



BEDTIME STORIES OF WHITE SUPREMACY

Programmed by Allison Glenn

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Deanalís Resto

**BEDTIME
STORIES
of
WHITE
SUPREMACY**

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 15
5pm

Mana Contemporary
2233 S. Throop Street
Studio #423

WITH
THE GODDESS
LAKSHMI
+HER PET WHITEBOY
and
FEMelanin

* BYOP *
BRING YOUR OWN
PILLOW



BEDTIME STORIES OF WHITE SUPREMACY
November 15, 2015 & December 20, 2015

Performance Document

With production photographs and photographs taken by audience members

Goddess texts written by Maya Mackrandilal and Devi stories written by the individual performers as listed.
All devising work and direction done collectively by FEMelanin.

PROLOGUE

Doors open, “guards” stand watch outside. Every time a white man tries to enter, he is pulled aside and interrogated:



*What's your name?
Who are you with? Can they vouch for you?
Why are you here?
Can I see some ID, please?
What's your occupation?
Where were you born? Are you sure?
What is in your pockets?
You're going to need to submit to a pat-down.
Step over here, please.
Wait, please.*

Inside: Lakshmi sits on her throne with her pet whiteboy at her feet. She is motionless, like a statue, waiting to be awakened.

Other “guards” direct audience members on where to sit

BEDTIME STORIES

“Devis” (all performers minus Lakshmi and pet whiteboy) collectively close the door. They begin walking through the space, reading text off of their bodies.

Enid:

As Enid recites her text, she approaches the goddess and lays down a bright pink strip of cloth that bisects the room diagonally, connecting the feet of the goddess with the door that has just been closed. There is a pleading tone to her voice, but the goddess does not respond.

Cuando era nina caminabamos en el parque. Mi mama, mi hermanita y yo. Un día una camioneta nos grito "go back to Mexico!" No supe que hacer. No supe que decir. Solo te vi. No hice nada. Solo te vi. Perdón por no hacer nada.

(When I was a girl we would walk through the park. My mom, my little sister and I. One day a truck yelled "go back to Mexico!" I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to say. I just looked at you. I didn't do anything. I just looked at you. Sorry for not doing anything.)

All Devis:

One Devi is through line, others echo or hum, as they progress in the poem, they begin to use objects, instruments, and their bodies to create a rhythm that slowly builds to a cacophony.

There is a black woman that lives in my body.

I don't know her name because no one bothered to remember it.

I don't know her name but I know she's here, inside this body—I feel her fingers clawing at my insides, up my throat, past my lips.

I won't let this body be her prison.

I know she's alive because she bore a daughter, and that daughter bore a daughter, and that daughter bore my grandmother, and my grandmother bore my mother, and my mother bore me—each body ripping open to bring another into the world—each opening up a division, one generation carried into the next, unbroken—a kind of immortality.

There is a black woman in this body and I won't let this body be her prison.

There is a black woman in this body and my life is her tribute.

I won't let you make this body her prison.

This final line is repeated, the rhythm increases into a cacophony, then a collective scream, which Lakshmi joins in on. She has been awoken. The scream brings the noise to a close, and Lakshmi speaks.



Lakshmi:

I gotta set the record straight. Some #basic dudebro started this rumor that Vishnu dreams the universe into existence while I massage his fucking feet. Only a man would think that creation involves lying on your ass. Vishnu is asleep alright, I just fucked his brains out, they don't call this pussy Nyquil for nothin. He's sleeping while I do all the work of giving birth to every living thing. Of feeling each life come into being. The infinite rush, the fear, the confusion, the slow dawning of consciousness. Billions of times a day. I do the work of feeling each death. The first time something died I thought my body would rip apart. I screamed for days, until that scream turned into the first song {*A Devi screams behind this line, transforming the scream into notes*}. But yeah, give the napping man all the credit. Typical. He has some "ideas"—which seems to be all you people care about.

