

Ang's Playwright/Director's Note for *The Medusa Play* at Shoe Box Theatre Collective

"...on matters related to race, the Racial Contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made."

— Charles W. Mills, "The Racial Contract"

"There is two things everybody got to find out for themselves. They got to find out about love and they got to find out about living."

—Zora Neale Hurston, "Their Eyes Were Watching God"

The Medusa Play was written ten times over. Which is to say that I wrote nine different plays and one world over the course of three years; each time, I became frustrated by the lack of clarity. I couldn't understand why I struggled so much believing in my ability to tell a story. Close, but no cigar. Not essential enough. Too "harsh" to consume. But who exactly was I writing for anyway?

"Your work makes me feel stupid."

"No one is that racist. Is this satire?"

"You're alienating yourself from the community, but write what you want to write. It's your play."

Three professors from the two predominantly-white colleges that saw the development of this play. Three mentors, two of which would go on to greenlight a mainstage production. I was the first in twenty years and the first Black student in the college's history to have this happen. I would be made to never forget the latter.

Blatant lying, reverse-psychology, withheld resources, micro- and macro-aggressions, and, ultimately, the erasure of *The Medusa Play* from the college's annual theater-centric report. Reports I had been the posterchild of previously for my "outstanding" accomplishments campus-wide, but of course this is before I had the audacity to open my nigger mouth. Before I had the audacity to criticize these self-proclaimed allies and hold space for other Black designers and students in the department.

I am still angry. I could write several articles. I have.

But I debated on staying silent and "good," thanking the gatekeepers, and proceeding with business as usual. They sure did.

Like Meddie, I struggle to believe that my voice matters. Like her, part of me is still eager for their validation. Meddie and I want a platform to be seen, understood, and valued— especially as Black artists.

But we are not blind.

Is scaling the mountain worth the sacrifice of authenticity? If we are reflected back disfigured, unhappy, and unfulfilled, is it worth it? What do you do when you only feel empowered to tell the truth after the tenth try?

This play is a break-up letter to the white gaze. It resents guilt and trauma. As Black artists, we are not exhibits. You cannot sell or claim our souls. We repurpose your doubt and skepticism into power, because we are *wholly* aware. And like *The Medusa Play* we embrace, and re-mythologize Ourselves for Ourselves, singing, laughing, and playing despite it all.