Michael McMillan: “Brother to Brother: Black Men Loving Black Men is a Revolutionary Act”

Abstract

Black men are represented as a more body than mind, which recycles a colonial fantasy based on fear and desire and casts an ontological shadow in the formation of diasporic black masculinities. How does this affect the emotional landscape of boys becoming men? How is this acted out on a bodily and psychic level? How this affect black men loving themselves and each other? There is trauma in the social texts of every life for black men, not simply as an individuated experience in response to a specific traumatic event as expounded in hegemonic trauma theory, but also as a process where racial and colonial violence is ongoing in the everyday. Patriarchy and historic black masculine performative strategies for survival in a hyper-masculine ‘cool posture’ that like a black hole emits no emotion means the affect of colonial trauma process implodes or explodes. Along this spectrum of responses to colonial trauma process, victimhood has been resisted in the struggle for decolonisation through narratives that interrogate how histories of colonialism have been constructed. The unspeakable has been made speakable in the emotional, spiritual, political recuperative power of black diasporic culture forms and practices, from the blues to reggae, from poetry to theatre, from literature to visual arts, from the oral tradition to style-fashion-dress. This mixed-media presentation uses a critical praxis that conjoins theory on black masculinities including Franz Fanon, Kobena Mercer, Hilary Beckles, Robert Farris Thompson, Essex Hemphill with material from my practice including my play Invisible (1993), a devised performance piece and workshop project Brother to Brother (1996) and Master Juba (2006).