

“The ‘Black Card’ Project”

From The Creator

When I started creating this show 3 years ago it was out of a need to wrestle with my own identity as a black male in America. I grew up as a young black boy in the 90’s who liked to go to dance class and soccer practice. I learned quickly from my peers that my dreams of becoming a professional dancer in Paris or professional soccer player in England “ain’t black”. I spent much of my adolescence trying to hide who I was and instead prove my blackness to people around me because I wanted badly to fit into the black community.

“The ‘Black Card’ Project” comes from my personal story. It is a collage of images and memories I’ve experienced throughout my life. From the old black man who lived on the end of my street on Roscoe (East Akron) to being told in 2nd grade, “ya know, if you like girls outside our race...you go to hell!” This evening is a compilation of various aspects of my life told through black music, black theater, and black dance.

You will notice we are using familiar theatrical tools to tell this story. By having only two male performers we are referencing one of the original sources of black entertainment, Vaudeville minstrel shows. We are internationally using this theater structure that showed a narrow and misleading vantage point on black America in the 19th/early 20th century as a way to explore the narrow defining of blackness we deal with today.

In the 90’s there was an influx of family-friendly black sitcoms. They entered living rooms around the nation to tell universal family stories through the lens of the black experience. Shows like Family Matters contained whole hearted messages inside of every episode of every season. We are also exploring, “How can we tell the universal story of identity but through the black experience and it be a story for the whole family?”

Maybe the most recognizable aspect of our production is the references to old school Saturday morning cartoons. Cartoons are such a large part of childhood for most people, including me. We are using the comedic tone of the cartoon world to talk about the often difficult and confusing topic of black identity. I spent many hours studying The Flintstones, Fat Albert, Tom & Jerry, Looney Tunes and Animaniacs to find the right combination of wild and zany to juxtapose the dark and serious.

This show is targeted towards middle school and high school students and their families. Understanding one’s identity is a huge part of the human experience and I believe presenting a piece of dance theatre to spark that conversation is a privilege. We all need the time and space to explore our own cultural norms and history but it’s likewise imperative to understand that who we truly are is what makes us belong.

Welcome to Booker T. Malcolm Luther Parks Academy of Absolute Blackness!

-Dominic Moore-Dunson,

Creator/Choreographer of “The ‘Black Card’ Project”

Company Member and Assistant to the Artistic Director of Inlet Dance Theatre