also dramatizes them, engages the spectator in these issues, and demands a reaction. Drury's employment of metatheatricality serves as a profound intervention rather than a mere aesthetic embellishment. It presents a robust framework for how theatre might contest prevailing narratives and stimulate social awareness.

2.3 Jackie Sibblies Drury's Fairview

The play portrays enduring racial tensions in the United States, intertwining various realities in a distinctly theatrical manner (Lewis, 2020). It is a dramatic work, especially a genuine family drama that amalgamates elements of comedy. It examines topics of race, class, and the intricacies of familial relationships, while also integrating aspects of comedy and satire. The play received the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama (Als, 2018). The performance is divided into three acts. Act one unfolds the realistic family drama within the family's elegant and sparkling dining room. Beverly, the typical maternal figure, is eagerly striving for perfection, while her husband Dayton offers his assistance. Beverly's sister Jasmine arrives, and apparent stress arises as they attempt to avoid confrontation. Keisha enters, seeking Jasmine's support in persuading their mother to allow her a gap year before attending college; a relatable kitchen sink drama unfolds. In Act Two, the play shifts from its initial course: the events of Act One are reiterated, although the malfunctioning radio offers a soundtrack featuring a range of white individuals deliberating about which race they would select if given the option. The debates reveal a spectrum of ideas and racially charged stereotypes, underscoring the prevalence of these attitudes and the casual manner in which the characters address them, which is particularly striking. In the concluding act, the white actors participate as members of the Frasier family, culminating in the family shattering the fourth wall and letting audience members onto the stage (Pope, 2020).

2.4 The Intersectional Analysis of Jackie Sibblies Drury's Fairview

Jackie Sibblies Drury's award-winning Fairview is among numerous contemporary plays that confront the strong influence of white audiences in largely white theatrical environments. The analysis entails investigating how intersecting identities such as race, gender, class, and surveillance inform the experiences, representations, and power dynamics of its characters. Drury uses Fairview as a meta-theatrical criticism of whiteness, the white gaze, and systematic racism, challenging the boundaries of how Black life is perceived and shown on stage (Krometis, 2022). The work is a compelling and thought-provoking exploration of race, surveillance, privilege, and the politics of representation. The play's structure and character interactions deconstruct conventional audience expectations, focusing on themes of racial discrimination and white privilege in both nuanced and explicit manners (Obenland, 2023). Drury uses all available resources to forward her objective on the central theme of Fairview. Symbolism

serves as an effective mechanism to convey specific signals to the audience regarding discrimination. Samuel (2023) argues that carrot as a symbol might serve as a potent emblem of racial discrimination and performative expectations, particularly emphasizing the methods by which Black identity is monitored, commodified, and twisted for white consumption. There is an apparent allusion to the old idiom "carrot and stick" a strategy of control by rewards and punishment. It may represent the deceptive benefits (acceptance, opportunity, "equality") presented to Black citizens inside a white-dominated society, which are, in truth, conditional and frequently unattainable. It also reveals the institutional inequity that governs relationships and expectations, particularly about the performance of race for the comfort of white individuals. Drury designates the two groupings, black and white, to symbolize marginalized and privileged characters, respectively. Black groups are regarded as discriminated characters due to many social identities.

3. INTERSECTIONAL FACTORS OF DISCRIMINATION IN FAIRVIEW

Intersectionality is the study of examining different forms of discrimination in which, different factors such as race, class and gender work together to make a unique form of discrimination (Sorani A. Abdulrahman, Liva A. Shareef, 2025). Intersectional discrimination is a fundamental theme that emerges through a multi-layered, self-reflective narrative structure. The play analyzes the intersections of racism, class, gender, and surveillance in the lives of Black people, especially with white spectatorship and the commodification of Black identity.

