




4-3-2013

I Am Not Your Video Girl

Rashida Aluko-Roberts
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Asian American Studies Commons](#), [Dance Commons](#), [Educational Sociology Commons](#), [Ethnic Studies Commons](#), [Ethnomusicology Commons](#), and the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Aluko-Roberts, Rashida, "I Am Not Your Video Girl" (2013). *SURGE*. 150.
<https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/150>

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/150>

This open access blog post is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

I Am Not Your Video Girl

Abstract

“We need girls who are willing to be up on stage with us and who are not afraid to go HAM dancing in front of a crowd. I know at least a few of you who have the confidence/jaw-dropping dance moves to pull this off.”
[*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, dance, self expression, 2 Chainz, minorities, stereotype

Disciplines

African American Studies | Asian American Studies | Dance | Educational Sociology | Ethnic Studies | Ethnomusicology | Race and Ethnicity | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Sociology

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

I AM NOT YOUR VIDEO GIRL

April 3, 2013

"We need girls who are willing to be up on stage with us and who are not afraid to go HAM dancing in front of a crowd. I know at least a few of you who have the confidence/jaw-dropping dance moves to pull this off."

This was a quote from an email that I received last semester from one of my housemates. Okay sounds like a reasonable request, I thought at first. It is a campus-wide event and I could understand that my housemate's organization was trying to pull out all the stops to ensure a win. However, my internal BS meter started going off when I saw the song of choice: Birthday Song by 2 Chainz. Here's an excerpt from it:

"All I want for my birthday is a big booty ho."

All of a sudden, I was very insulted by the email, and most importantly where I believed his idea stemmed from. I was even more annoyed by how others responded to the email. Was I overreacting? Being too sensitive? Reading too much into it? I scrolled to the top of the email to investigate, and my fears were confirmed. I had hoped I would be wrong and that I was "overreacting," but going through those names only confirmed my fears. Our dear housemate had sent the email to only persons of color; 14 out of 16 of whom were women of Hispanic, African, and African American heritage. So the message hadn't even been sent to the whole house. In fact, the white students and Asian students who live in the house had been purposely excluded from the request. It was only intended for students of color, but more specifically, female students of color.

Women of color constantly face derogatory stereotypes that continually affect how we are portrayed in society. Agreeing to dance to a song that is derogatory and offensive, to not only women of color but also women in general, in such a public setting would only strengthen the already negative stereotypes assigned to women of color. Participating in this dance would be a public mockery of myself and all the women of color who struggle on a daily basis to transcend the demeaning stereotypes that place offensive and unjust limitations on our positions in society.

For many, we are seen as mere statistics in the growing number of teen pregnancies and high school dropout rates. To some, we are "video vixens", "big booty hos", "confidence" and "jaw dropping" moves. The list goes



on. Yet, for the women of color who reject these expectations, society often finds a way to remind us (in this case an innocent email) of the “[roles](#)” that are expected of us, despite our successes.

Maybe I was “reading way into it” or I was “seriously overreacting” as many of my friends told me. But I was reminded of what my mother always tells me: “You get back what you give out.” Shaking my non-existent “big-booty” before the entire student body would only reinforce the negative perceptions on a predominately white campus. As a black woman, I now strongly believe that I too am responsible for the messages I send out and how society and others perceive me. Therefore, it is my responsibility to break free from those stereotypes that so often cloud people’s judgment of who we are as women of color and educate them that there are more to women of color than just shaking our “big booty” to a 2 Chainz song.

I am not your video girl!

Rashida Aluko-Roberts '15
Staff Writer

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/04/03/i-am-not-your-video-girl/>