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HELD IN THE LIGHT

Reading Images of Rihanna's Domestic Abuse

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Denise Ferreira da Silva's (2001) notion of the "analytics of raciality" and Sally Engle Merry's (2001; 2002) concept of the "regime of domestic violence governmentality" prompt my analysis of how black women's bodies have been written, through photography, into the culture of white domesticity in the United States and the institution of law. I am inspired by Ferreira da Silva's argument that to account for how race operates as a "strategy of power in modernity," we must "address the very conditions of production of the symbolic mechanisms deployed in the constitution of people of color as modern subaltern subjects" (2001, 427). In this essay I consider the nineteenth-century criminal mug shot and Mammy portrait as photographic genres that established visual codes of whiteness and femininity. Ancestors to police images of battered women, the mug shot and Mammy image fix the body before an aesthetic-scientific gaze crucial to the production of the legal reasoning that undergirds slave and criminal law.

As a way of accessing the issues at stake in my argument, I attend to the use of the camera flash in police photographs of the battered face of the popular U.S. singer Rihanna Fenty, who is black and originally from Barbados. My analysis of the images shows how women are situated as scientific objects, placed in an antagonistic relationship to cam-

era lighting: the flash regulates skin color to produce the subject of domestic abuse. Ferreira da Silva's and Merry's theories clarify the function of Rihanna's image as facilitating what Christine Shearer-Creman and Carol L. Winkelmann (2004) note are contradictory, temporal, and contingent trauma narratives of battered women.¹

I also examine Sham Ibrahim's multimedia artwork of Rihanna titled *Disturbia* (2009) and Rihanna's television appearance on ABC's *20/20* in November 2009. Ferreira da Silva's analysis of raciality is helpful in situating these as significant moments in which the black female subject of domestic violence gets written into law and public culture. I add to this an analysis of what I call Rihanna's "coming into voice" on *20/20* about her abuse, which follows Lisa Cartwright's (2008) articulation of the "coming into voice" of subjects with communication disorders who learn to speak through human and technological facilitators. For Cartwright, facilitated communication opens a space of empathic identification or moral spectatorship that is constitutive of the extralegal space in which Ibrahim and Rihanna respond to police photography of domestic violence. Ibrahim's multimedia artwork and Rihanna's appearance on *20/20* critique the scenes of visual evidence gathered by police, which transmogrified these into signifying visual codes of whiteness and femininity. The use of light and color across different media and materials—digital media, skin, fabric, and cosmetics—serve as nonverbal forms of communication that facilitate "coming into voice" and the production of subjectivity in the prosecution of domestic abuse.

Photography and the Analytics of Raciality: From the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First

In the late 1990s the legal historian Jennifer Mnookin remarked, "Despite more than 125 years of photography's sustained legal use, the history of photographic evidence remains almost entirely untold" (1998, 7). Police photographs of battered women, like the police image of Rihanna's battered face, have no official label that mark their unique history and rhetorical functions as legal institutional photography, as coveted objects of criminal procedure, and as prime movers in the aesthetic practices of the criminal courtroom in the United States. Accumulating in police databases since the 1980s, images of battered women are treated by law professionals and the public as visual evidence. Their untold, unmarked relation to the scientific apparatus of racism obstructs the view

of the gendered and racialized conditions under which this body of photography proliferates. Images of battered women are key artifacts of the regime of evidence-based domestic violence, the emergence of which in the late twentieth century is largely overlooked.

Merry uses the term “regime of domestic violence governmentality” to refer to Anglo-American legal procedures that regulate intimate affective relationships in the twentieth century (2001; 2002). Her analysis attends to how the state authorizes the containment of domestic abuse and the regulation of communication between intimate partners. Protection orders, mandatory arrest, no-drop prosecution, and intervention programs are meant to effect changes in the subjectivities of batterers and battered women.² No-drop procedural action requires police to pursue charges, provided there is evidence of probable cause, with or without the victim’s consent, while mandatory arrest demands that police responding to domestic disturbance calls arrest abusive partners. Strategies of evidence-based prosecution remove police discretion, which previously fueled inaction on domestic-abuse investigations. State policies produce particular forms of gendered subjectivities where male batterers are typically disciplined and punished for abusive behavior, and female victims are overwhelmingly protected by state orders which designate geographical and physical spaces of safety and security. Police photographs of domestic-violence injuries, providing visual evidence of domestic assault, as in the case of Rihanna, are an important component of the paperwork generated when police initiate a domestic-violence investigation.