3.1 Race Discrimination

African, black, colored, Negro, and more recently, Afro-American or African-American, have been the most often utilized and approved words. These expressions were included into legislation that restricts individual liberties and human rights. Racial discrimination is a prominent subject of discourse both currently and historically. It signifies the deprivation of opportunity for a certain set of people. The term "black" often denotes an individual of equatorial descent, including African, Negrito, Aboriginal, or South Indian heritage, and/or possessing a very dark skin. Ultimately, it is impossible to physically define or characterize a black individual. Amidst superficial acceptance from others who would otherwise regard black individuals with disdain or revulsion, blackness is associated with a legacy of conflict, subjugation, and a sense of personal integrity. There is much contention on the criteria for identifying individuals as black in historical contexts. Racial discrimination has been a significant concern in the

nation since its inception. Afro-Americans experienced a diminished quality of life upon their arrival in the United States in 1619 due to slavery, segregation, and social stratification. Racial discrimination is widely recognized as the primary source of their misery (Akbar, 2023). Jackie Sibblies Drury's *Fairview* is a provocative exploration of racism, privilege, and the pervasive influence of the white gaze in American society. Through innovative theatrical techniques, Drury challenges audiences to confront their own biases and the systemic structures that uphold racial inequality (Als, 2018).

Jackie Sibblies Drury's play *Fairview* is a profound examination of racism, surveillance, and white complicity, employing a very innovative and meta-theatrical framework. The play intentionally undermines the audience's expectations, especially in the second and third acts, to provoke contemplation on the white gaze and biased assumptions. Throughout the play, the characters, particularly those who are Black, experience discrimination based on their race on multiple occasions. Act one presents a conventional family drama, allowing the spectator to experience the dynamics of a middle-upper-class Black family as they prepare for a birthday celebration. Numerous matters will be deliberated among family members, and disputes will be settled. The play starts with a sequence that introduces the audience to the central theme of racism, albeit indirectly referenced at the outset. The correlation between slavery and labor is highlighted in the play's initial stage directions: "The scene opens with a [n-word]: Beverly is peeling carrots" (Drury, 2019, p. 7). The utilization of the n-word with Beverly's depiction of laboring in the kitchen instantly conjures the abhorrent background of Black enslavement throughout the Americas. From that initial phrase onward, as the preparations advance and the doorbell looms, Beverly gets further overwhelmed by the enormity of effort necessary to orchestrate such a banquet. Amidst the carrots, roast, cake, chilled wine, and silverware, she perpetually perceives herself as being "so behind" (Qian, 2019).

In a typical daily dialogue between Beverly and Jasmine over media and movies. Beverly's perspective on films is deeply nuanced:

BEVERLY: "Nothing real about those kinds of movies. Those kinds of things just don't happen in real life" (Drury, 2018, p. 25).

This statement addresses the exclusion or misrepresentation of Black experiences in mainstream media within the racial and political context of *Fairview*. Numerous reports from different organizations illustrate the existence of systemic racism in the United States affecting Black lives.

The American Civil Liberties Union has published an extensive examination of the widespread systemic racism in the United States. It discusses instances of racism

encountered by New Yorkers and the daily efforts of the New York Civil Liberties Union to oppose them, including racial profiling, educational inequities, drug sentencing legislation, and police brutality. The paper, *Race & Ethnicity in America: Turning a Blind Eye to Injustice*, addresses the United States government's submission to the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) published earlier this year. The government's assessment, labeled a "whitewash" by the ACLU, obscured the significant impacts of pervasive racial and ethnic discrimination across the country (American Civil Liberties Union, 2017).

3.2 Gender Discrimination

Fairview, although not overtly focusing on sexual discrimination, explores the intersections of race and gender, illuminating the perceptions and representations of Black women in society and theatrical contexts. The play transcends a mere family drama; it serves as a meta-theatrical work that utilizes its Black female characters to examine the compulsion of African Americans to perform for white audiences, both literally and metaphorically. Black female characters are pivotal to the story and the play's incisive critique of racism, surveillance, and the white gaze in American culture. The play deliberately undermines theatrical standards to attack the observation and stereotyping of Black life, particularly by white audiences (Bradford, 2018).

In *Fairview*, Drury examines the observation and interpretation of Black bodies, especially those of women, via a largely white lens. The play's structure, starting with an ostensibly ordinary family supper and progressing into a meta-theatrical critique, underscores the errors and biases intrinsic to such perceptions. The characters' behaviors are recontextualized via the views of invisible white observers, highlighting the objectification and stereotyping frequently experienced by Black women (Appel, 2019).

Beverly Frasier serves as a pivotal character through whom Drury examines the topics of racism, surveillance, and performativity, especially in relation to Black female identity. She, the Black mother, exhibits evident tension while cooking supper for the family meeting. Her collapse illustrates the demands imposed on Black women to uphold control and decorum.

