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Blks aziza barnes pdf. Blks aziza barnes monologue.

So I went to NYU, and I spent a semester abroad in Ghana. I was grieving my cousin who had just been killed, and I was getting over this horrendous breakup, and feeling disillusioned and like, jaded in that American fashion. So I went to Ghana with one of my best friends Nora Carroll, who is also in the cast of BLKS, and without her I honestly would not have felt it important to write this play. Because she and I would just get into these ridiculous shenanigans thinking that we had like arrived at “African heaven” and really the Ghanaians were like, “you’re just American fools.” It made us really focus on ourselves as Black American people, as Black American women and gender-non-conforming people. Why is our experience so nuanced from the get? Why don’t we belong anywhere in Africa or the U.S.? Why isn’t our voice heard? We’d go into the club and the most absurd things would happen to us that didn’t make any sense. They weren’t happening to any white people we knew or Ghanaian people we knew... even other Black people that we knew. And other people did not have the same absurd perspective on the world. I came back from Ghana feeling all that and then I became aware that the stories we would tell about our trip, and the stories we would tell in general, were so funny and heartbreaking and beautiful that I was like “that has to be theatrical somehow.” Like telling the story of that ridiculous night when everything went wrong, and you have to deal with yourself, that has to be a play. And so I started writing BLKS. For the next few years after I graduated I worked on it intermittently and the premise of the play continued to ring true to me - these three very different kinds of Black women in their early 20’s trying to deal with themselves through all the ways we self-medicate. They drink a lot. They smoke a lot. They try to have sex a lot. These are all ways of avoiding the actual acute problem: “WHICH IS THAT YOU’RE MISERABLE AND THAT NO ONE LISTENS TO YOU.” You don’t listen to yourself. I’d have those nights in Ghana and I’d have them afterwards and I realized I had had these kinds of nights my whole life. This made me ask, why am I running from what I’m running from, and why is it usually myself? Especially when no one wants to see you, why are you betraying yourself? So that’s why BLKS exists. The title is quite cheeky because the Chicago-based poet Avery R. Young coined the word BLKS because it’s about people not about a color. We are Black. And it’s also fun to frazzle people who then have to say it. Say it! We’re Black people. Cuz I was in school with a bunch of very delusional neo-liberal people who would say “I just don’t see race.” To which I say, “Bitch you better! What is wrong with you?” I see it as such a fearful erasure, it’s dangerous not to see, and it’s dangerous to say it’s not your politics. For me as an early 20’s person you don’t care about your bed yet. You’re not happy enough to know that you need to take care of yourself and that kind of starts with having a nice bed. Like, a couch is communal, you and your homies can sit on it, and it ties the room together, it’s comfy. That’s how I envision this couch, like if someone were to take this couch away the world would end. If you don’t have it you really need it; it could be the shittiest couch but it’s yours. There’s something intrinsic to a couch in Black culture. It’s like a porch for city-dwellers. You know how people in the south sit on their porch and it’s where you can make out with a cute person because your bed ain’t shit. It’s very evocative of a pioneer life and what matters and what mattered was a place that you or anyone could feel comfortable. And you’ll end up having a time in your early 20’s where you’re couch-surfing; no one is immune from couch. So when I think about the images in my play, I also think about each character’s hair and how they decide to do it. June has this moment where Justin is calling her and he finally shows up and she’s pinning it up cuz it’s straight and she has to pin it up at night and put the thing on it... And I feel like Imani has always had low natural... And Octavia has real dreads or silky dreads... I see their hair because it is such a thing - a crown. And it’s how you express yourself and align yourself politically. Hair is like a flag. And I think about the clothes that they wear. There’s a moment when Octavia’s in the house with Justin and she puts on this big crazy pink afro wig and sunglasses indoors and she wants to look and feel like Pam Grier. The ways in which you create fantasy are, I feel, very important. June creates the fantasy that she’s put together; Octavia puts together a fantasy that she can be a different person at any given part of the day; and Imani don’t really give a shit about her clothes. Imani would go to the club in a white tee, jeans and sneakers and that’s Gucci for her. Their clothes are almost like portable houses that way. Poetry is a huge part of my life. At my elementary school we’d memorize and perform poems for a poetry contest and if you won then you got an award and stuff so my parents would always put these poetry books under my nose and so from the time I was little I was memorizing poems. That was my first entry point into writing. Which I feel like, is why I’m on the planet. It feels very aligned. I’ve always written, and it was always poetry, mainly because I was obsessed with condensing very big feelings into singular moments. I remember always seeing the world like that. I remember when my Grandma passed, it was too big to encompass or understand, but I remember a poem about her. You could put all that life into a page and it’s still true and real. I thought that was like alchemy; that was like the most magical thing a person could do and it’s why BLKS is only 24 hours. The same concept of “put all of this life into one night, one moment, one day.” That’s how I approach a lot of things. Then when I was in college I did a lot of slam poetry. The slam world is a strange and magic world. You work so hard for this one moment which, to me, is the most important thing. I won this really big collegiate slam and was really disturbed after that. If you’re good at slam and successful at slam, weird shit happens to you. Mentally, what the fuck is going on? Why are people having opinions about me when I don’t know them? So I started writing again and focusing on the quietness that comes with it and the reflection that comes with it. I started playing with voice and creating poems written from the voice of other people. I wrote my first book me Aunt Jemima and the nail gun. And it won this poetry prize from Button Poetry, the first book to win a prize from that publishing house. And then my first