In *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007), Ferreira da Silva accounts for the centrality of human difference in the production of juridical universality—the law of reason—in post-Enlightenment thought. The idea of race precedes Enlightenment rationality. Racism is more than an exclusionary practice documented by the sciences. The biological and social sciences manufacture evidence of human difference, ultimately forming an apparatus of knowledge, which I propose *produces the legal subject of domestic abuse*. Ferreira da Silva’s analysis of raciality argues that “blackness and whiteness indicate distinct kinds of modern subjects [including] how the white body and the social (geographic, economic and symbolic) spaces associated with *whiteness* have been produced to signify the principles of universal equality and freedom informing our conceptions of the Just, the Legal and the Good” (2001, 423, emphasis in original). The scene in which the subject becomes caught up, absorbed, overwhelmed within techniques of normalization is described in terms of engulfment—a key

aspect of the analytics of raciality that tracks the intricate circumstances and positioning of Rihanna on camera. Both the “analytics of raciality” and the “regime of domestic violence governmentality” take their cue from Foucault’s concept of biopower—the techniques of power mobilized by nation-states in the normalization and management of populations. Ferreira da Silva’s and Merry’s respective analyses add nuance to the work and affects of biopower. Their work encourages the discernment of the somatization of biopolitical technique, which is produced as experiences of global space and interiority, and as I demonstrate, is the function of whiteness in Rihanna’s engulfment in the racialized regime of domestic-violence governmentality.

The “analytics of raciality” describes an aesthetic arsenal that “consistently rewrites post-Enlightenment European consciousness and social configurations in transparency” (Ferreira da Silva 2007, 20). As aesthetico-scientific texts that lay open the body, photographs are endowed with the ability to rewrite the body of the racial other into new photographic genres. The nineteenth-century and post-Reconstruction eras designate key moments in which the racial other was produced through scenes of representation whose violence are rearticulated in the police image of Rihanna’s battered face. For example, Jonathan Finn (2009) observes that human racial difference structured nineteenth-century experimentation with photographic technology, ultimately shaping legal institutional practices of how criminality was visualized.³ Experiments with photographic technology during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were part of the discourse of scientific racism and established disciplinary power relations between the photographer and the photographed. From Louis Agassiz’s coerced portraits of slaves born in Africa, to Francis Galton’s experiments with composite portraiture documenting “successful” and “unsuccessful” human breeding, to Alphonse Bertillon’s system of anthropometric measurement of the criminal, the first half-century of photographic technology documented experimental practices of looking, measuring, and categorizing the human body according to a transcendental hierarchy of higher and lower orders of humanity. Photographs of the criminal and the asylum inmate, and the slave daguerreotype emerged concurrently and displaced the prison as the quintessential model of legal panopticism. These institutional gazes developed as sciences; their power to categorize and identify continues to find diverse state and private applications in human fingerprinting, DNA analysis, and facial-recognition technology (Finn 2009; Gates 2011; Magnet 2011).

Laura Wexler's (2000) analysis of the photos of black nursemaids frequently referred to as "mammies," moves away from the site of the criminal mug shot and slave daguerreotype to illustrate the production of human difference and femininity. Wexler's discussion of Mammy photos adds a crucial photographic link to the management of domestic relationships that Merry describes. Mammy portraits regulated post-slavery domestic relations in the United States. The images functioned as important tokens of sentimental feeling for white masters of black women held in bondage. Post-Reconstruction, white keepers of black female labor engaged in photography practices that displayed "few or no visible debilitating marks of slavery" through sartorial details and gestural comportment (Wexler 2000, 74).⁴ The images are distinctive for the clean, dignified, ladylike poses in which black nursemaids were photographed, often holding their tiny white charges while wearing stylish and morally tasteful dresses. Wexler's concept of the "innocent eye" explains the representational practices in which middle-class white women were portrayed "as if looking out from within, without seeing, the race and class dynamics of the household" (ibid., 6). The "innocent eye" is a sentimental photographic gaze that imagines the black nursemaid according to visual codes of white femininity. These images wrought a "tender violence" that reordered white consciousness through a sentimental and innocent photographic gaze by exploiting the black nursemaid's apparent "absence of wounding" from slavery (ibid., 74). The "absence of wounding" displayed in Mammy portraiture and the *presence* of wounding in the Rihanna image derive from the same aesthetic arsenal. By analyzing the crucial role of photography in rationalizing the postslavery domestic sphere in the United States, Wexler aesthetically situates the black nursemaid's fragmentary ascendance into whiteness via sentimental appearance. The particular aesthetic practices embedded in the image of Rihanna's abuse offer a window into the role of photography in domestic-violence adjudication.