BEVERLY: "Everything must be perfect or-" (Drury, 2018, p. 6).

The argument addresses the cultural expectations imposed on women especially Black women to achieve perfection in household responsibilities, stifling their emotions and shouldering the weight of familial cohesion. This depiction portrayed Black women as inherently predisposed to domestic work joyful, loving, and self-effacing frequently at the expense of their own families. This prejudice endures insidiously in

contemporary media and social discourse. Black women are frequently anticipated to be unwavering caregivers, emotionally robust, and perpetually proficient, particularly within the domestic sphere. This constrains susceptibility and establishes an unrealistic benchmark of perfection. Black women frequently bear the burden of both racial and gender expectations anticipated to maintain the household, nurture extended families, and achieve professional success without apparent difficulty (Harris-Perry, 2011).

Keisha's concluding monologue is among the most impactful segments of the play. She contemplates the scrutiny and evaluation she faces about her race and gender. Although it does not explicitly condemn gender discrimination, it subtly challenges the multifaceted oppression she experiences.

KEISHA: "I don't need to sit down. I need to ask you to leave so that I can have some space to think" (Drury, 2018, p. 35).

This moment represents the reclamation of agency and the resistance against the objectifying gaze that reduces Black women to symbols rather than recognizing their humanity. Rather than being shown as people with distinct voices, aspirations, and humanity, Black women are frequently utilized as metaphors or symbols to reinforce overarching narratives typically those focusing on white characters or white social standards. A Black lady may be shown as an emblem of perseverance to facilitate the development of a white character.

Her suffering may be exhibited not for her own benefit, but to elicit shame or atonement in others (Hooks, 1992).

A further indication of gender discrimination is the manner in which white characters or voices observe Black women. In the second act, white individuals deliver invasive and condescending remarks on the Black family. While many of them are racial, others also convey gendered assumptions especially when they speculate on Beverly's conduct and "domestic failure." (Als, 2018).

WHITE VOICE: "She's a strong woman, trying to provide for her family, not some -" (Drury, 2018, p. 29).

This perpetuates a stereotype regarding assertive Black women and exposes the intersection of gender biases with discrimination based on race. This perpetuates a stereotype regarding assertive Black women and illustrates the intersection of gender biases with discrimination based on race. *Fairview* reveals the ways in which white voices commodify, distort, and dominate the identities of Black women, portraying them via stereotypes, domination, and idolization. The play's experimental form, particularly the metatheatrical disruption, exposes these dynamics as systemic rather than individual (Pearce, 2021). The white voices effectively overwrite the Black family's narrative, imposing stereotypes such as the "pregnant teen" (Keisha)

and "crack addict" (Beverly) in Act 3. This illustrates how predominantly white media has long governed Black depiction (Qian, 2019).

Drury emphasizes the intersection of race and gender in shaping the characters' experiences, notably through the disturbing presence of white viewers who, both physically and figuratively, overshadow the Black characters, stripping them of agency and narrative authority. This voyeuristic perspective illustrates wider social processes in which Black women are very visible yet voiceless, compelled to adhere to imposed identities while being deprived of their subjectivity. Drury examines the racism inherent in media portrayal and the patriarchal institutions that restrict Black women to conventional positions by blurring the distinction between performance and reality, so exposing the intricate and compounded nature of their oppression.

3.3 Privilege in *Fairview*

Fairview, initially appears to be a conventional sitcom premise; nevertheless, underlying tension indicates that something is amiss. The identical event of Act one is performed, however, now four white voices linger above the stage, deliberating about race inquiring which race they would select, interrogating Blackness, and superimposing the family's organic relationships. Those white voices enter the narrative representing the Black family and transforming its story. Keisha addresses the audience directly, insisting that Black individuals take ownership of their narratives, while urging white individuals to cultivate the ability to listen (PBS, 2019).

The play examines the notion of privilege, especially regarding race and white spectatorship, through its structure, characters, and themes. The play employs meta-theatrical techniques and interrogates conventional ideas of spectatorship to reveal the processes of power and control linked to whiteness and racial surveillance (Kareem, 2025).