You know, there used to be a time when men knew exactly where they came from. There was a time when the only thing people worshipped were the bodies of women *{Devi direction: touch yourself!}*. But men want recognition for the little bits of nothing they have cobbled together and call civilization. Well, here's your credit: all it looks like from here is slavery and death. All these glittering prisons, built with the blood and suffering of my children. The blood and suffering of my body. I'm so bored with your #basic bullshit. *{Lakshmi stands}* I'm ready to burn this mother fucker down. I'm done being the patient mother, thinking that if you keep falling and hitting yourself in the face you'll learn. It's time to be proactive. It's time to cut off some dicks and take some names.

As Lakshmi walks away, Brooklyn takes a seat on the throne, when Lakshmi reaches the end of her monologue, Brooklyn begins her story.

[Brooklyn's Story- told from memory, transcript forthcoming]

All Devis and Lakshmi provide affirmations as Brooklyn tells her story. Like we're at church.

Brooklyn's story ends, water noises begin. Two Devis pull out blue sari from between Brooklyn's legs. More water sounds, then the water motion with the sari. Performers move towards Lakshmi and pet whiteboy as they begin walking forward along the pink ribbon.

Lakshmi:

My sister Saraswati is the embodiment of the purifying waters of knowledge. Knowledge is power, but not like a sword. Knowledge is a rising tide.

Knowledge is an army. It isn't something that can exist in one person, alone and elevated above everyone else. Knowledge can only exist communally, in the intersections between people. If knowledge is hoarded or hidden, it is eventually lost.

Knowledge that purifies, that washes away ignorance, intolerance, bigotry.

During this section, pet whiteboy is washed away by the sari, and Lakshmi returns to her throne solo.



Performers switch to orange sari, Brooklyn is at the back, covers her head with the tail of the sari.

Lakshmi (Trinh T. Min-Ha):

The world's earlier archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from **mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand** *{special motions}*. In the process of storytelling, speaking and listening refer to realities that do not involve just the imagination. The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and **touched** *{hip slap}*. It destroys, brings into life, nurtures. Every woman partakes in the chain of guardianship and transmission.

[...]



{Machine motion}

In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me, neither me nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel greatly responsible for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of the pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. Pleasure in the copy, pleasure in the reproduction. No repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history, and our story repeats itself endlessly despite our persistence in denying it.

[...]

We fear **heights** {sari high up}, we fear the headless, the bottomless, and the boundless. And we are in terror of letting ourselves be **engulfed** {drop sari on head} by the muteness depths. This is why we keep on doing **violence** {trying to get out of the sari} to words: to tame and cook the wild-raw, to adopt the vertiginously infinite. **Truth does not make sense** {stop}; it exceeds meaning and exceeds measure. It exceeds all regimes of truth. So, when we insist on telling **over and over and over and over again** {arms back and forth}, we insist on repetition in recreation (and vice-versa). On distributing the story into smaller proportions {orange sari behind throne covering bodies} that will correspond to the capacity of vision of our eyes, the capacity of absorption of our mouths, the capacity of bearing of our bodies {slowly revealing face and body, finally dropping the sari on the floor}.

Lakshmi hands book to Deanalis, walks along pink ribbon to collect pet whiteboy.

Other Devis are little girls, running around playing tag, then sitting down for story time.

Deanalís:

When she was born, her grandmother rushed out to alert the rest of us in the waiting area.

"She's here!"

"What does she look like?" Someone asked.

"She looks...White."

When she was almost four, her mother posted a video of her dancing in the kitchen to Aventura, with the caption: "Showing off her dance moves. She truly does have some Puerto Rican in her. Love her free spirit. ♥"

I feel the rage of Guabancex flood my being.

{Devis become the Hurricane}

The "one whose fury destroys everything" wants to bring the hurricane down on their asses for not paying proper tribute.

They've forgotten the roots.

Guabancex doesn't like to be forgotten.

or ignored.

But they're so unprepared for that storm, that chaos.

Yúcahu, the father, says it isn't fair to them.

Fine.

I won't leave my niece motherless, as I was.

So I redirect the storm to the mountain peak.

again.

{Devis sit back down}

Some.

Some Puerto Rican.

If by some, you mean HALF, then sure. I guess that's accurate.

Did you ever doubt? Because if you did, if you do, I have some new concerns about your marriage to my brother.

But I don't really.

Because she didn't ever.

Yes, her mother is white.