The technical recording of Rihanna's injuries involved a complex negotiation between skin color and skin trauma mediated by camera lighting and physical comportment. The close-up image features the singer with her eyes closed. Her lips and nose appear swollen. There are abrasions and bruises on both sides of her forehead and cheeks. She has what looks like the beginning of two black eyes. Her short, jet-black hair disappears into the black background of the image. Awash in light, the performer's complexion appears whitened by the camera flash. If, as Ferreira da Silva



6.1 Los Angeles Police Department photograph of Rihanna's injuries, 2009.

(2007) argues, the very concept of post-Enlightenment rationality is informed by the idea of race, the flash photography that dissipates Rihanna's skin color and throws her wounds into relief produces the black female body as a limit of legal reason. Legal photography institutes a mode of representation that focuses on the body's exterior, or phenotypic qualities. In domestic-violence cases the state is interested in overseeing over time the development of bruises, punctures, scrapes, and so forth to provide evidence of abuse for criminal-trial juries. The police image simplifies into a "look" (Mulvey 1975) the complex affective and cultural relationships animating the violence between the black U.S. recording artist Chris Brown and Rihanna. The photograph voyeuristically focuses public attention on the presence of physical wounds that are legally actionable. Held by the camera flash, the singer's appearance displays visual codes of whiteness and femininity reminiscent of the graceful and dignified poses of black nursemaids. Similar to the proper dresses and groomed hairstyles that ostensibly incorporated the black nursemaid into white domesticity postslavery, Rihanna's whitened skin provides her access to "the Just, the Legal and the Good," which Ferreira da Silva (2001) associates with post-Enlightenment rationality. The image of Rihanna's abuse writes her black female body into the "regime of domestic violence governmentality" through visual codes of whiteness.

Richard Dyer (1997) observes how whiteness as signification emerges in the modern era in part through the technocultural production of movie-lighting techniques.⁵ Whiteness demands technological projection where the preferred subject of the camera gaze appears "whiter than white" (Dyer 1997, 122). Dyer identifies the theater stage and television studio as quintessential technical realms where the production of whiteness and femininity is supplemented through cosmetics and lighting techniques. Visual whiteness is privileged in part through photographic regimes that control the hue and brightness of skin color. For the black subject, then, the scene of photography can operate as a "scene of regulation" in which the black body is normalized by the whitening camera flash (ibid., 4). Seated still before the police camera, Rihanna's pose is that of a scientific specimen, passive, immobile. Placed in an antagonistic relation to light, her image renders the structural antagonism between the black female body and the techniques of juridical universality. Pivoting from what he sees as a preoccupation with ideas of movement and passage in academic work on slavery, Harvey Young (2010) argues that stillness is an overlooked performance that negotiates the representation of

the black body in visual media. The law's institutional documentation of domestic violence demands a performance of stillness which Young identifies in the coerced daguerreotype images of slaves born in Africa. The close-up shot of Rihanna's head, cut off from the rest of her body, centers her closed eyes and bruised skin, recalling the intimate gaze of the genre of Victorian memento mori, sentimental postmortem photography. Rihanna's deathly stillness is a performance of submission that coordinates with the camera flash that bombards her skin with light, isolating and throwing into relief the trauma to her skin that is already in the process of disappearing from the gaze of juridical universality.