full-length poetry collection I be but I ain’t came out in 2016 and won the Cabinet River Prize for books. Poetry for me is a really beautiful way to hone the moment and why it’s important, and hone a character’s voice. When people aren’t paying attention they say some really gorgeous things. I love hearing when people slip up and say something gorgeous. That’s my life as a poet. In reflecting on my own experiences to write the play I realized my friends and I are fucking funny. It’s the thing to deal with the thing. Like the laugh so you don’t cry thing. I’m not interested in writing people who are miserable and sad. I’m interested in people who run from it, creatively, until they can’t anymore. So it’s a comedy. Like shit, please let it be a comedy. People are so fucking sad, it needs to be a comedy. As outrageous as they are, that’s the only way they deal with it. I mean if they were like “dang my boyfriend cheated on me” and “dang my dad’s dead” and “dang I don’t know what my own brain is doing...” Jesus Christ no. I think of the horrors of my life, why I felt so out of my body and mind, like the only thing that would have helped was to laugh and to put on some makeup and a wig. It’s just horrifying, and you can’t walk around being horrified all the time. Continue reading the main story.Critic’s PickSend any friend a storyAs a subscriber, you have 10 gift articles to give each month. Anyone can read what you share.From left: Antoinette Crowe-Legacy, Alfie Fuller and Paige Gilbert have a raucous night out in Aziza Barnes’s “BLKS.”Credit...Sara Krulwich/The New York TimesComedy depends on people behaving badly. So does stretch of the breakneck 90-minute production, you feel the pure joy of seeing the best of people at their worst.June (Antoinette Crowe-Legacy) has just caught her boyfriend cheating on her for the 11th time this year — and is probably heading back for a 12th. Imani (Alfie Fuller) spends most of her day memorizing the comedy routines from “Eddie Murphy Raw,” believing that reciting them verbatim will make good performance art. Minutes after having sex, Octavia (Paige Gilbert) dumps her maybe-girlfriend, Ry (Cora Peña), over the tiniest thing.How tiny? It’s a mole on her clitoris. Ry, citing boundaries, refuses to examine it. “You were literally just down there!” Octavia wails.Among the many successful audacities of “BLKS” is the way that bit of comedy sets up both the plot and theme. Octavia’s fear that the mole may be cancerous propels all three roommates on a use-it-while-you’ve-got-it night of club crawling and sex trawling. But the uncomfortable proximity of terror and pleasure, the mark of mortality in the midst of intimacy, percolates beneath the surface at all times, so that even at its most extreme and obscene — “BLKS” is not for prudish ears or eyes — it is serious and sad and profoundly human.Which means that everything that happens as the three women “get extremely day drunk” and “extremely night fly” cuts two ways: hilarious in one light, awful in another.A gon in a bar promises to pleasure Octavia but really just wants her panties. June tries to help a drunk white woman who is being harassed by an “ethnically ambiguous dude” and somehow winds up with a shiner. A different white woman (Marié Botha) has the hots for Imani, but those hots quickly turn into microaggressions.Ms. Gilbert, left, with Chris Myers as the seemingly nice but overly attentive guy she meets at the club.Credit...Sara Krulwich/The New York Times“If you want me to be your blk person survival guide slash encyclopedia,” Imani snipes. “I got a rate.” It’s \$50 per question.[What’s new onstage and off: Sign up for our Theater Update newsletter]The playwright, who identifies as nonbinary but is comfortable with female pronouns, uses the abbreviated spelling “blk” to create a verbal distinction between a people and a color. She credits the Chicago poet Avery R. Young with that coinage, and you can hear in Barnes’s use of it, as well as in the incredible precision of the dialogue throughout, a poet’s attention to sound and meaning.Yet “BLKS,” which had its world premiere at the Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago in 2017, is the opposite of precious. As its bleaker themes begin to emerge, first in flashes and then more pervasively, Barnes never slumps into abstraction.So when we hear, near the beginning, that June has just landed a great job as an accounting consultant at Deloitte, it slips by as mere irony. Surely an accounting consultant would have advised her not to room with two women who cheerfully call themselves “the most-fired blacks of 2015.” But eventually her status as a successful young black woman starts to throbb like a tension headache. When she gets punched by the ethnically ambiguous dude, the police refuse to come. When she reads on her phone that “another one” was killed — another unarmed black person, that is — the idea takes hold for her and for us that there is no escaping American racism, any more than American men, even if you pull down \$100,000 at Deloitte. June, Octavia and Imani bear up as best they can, with gallows humor, abundant weed and fifths of Maker’s Mark. Sex, too, is an anesthetic, if a short-acting one. Without pressing the issue, “BLKS” describes a world in which black women have only one another to lean on. Even the nice guy that June meets at a club (Chris Myers) turns out to be a stalker nerd with Crazy Glue in his manbag.But the process of numbing and un-numbing themselves, of climbing repeatedly to hope from hopelessness, takes its toll. The cast is exceptionally good at specifying each step of this treadmill so that their performances don’t blend into a generalized blob of mirdrange feeling. Ms. Crowe-Legacy (recently seen in “If Pretty Hurts ...”), Ms. Fuller (“Is God Is”) and Ms. Gilbert (“School Girls; or, the African Mean Girls Play”) are so delicate with the sadness that it keeps coming as a surprise how merciless they are with the comedy.Mr. O’Hara’s direction is key here. Like his own warped tragicomedies, including “Barbecue” and “Bootycandy,” “BLKS” benefits from brightness and speed. (Clint Ramos designed the aptly rotating set.) “BLKS” also shares with those plays a delight in discomfiting audience members — I mean white ones — who may feel they are being prodded to laugh at something they have no right to see.Discomfort is great for comedy, of course; it adds intensity. Less profitably, “BLKS” suffers from a familiar structural turbulence at the end, as if it’s too big a vehicle, with too heavy a burden of stories and themes, to land on a short runway.Still, it lands. And you may find it continuing to do so for quite a while in your thoughts, like a pleasant dream that inexplicably turns into a nightmare, even while you’re still smiling.

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