But her father is Puerto Rican, and I wish that her mother and her family and their community would stop forgetting half of who my niece is. Stop acting like it's such a fucking blessing that she has blonde hair and light skin.

Because she still has her father's eyes, rich like soil.

Because she was always going to be a blessing, no matter what she looked like.

Why are you grateful that a part of her identity has become invisible before she even has a chance to know it?

Will you tokenize your child every time she behaves in a way that you deem "non-white?" As if the blood of our ancestors is only there for novelty. For your entertainment.

Mi Sobrina; I want you to know that you could have been the color of earth,

or sand,

of the ocean,

or the night sky,

and you would have been exquisite.

Just as free-spirited.

That kitchen floor would have felt the same joy in your feet, the same love you have for that music.

Yes I understand we live in a world where you will be safer now because of your exterior whiteness. But I also want to make sure you understand that you are no more special, no more valuable, no more entitled to basic human rights than your unborn cousins, who will surely have beautiful brown skin, than your father, with hair like lamb's wool, than your tía whose features have confused white folks since the beginning of time.

Than your new baby brother, whose future visage is TBD because he basically still looks like a potato.

If you keep that fair complexion as you grow older, you'll have to learn about the responsibility that comes with it. Tía will teach you. Guabancex and Atabey and Yúcahu will teach you. Because right now, it seems like your mama sure won't.

Devis play tag, grab the book and bring it back to Lakshmi

Lakshmi:

{walking back to throne with pet whiteboy in tow}



When I'm Lakshmi, Durga is my sister. But you have to remember that I am also Maha-Lakshmi, the great Goddess, and we are all one. Maha-Lakshmi gives birth to all knowledge, all life, she is the cause of creation. She is ever-present as Shakti, present in every living thing. My body is your body. Forever. *{sit}*

As Laskhmi tells the story, it is acted out by the Devis

At the beginning of time, I was Durga, the invincible one, birthing the world into existence. But Durga was also created in a time of need. Long ago, a great demon unleashed a reign of terror on the earth. When the gods tried to intervene, the demon defeated them, banishing them from heaven.

The gods convened in a grove of trees, narrating the tale of their woe. As they spoke, their anger became light that gathered in their mouths. Soon the light became so powerful that it poured past their lips, gathering together into a bright orb at the center of their circle. The orb grew with each word, each breath, more powerful, until finally it took the form of a woman—Durga.



The gods each gave her mighty weapons of divine power: Shiva gave his trident, Vishnu his mace, Indra his thunderbolt. Holding the weapons in her many arms, she roamed like thunder across the earth, tectonic plates shifting with each step, confronting the demon's entire army, slaying them with ease. His warriors vanquished, the great demon had no choice but to finally enter the field of battle. He tried every trick he could think of, transforming into different animals, each more fearsome than the last. Durga defeated each form in turn. After ten grueling days of battle, Durga decapitated the demon with her trident, and balance was restored to the world.



The moral of this story: men fuck up the world and then women have to fix it.

Transition moment where the Devis create music with the vibrators and humming while Alyssa removes her Durga outfit and Lakshmi becomes Kali.

Alyssa reads from the book:



Kali, the very essence of time, which destroys and creates, has been present since the birth of the universe. She pervades all existence. She is the root. But sometimes she has to take form, in times when the only thing that can right the world is her unstoppable fury. One such time happened when Durga and her army were fighting a fearsome demon who threatened to subsume the world in suffering. As they fight, they realize that every drop of the demon's blood that hits the earth becomes a duplicate of himself, and soon they are fighting an army of him.

Consumed by the heat of battle, Durga becomes so furious that from her furrowed brow springs forth Kali, carrying a skull-topped staff, wearing a garland of skulls and clad in a tiger's skin. She attacks the demon, and as Durga fights him, Kali licks up all his blood so that it cannot touch the ground. When Kali drinks all his blood, he is finally vanquished.

The moral of this story: Do not fuck with us, or we will fuck your shit up.

The Devis, along with Lakshmi/Kali break out into a song, titled “Bedtime Stories of White Supremacy” with a reprisal of the opening text (there is a black woman in my body).

Dance party! Audience members are invited to join in.



Video installation with performance remnants and rehearsal video at Mana Contemporary Nov-Dec 2015