In a sense, battered women are literally "to be looked at" (Mulvey 1975) by the state in a strategy of engulfment exemplified by Charles Goodwin's (1994) concept of "professional vision." Professional vision refers to the discursive practices—such as highlighting, coding schemes, and production of graphic representations—used by professionals to see and record. In his discussion of how law professionals deconstructed the video shot by George Holliday in 1991 of Rodney King being brutalized by police, Goodwin asserts "central to the social and cognitive organization of a profession is its ability to shape events in the domain of its scrutiny into the phenomenal objects around which the discourse of the profession is organized" (1994, 29). The use of light in flash photography to disassociate skin color from skin trauma is constitutive of police professional vision and seeks to regulate claims about domestic abuse. Forensic-evidence photography guides confirm the role of professional vision in the governance regimes Merry examines. Evidence photography guides and reports recommend a variety of procedures for documenting abuse. For example, point-and-shoot single-lens reflex cameras over 35 mm do not have a focusing distance that fill the (camera) frame (Pex 2000). High-resolution digital images have supplanted Polaroid technology in domestic-violence cases (Etengoff 2002; Kershaw 2002). Digital cameras are thought best for documenting bite marks, scratches, scars, and cuts, but not for bruises unless blood accumulation is close to the skin surface. The best time to photograph is between two and five days after injuries are sustained. The priority of capturing the disappearing injury is also evinced by police instructions about the manipulation of light for optimum exposure (Pex 2000). As one police protocol recommends, "Visible light penetrates into the skin deeper than UV light and is sufficient to document most bruises. Addition of special wavelength sources and filters can improve the visualization of [a battered woman's] injuries by en-

hancing the blue color and improving the contrast against the normal skin tones” (Pex 2000, 1). The use of the penetration metaphor is not inconsequential here, nor is the police photographer’s reference to “normal” skin tones. Photography guides imply that the photographer needs to pass through the epidermal boundary into the “inner life” of the dark-skinned subject. As police-photography instructions attempt to manage skin color through lighting practices, something like Goodwin’s idea of professional vision performs its “sovereign role as a regulating power” (Ferreira da Silva 2007, xvi).

Rihanna’s whitened appearance models an institutional disciplinary practice of entering the black female body into the domain of universal justice under the cover of whiteness and femininity. Whitened out by the camera flash, Rihanna’s image recalls the controversial 1994 *Time* cover featuring O. J. Simpson, whose face had been darkened to make for a more threatening mug shot of an accused killer of a white woman. Darkness and masculinity associate Simpson with the highest form of criminal behavior, while, in contrast, visual whiteness and femininity render Rihanna an empathetic witness. Both images presume a transparent body, which aligns with Rachel Hall’s arguments about how the “aesthetics of transparency” (this volume) function in privileging white bodies at airports.

Reading Photography of Rihanna’s Abuse

The police photography of Rihanna’s domestic abuse facilitated critical responses to the visual epistemologies of law enforcement and Rihanna’s own experience of “coming into voice” about the violence she endured. The online tabloid TMZ published the police image documenting the singer’s injuries days after the assault. Kevin Glynn coins the term “investigative tabloidism” to describe the “morally motivated and self-consciously adversarial stance” (2000, 124) that leads tabloid media into melodrama, which I argue, has created an extralegal space to work through issues of victimization and grievance in Rihanna’s assault case. In *Moral Spectatorship* (2008), Cartwright uses the concept of “working through” to examine the role of technology in facilitating disordered communication in the genre of deaf women’s film. Cartwright pivots away from Freud’s idea of working through as it relates to the talking cure to suggest that “we might also look to nonverbal vocalization, gesture, gaze, and touch—all present in the field of play—as important means through which acting out and

