

The Commodification of Black Culture

Commodification, A Definition

- A commodity is a product that can be bought and sold.
- When someone, their culture, their idea, etc., is co-opted and used for the financial gain of another, that person, culture, idea, etc., has been commodified.
- There are no limits to what can be commodified.
- Slavery was the commodification of a people, their intellectual properties, their culture, etc.



August Wilson,
African American Playwright

August Wilson's Century Cycle

- Jem of the Ocean, 1900s
- Joe Turner's Come and Gone, 1910s
- Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, 1920s
- The Piano Lesson, 1930s
- Seven Guitars, 1940s
- Fences, 1950s
- Two Trains Running, 1960s
- Jitney, 1970s
- King Hedley II, 1980s
- Radio Gulf, 1990s

August Wilson

- Wrote 10 plays that were depictions of Black life in 10 year cycles
- Became known as the Pittsburgh Cycle
- Won countless awards
- Wilson stated that he wanted only Black directors to direct his plays
- Died in 2005
- After his death, one of his plays is revised on Broadway and has a white director.
- What are your thoughts?