

**1. What does your textbook reading (pp. 1-10) say about race, slavery, philosopher David Hume, Shango, Ogun, Obatala, Emperor Montezuma II**

While reading the Introduction chapter to *A History of African American Theatre*, the main point that stood out to me regarding **slavery** was how people were not enslaved due to their race but the consequences of war. In the 15th century, Prince Henry of Portugal explored the Guinea coast to claim any wealth these villages may have had. Eventually, “Portugal was importing a thousand baptized Africans a year to serve on the docks, in the fields, and the homes” (P. 2). Later that century, Christopher Columbus promised the Catholic Kings that when he traveled to the New World, he would find gold. “Spain sent two kinds of conquistadors... ones with guns, and ones who came to conquer with the Cross of Christ” (P. 4).

**Emperor Montezuma II** (ruled from 1502-1520) and his Aztec army were defeated by Hernando Cortes, leader of the invading Spanish armies. As a result, the Spanish stole the Aztec treasury and any other possessions.

**Shango** (also called Chango) was a significant figure in the religion of the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. He was the fourth king of the town of Oyo. His voice was as fierce as thunder, had a double-headed battle-ax, and fire came from his mouth as he spoke. Sadly, he left his town and killed himself, but his followers believed he ascended to heaven.

**Ogun** (known as “Ogun Feraille” in Haiti and “Ogun” in Cuba) was the Warrior God of Iron and War. He represented primitive force and energy to his followers, whose legacy can be traced back to Iron Age civilizations in Nigeria and surrounding territories.

**Obatala** created the earth, men, women, and children. He was the creator of the world and humanity and is the source of peace and compassion.

At the height of the slave trade, Scottish philosopher and historian **David Hume** wrote: “There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences” (P. 8). This quote discusses the **race** of people who are not white and is grossly stereotyping all people as uncivilized and unintelligent. A similar quote from the *Whig* newspaper reads: “The negro’s happiness and safety are best promoted by... conformity (from whites)” (P. 8). This quote is in regard to the social and political status white people should have set for black people.

**2. What does it mean to “decolonize” (Western) theater?**

I believe this means liberating the people and ideas oppressed in the Western theater, specifically people of color. From *BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre*, one idea is “naming and (acknowledging) American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian tribal land” and people that have lived or currently live on the land where any theater activity happens

(P. 1). By doing this, it gives a voice to this marginalized group that has had their land and resources taken from them through force. “Naming” and “Acknowledging” consists of incorporating rituals at the beginning of any Broadway, Off-Broadway, LORT, Educational, and BIPOC theaters as well as mentioning the broken treaties made by the U.S. Government (P. 1).

**3. What is antiracism? Why is antiracism important/necessary in the study of theater or in watching a play?**

Antiracism is countering racist ideas or actions, such as voting for equal rights for African Americans or abolishing laws that have race supremacy. From *Four Black Artists on How Racism Corrodes the Theater World*, playwright Lydia R. Diamond confronts racism through art, as her award-winning play “Smart People” was about the idea that “white leaders of institutions, and white people in general, could just acknowledge the depths of their embracing a kind of white supremacy that allows them to allow institutions to be not inclusive and not equitable,” and how it must be fixed (P. 4). This example is important because its message will resonate with the play’s audience, which will begin dialogue and eventually create action that counters racism in theater. With this being said, African Americans in theater use their voices and artistic skills to speak out against these injustices so that the future of theater in the U.S. is more inclusive.

**4. Is it necessary to incorporate theaters by Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) playwrights and theater makers in studying theater? Why?**

Yes, it is completely necessary to incorporate BIPOC playwrights and actors/actresses. I believe it is important because involving BIPOC talent in the creation of theater will positively affect making this art more accepting and inclusive. From *Not a Moment but a Movement: Toward an Anti-Racist American Theatre* addresses how racism affects workplaces, as “it is a danger to the mental as well as the physical well-being of those subjected to it” (P. 2). Therefore, adding perspectives from different realms of the theater will portray a more open sense of acting as well as inform people of racial injustices in the theater.

**5. Define representation and the purpose of African American theater.**

Although representation can be defined as just simply having African Americans act, it would be more effective if they were the ones writing, producing, and directing the plays. From *Four Black Artists on How Racism Corrodes the Theater World*, “Black theater always has a social justice imperative and community uplift embedded in it, whereas plays with black people in them might actually be injurious or do harm to the black community” (P. 10). I believe the first half of the quote represents my opinion well. In contrast, the second half could be paraphrased in the way that if black actors are performing a play that’s not directly related to addressing the injustices in theater, it could be detrimental to the black theater community. August Wilson’s speech, “The Ground on Which I Stand,” preaches the need for funding black theaters (P. 9).

This way, African American playwrights and actors can express themselves in ways that would not be possible without proper funding.