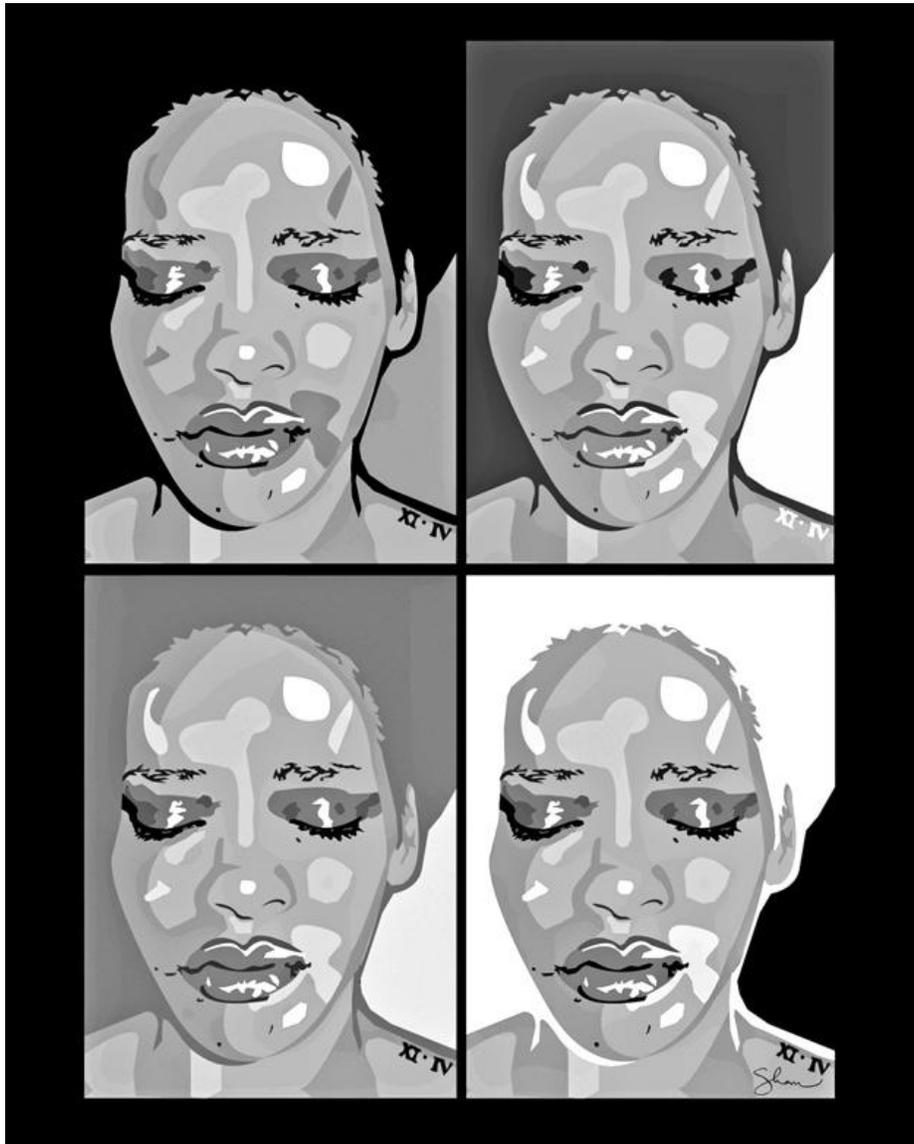
working through are carried forward between analysand and analyst” (2008, 57). TMZ’s investigation of the Rihanna case led to extralegal critical responses that took up the transparent aesthetics constitutive of the knowledge-making practices of the police. The responses from Ibrahim and Rihanna came in the form of nonverbal communication, by which color, textiles, images from popular culture, and light were mobilized to “talk back” to the regime of knowledge in which the experience of domestic abuse was reduced to a coveted photographic “look.” The transparent aesthetics practiced by law enforcement operate through an association between objectivity and whiteness. The visual disclosure of domestic abuse that would bring battered women into the domain of universal justice occurs by reference to the cultural codes of white femininity, a coding forefronted in Rihanna’s interview on ABC’s 20/20 and in Ibrahim’s art.

Disturbia

The new-media artwork by Ibrahim, *Disturbia* (2009), critiques how images of battered women—objects of police surveillance—are transformed into images for public consumption. Ibrahim created a form of appropriation art by modeling the police image of Rihanna after Andy Warhol’s 1962 silkscreen *Marilyn Diptych*. The reworked image of Rihanna’s abused face, published on Ibrahim’s personal website, was digitally altered from a copy published by TMZ. In his rendition, Ibrahim replicates the garish color palette used in the comic strips Warhol used to reframe a screen shot of Marilyn Monroe from the film noir *Niagara*.⁶

The still image of Monroe used in *Marilyn Diptych* was captured for a publicity shot for the film. Created a few weeks after the movie star’s death, *Marilyn Diptych* rehearsed the industrial mode of production with the massive manufacture of identical, interchangeable factory goods. Warhol’s use of color in the piece juxtaposed twenty-five color images of Monroe with twenty-five black-and-white images of the star. Art historians suggest that the movement between the vitality of the color images and the dull, smudged ink of the black and white images signify the life and death of Monroe.⁷ Warhol’s *Marilyn Diptych* preempts Rihanna’s police image, specifically its citation of the memento mori genre of photography. Warhol’s work may have also sought to mark the production of the film in Technicolor—a rarity for film noir at that time.⁸

Disturbia is suggestive of Dyer’s argument that the white face operates as a form of media control (1997, 94). Rihanna’s battered face is re-



6.2 *Disturbia* (mixed-media artwork). ©2009 Sham Ibrahim.

peated in a series, rewriting Warhol's original repetition of the face of Monroe. In *Marilyn Diptych*, Warhol keyed into the process of mechanized production, aligning an iconic vision of white femininity with the serialized outputs of assembly-line production. The serialized repetition of the white female face is an example of how the "primary effect of the power of race has been to produce universality itself" (Ferreira da Silva 2007, 427). In *Disturbia* Ibrahim draws Rihanna into the domain of universal justice by substituting copies of Rihanna's face for Monroe's. Rihanna and the marks of violence on her face are linked to Marilyn Monroe's iconic performances of white femininity.