Privilege is examined in *Fairview* through several methods, including the deconstruction of whiteness, the challenge to spectatorship, the intersections of race, class, and power, and the themes of surveillance and the "gaze." The play challenges the normalization of whiteness, which is frequently unmarked and regarded as the "default" identity, in contrast to the hyper-visibility and scrutiny of Blackness. Whiteness that is examined as an "ongoing and unfinished history" positions people in space, and it is important to the play's critique. *Fairview* embodies the white gaze by having white audience members observe a Black family's performance, therefore exposing how this gaze distorts and manipulates narratives concerning Black life. On the other hand, the title itself alludes to the distorted "fair view" of whiteness. *Self-Centering Whiteness*: Drury recognizes the contradiction that a play condemning whiteness needs

prioritize it to operate, necessitating white audiences to confront their privilege (Holdren, 2018).

Act two of the play illustrates the superiority of White voices over the Black characters. In several instances, such as when one of the voices articulates:

WHITE VOICE: "Wait wait wait wait wait - She's going to faint now." (Drury, 2018, P. 45).

The concept of "Wait wait wait wait wait" serves as a potent metaphor for how white privilege facilitates passive observation and evaluation of Black existence. It illustrates how white individuals frequently perceive themselves as entitled to watch, characterize, and interpret others without mutual engagement (Moses, 2020).

The play deconstructs conventional theatrical power dynamics by inverting roles: in the climax, white audience members are called onstage, compelling them to undergo the sensation of being "watched" and scrutinized a reverse of racist surveillance. Black individuals endure every day. The alteration in the role has occurred not just with the audience but also reflects the desires of one of the white characters:

WHITE VOICE: "And it's like, I would choose to be African-American, actually. Because I was raised by. My family, we had ... but she was more than that, she was this lovely" (Drury, 2018, P. 28).

This statement illustrates the fetishization and romanticization of Blackness while neglecting the genuine societal repercussions and threats encountered by Black individuals. It signifies a privileged detachment, the capacity to "assume" another identity for amusement without enduring its associated obligations (Krometis, 2022).

The most effective audience confrontation to examine the interplay of discrimination and privilege occurs when Keisha breaks the fourth wall and addresses her discourse directly to the audience, inviting their participation in the play.

KEISHA: "Could I say Come up here folks who identify as white, you know who you are. you can choose to come up here to where I've always been, where my family has always been. Sit on the couch. Make yourself a plate. Look out from where I am. And let me and my family go out to where you've always been.?" (Drury, 2018, P. 38).

Keisha breaks the fourth wall to assert her autonomy, dignity, and the necessity for distance from the pervasive scrutiny of white privilege. It is an explicit rejection of systematic oppression and a request for unregulated Black life (Pearce, 2021).

The play progressively uncovers the influence of white spectatorship and societal dominance on the lives of Black folks, illustrating their distortion. Fairview, first appears like a genuine family drama but subsequently reveals how white individuals, initially mute viewers,

intrude onto and ultimately dominate the story, reflecting the dynamics of white privilege in reality. These white characters represent archetypal roles and impose them upon the Black family, illustrating how whiteness frequently determines the parameters of identity, conduct, and worth in society. In the last act, Keisha openly addresses the audience, revealing the fatigue and agony of being always seen, evaluated, and characterized by whiteness. Drury uses dramatic techniques to elucidate that white privilege is both structural and performative, manifested via everyday assumptions, entitlement, and dominance over representation.

4. CONCLUSION

Jackie Sibblies Drury's Fairview presents a compelling critique of systemic racism and privilege through an innovative theatrical framework that compels audiences to acknowledge their complicity in social hierarchies. This paper employs intersectional analysis to illustrate how the play reveals the complex discrimination faced by Black individuals, especially Black women, at the intersections of race, gender, and class. Drury undermines conventional theatrical norms, positioning the audience as both spectators and participants in the enactment of bias, thereby illuminating the often imperceptible nature of privilege for its beneficiaries. Ultimately, Fairview contests prevailing narratives regarding identity and representation while advocating for enhanced accountability and awareness. It compels audiences and society as a whole to confront the quotidian manifestations of privilege and the systemic marginalization they sustain, rendering the play an essential contribution to current dialogues on race, equity, and justice within both theatre and broader cultural discourse.

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