Ibrahim's interpretation of Rihanna's image is a gesture acknowledging new modes of production enabled by fiber-optic networks, in particular publicity images. Understood in terms of unrestricted movement, publicity is a commodity that wants to be free. By reworking one of the most famous artworks of the master of appropriation, Ibrahim comments on the imposition of publicity into everyday life. Media scholar Wendy Hui Kyong Chun understands publicity as stemming: "from the breach between seeing and being seen, between representing and being represented. Publicity is an enabling violence—but not all publicity is the same. The key is to rethink time and space—and language—in order to intervene in this public and to understand how this public intervenes . . . in order to understand how the Internet both perpetuates and alters publicity" (2006, 126). Ibrahim's *Disturbia* considers time, space, and the language of *color*, refashioning the battered Rihanna as Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych*, which is arguably one of the most famous publicity-art images of the twentieth century. The background colors of the images that comprise Ibrahim's work shift from black to orange to white to blue. The individual portraits use muted pastels that also shift from panel to panel, a possible citation of the bruises and abrasions documented by the police images of Rihanna. *Disturbia's* shifts in color suggest the passage of time during which Rihanna's physical injuries gradually fade away. Ibrahim makes color speak, whereas in the police photograph of Rihanna, color can only remain silent, muted.

The changing colors of Ibrahim's series evoke the movement of information, facilitated by digital technology, from the space of law into the public domain. In 2002 the *New York Times* reported the introduction of digital cameras that would replace the Polaroid technology previously used by law enforcement to investigate domestic-violence crimes.⁹ The report, like Ibrahim's *Disturbia*, marvels at the affordances of digital media.

Ibrahim's vibrant use of color disrupts the status of the police as arbiters of transparency. The perception of skin trauma is not the central point of information in Ibrahim's image; the use of color only suggests the wounds rendered by the police image. The viewer must also see the original police image to decode law enforcement's encoding of the "look" of domestic violence (see S. Hall 1980). Rihanna's death mask in Ibrahim's image returns us to her commodified identity, her celebrity status as a performer, the organizing concept of the image. In the absence of any text or caption, the viewer must read the use of color to decode the information in the image. Ibrahim's appropriation of both Rihanna's image and Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* attunes the viewer to the promiscuity of Rihanna's image, oscillating between legal photography and entertainment.

20/20 Visions: Rihanna Speaks Out

In November 2009, nine months after Rihanna was assaulted, Diane Sawyer interviewed her for *20/20*. Rihanna's appearance on the program is suggestive of how the visual evidence of domestic abuse continued to produce multiple narratives about justice across social-media platforms. The *20/20* interview begins by interspersing moving images of the beaches of Barbados with childhood portraits of Rihanna. The singer is shown performing as Diane Sawyer's voiceover introduces the interview. At one point, Sawyer asks Rihanna to consider the infamously leaked image of her face.

Sawyer: The picture taken that night, have you looked at it?

Rihanna: I get very . . . embarrassed. I feel humiliated. I get angry all over again every time I see it. The whole thing plays back in my head, so I don't like to see it.

Sawyer: Why be ashamed? Why would you be ashamed?

Rihanna: I fell in love with that person. That's embarrassing. That's embarrassing that that's the type of person that I fell in love with. So far in love, so unconditional that I went back. It's humiliating to see your face like that. It's humiliating to say that this-this-this happened, to accept that. (Zak 2009)

As an internationally famous performer, Rihanna makes her fortune through timely, highly manicured, and choreographed rebrandings of her stage persona, of which this interview is one part. The police photograph of Rihanna's battered face also contributes to this branding, even if the

creation and circulation of this image is not under her (or her PR team's) control. Police photographs of battered women's injured faces and bodies participate in what surveillance-studies scholar Roger Clarke (1994) calls the "digital persona," where electronically collected and stored data appears as a model of the individual's identity and behavior. Rihanna's responses to Sawyer's questions disclose how the circulation of the image led to a humiliating exposure of her digital persona, inseparable from Rihanna's unique experience of controlling her artistic stage persona. Significantly, Rihanna notes how the mere sight of the police image induces a nightmarish "playback" of the violent encounter with her former lover. Her appearance on *20/20* attempts to deterritorialize from memory the image of her abuse.

Cartwright suggests we read "more closely the relational practices of empathy through a system that allows us to track the qualities and directions of its movement across texts, subjects and social contexts" (2008, 239). In Rihanna's case, the assault complaint, labeled the *People of the State of California v. Christopher Brown* (BA353571), did not result in a felony trial. Rihanna's appearance on *20/20* thus became an extralegal space in which to adjudicate and redress the violence she experienced (and experiences again when she encounters the police image). Her appearance on the program is informed by the "regime of domestic violence governmentality" and the "analytics of raciality" that regulate feelings around violence and represent what violence is, or looks like.¹⁰ Working through the shame and humiliation commonly experienced by battered women, the performer engages the aesthetics of transparency (R. Hall, this volume) when she offers her story of domestic abuse to the public.

Throughout the *20/20* interview, Rihanna remains seated, wearing a white turtleneck dress with fur epaulets, nude lipstick, and nude nail polish. Her hair is stripped of pigment. The ombre coiffure fades from dark to light and seems an updated version of hairstyles worn by Marilyn Monroe and Mae West. Sawyer and Rihanna are seated in a darkened studio, the walls lit blue and hung with red drapes. While Rihanna's seated figure provides the white in the "Red, White, and Blue" scene, Sawyer's body disappears into the darkened background. Through color, lighting, framing, and dress, the scene suggests that the United States has incorporated the performer's story of abuse into the national discourse of intimate-partner violence.

The makeup and clothing worn by Rihanna on *20/20* are examples of the aesthetics of transparency (Hall, this volume), which privilege white-



6.3 Screen capture of Rihanna's interview with Diane Sawyer on *20/20*. "Exclusive: Rihanna Speaks Out," 9 November 2009, ABC News website.

ness. The lighting and the singer's performance of stillness contribute to the public process of working through her assault and to the online circulation of documentation of the violence. During the interview, Sawyer shows Rihanna video footage published online after TMZ's publication of the police image. A young black man and two young white women are featured in separate video testimonials, each wondering what Rihanna did to provoke Brown. In a nonverbal response to these questions, the singer engages the aesthetics of transparency and stillness (Young 2010). Young's concept of "phenomenal blackness" captures the resistant visibility Rihanna achieves on *20/20* in the face of disbelief by the public about her claims of abuse. In Young's analysis, black athletes and artists at the turn of the century deployed gestural practices of resistance based on their experiences of racial violence and on a sense of anticipated violence (a violence to come). Fixed before the *20/20* camera, faced with the public's assumption that she provoked Brown, Rihanna preempts the "violence to come." The singer's radiant stillness strains against the inanimate post-mortem image rendered by the police. Rihanna mimics, through white clothing and nude cosmetics, the flash photography police use to document domestic abuse and the limitations of dark skin for this documentation. Her *20/20* appearance and her static position before the gaze of the law are brought into conceptual alignment as scenes and strategies

of racial engulfment: Rihanna's still body, physically subjected to the biopolitical regime of domestic-abuse adjudication, becomes the visual site of somatic resistance. In *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (2008), Jayna Brown observes how black women artists who perform negotiate their commodified bodies within racist entertainment contexts and urban geography. Brown notes that black women performers express "a deeper awareness of how expressive artistry brings into view the staged nature of racialization and the performed nature of defiant responses to racial [and sexist] discursive claims" (2008, 283). On the 20/20 television broadcast, Rihanna appears "at home everywhere and nowhere . . . [as if her] survival required spontaneity, agility, and awareness of the political conflicts and currents around [her]" (ibid., 242). On the *Fashion Bomb Daily* blog, Claire Sulmers (2009) wrote about Rihanna's use of color and sartorial choices as well as the complementary television lighting, noting that Rihanna's fashion choices emphasize her strength: "I, like many other Rihanna fans sat riveted watching her interview with Diane Sawyer on 20/20. Though the incident was quite traumatic for her, she seemed strong, resolute, and fierce. What better way to flaunt her renewed spirit than in Fendi's \$2,200 Fur-Trim Turtleneck Sweater Dress?" Rihanna's engagement of whitening techniques recalls the racial and gendered valence of categories of goodness, purity, and innocence traditionally held by white women and accessed through black women's sentimental appearances. The police image of Rihanna's battered face is fed back to the public on 20/20 through Rihanna's and the camera's rendering of soft, white, feminine elegance.

Conclusion

Through my reading of the police photograph of Rihanna's physical abuse and its circulation, I propose we see a moment in which the black female body is written into, but stands outside juridical universality. Ferreira da Silva's analysis of raciality would suggest that photography is a scientific tool that manufactures knowledge of human racial difference. Whitened by the camera flash, Rihanna's appearance exposed more than the problem of lighting in photography. Taken literally, Rihanna's entry into the arena of justice demanded the technical evacuation of her skin color. In cases of domestic violence, law enforcement's use of flash photography recalls the practice of "not-seeing" discussed by Andrea Smith (this vol-

ume). Not-seeing is a technique that foregrounds the logic of the white supremacist heteropatriarchal state and informs subsequent encounters with racial others. In Smith's example, the denial of preexisting native peoples, and of their ways of being, enabled the colonization of lands and resources that established the United States. The performance of not-seeing that the camera flash enacts on skin color creates a visual code that organizes the regime of domestic-violence governmentality, centering a normalized female body that is white. Rihanna, as racial other, is held by the light, cordoned by the flash, existing at the edge of juridical universality.

It is no irony that the practice of not-seeing is constitutive of a looking practice that involves conquest. In this chapter I pursued a critique of the rationale of law-enforcement photography by theorizing ways in which Ibrahim's *Disturbia* and Rihanna's television appearance on 20/20 "talked back" to the regime of domestic-violence governmentality. With its use of color and repetition, *Disturbia* suggests that iconicity is manufactured through reason and feeling. Rihanna's appearance on 20/20 performed an affective citation of the codes of whiteness and femininity, producing her as an empathetic witness. Engulfed within the visual codes of whiteness and femininity, Rihanna embodied Ferreira da Silva's concerns with "matters that take place on the other side of universality" (2001, 421). The idea of race is more than a political-philosophical thesis of the Enlightenment; it is a powerful technological strategy of enlightenment, producing the space, both real and virtual, that negotiates which bodies may enter the domain of justice.

Notes

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1. See especially Shearer-Creman and Winkelmann 2004, chap. 7. For studies of how photography of abused women in medicolegal settings influences trauma narratives, see also Garcia and Sues Kennedy 2003; White and Du Mont 2009.
2. For an analysis of the effects of evidence-based policies, see Guzik 2009.
3. See also Ewen and Ewen 2006; Fusco and Wallis 2003; Tagg 1993.

4. Wexler (2000) analyzes at length an image called *Nursemaid and Her Charge*, produced between 1865 and 1868 by George Cook of Virginia. For an analysis of nursemaid clothing, see Severa 1995.

5. See also Wilderson 2010.

6. In the film, Monroe plays Rose Loomis, the adulterous wife of George Loomis, a military veteran played by the actor Joseph Cotten. Monroe's character and her lover, Patrick, played by Richard Allen, plan to murder George. The aftermath of George's recent stay at an army mental hospital for "battle fatigue" is a notable prefiguration of posttraumatic stress disorder and its connection to war culture. George's disarray animates the onscreen violence between him and Rose and the murder plot conceived by Rose and Patrick. See Hathaway 1953.

7. Gardner and Kleiner 2010; Wilson and Tate Gallery 1991.

8. For an analysis of the Technicolor motion-picture color process, see Brian Winston's *Technologies of Seeing*. Winston offers a critique of the Technicolor process as a racist technology.

9. The *New York Times* reports, "Photographs of bruises or broken furniture, if taken at all, are usually shot with Polaroid cameras. Those snapshots, which are often blurry and fail to make the injuries visible, can take days or even weeks to reach the courts. But with digital photography, evidence that has been practically impossible to gather quickly or gather at all—clear and detailed images of injuries like swollen eyes, bruised cheeks and handprints around the neck—can be transmitted by computer to prosecutors and judges at the earliest stages of a case" (Kershaw 2002).

10. On the "regime of domestic violence governmentality," see Merry 2001; Merry 2002. On the "analytics of raciality," see Ferreira da Silva 2001; Ferreira da Silva 2007.