Assignment Inspired by
Facing Our Truth: Six Short Plays in Response to the Trayvon Martin Shooting
CALS 165B: Latino Art, Performance, and Social Justice
Due Friday Mar. 13 in a box outside Dr. M’s and Dr. Lopez’s office

CHOOSE TWO of the following four prompts and write responses that are 2-3 double-spaced pages each (for a total of 4-6 pages). Please print your essay and use 11-12-point font and 1-1.5 inch margins. Make sure to staple your essay and include page numbers. If you reference some sort of text (article, book, film/video, song or album, etc.) make sure you cite properly and include a bibliography/works cited section at the end of your essay using Chicago Style, which you can review here: http://libguides.sonoma.edu/content.php?pid=256245&sid=2145487

1. Violent injury and homicide occur at significantly higher rates among young African Americans and Latinos compared to whites. African Americans and Latinos also live disproportionately in neighborhoods where poverty and violent-crime rates are high, and are much more likely to be killed by police officers. Given this, many black and brown youth do not feel safe on a daily basis. Do you feel safe in your community? Describe why your community feels safe or unsafe. Does the presence of police make you feel more safe or less safe? Reflect on how your own position in terms of race and socioeconomic privilege—as well as possibly gender and sexual orientation—may affect your experience. How do you think it feels not to feel physically safe everyday? What are the psychological ramifications? How does this affect behavior? You can answer this by sharing your own direct experience, that of people you know, or through your empathetic imagination (i.e. “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes”).

2. If applicable, describe an experience you’ve had or observed where a young person of color was judged and assumed to be threatening or criminal or “up to no good”? Where do you think this bias comes from? Media? Longstanding history? If you’ve never observed or experienced this firsthand, what do you think accounts for the fact that so many blacks and Latinos attest to being “racially profiled” in this way? Why do you think oftentimes people who haven’t experienced this have such a hard time believing racial profiling even exists (i.e. “If that young man was simply behaving better, he wouldn't have attracted trouble”)?

3. Compare/contrast the way contemporary young people of color are perceived with pachucos, pachucas, and zoot suiters of the 1940s. When racial profiling occurs today, is the perception that someone appears “menacing” based solely upon skin color, or are other cultural markers important (i.e. dress, behavior, ways of speaking, etc.), as it was with pachucos? In other words, why are such factors as the hoodie, sagged pants, loud rap music (see the case of Jordan Davis) often invoked in incidents of racial violence against youth? Do you think urban/hip-hop youth culture is stigmatized? Does it deserve to be? Do think that changing ways of dress, behavior, and talk to fit white middle-class norms would keep young people safer?

4. Describe 1-2 of the Facing Our Truth short plays that impacted you the most. Explain why it impacted you.
Thought-provoking Quotes from Course Readings:

**Ta Nehisi-Coates, “Trayvon Martin and the Irony of American Justice”**
“The injustice inherent in the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman was not authored by a jury given a weak case. The jury's performance may be the least disturbing aspect of this entire affair. The injustice was authored by a country which has taken as its policy, for the lionshare of its history, to erect a pariah class. The killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman is not an error in programming. It is the correct result of forces we set in motion years ago and have done very little to arrest”

“Our sense of self is incredible. We believe ourselves to have inherited all of Jefferson's love of freedom, but none of his affection for white supremacy.”

**Ta Nehisi-Coates, “Barack Obama, Ferguson, and the Evidence of Things Unsaid”**
“For a creedal country like America, this poses a problem—in nearly every major American city one can find a population of people whose very existence, whose very history, whose very traditions, are an assault upon this country's nationalist instincts. Black people are the chastener of their own country. Their experience says to America, ‘You wear the mask.’”

**Robin D.G. Kelley, “The U.S. v. Trayvon Martin”**
“The point is that justice was always going to elude Trayvon Martin, not because the system failed, but because it worked. Martin died and Zimmerman walked because our entire political and legal foundations were built on an ideology of settler colonialism—an ideology in which the protection of white property rights was always sacrosanct; predators and threats to those privileges were almost always black, brown, and red; and where the very purpose of police power was to discipline, monitor, and contain populations rendered a threat to white property and privilege.”

“Unless we challenge the entire criminal justice system and mass incarceration, there will be many more Trayvon Martins and a constant dread that one of our children might be next. As long as we continue to uphold and defend a system designed to protect white privilege, property and personhood, and render black and brown people predators, criminals, illegals, and terrorists, we will continue to attend funerals and rallies; watch in stunned silence as another police officer or vigilante is acquitted after taking another young life; allow our government to kill civilians in our name; and inherit a society in which our prisons and jails become the largest, most diverse institutions in the country.”

**Robert P. Jones, “Self Segregation: Why It’s So Hard for Whites to Understand Ferguson”**
“But the chief obstacle to having an intelligent, or even intelligible, conversation across the racial divide is that on average white Americans live in communities that face far fewer problems and talk mostly to other white people.”
Mia McKenzie, “On Ferguson Protests, the Destruction of Things, and What Violence Really Is (and Isn’t)”

“In the wake of the Darren Wilson decision and the ensuing protests, I’ve been hearing the word ‘violence’ thrown around by journalists and social media commentators alike. It’s strange to me, because when these people use the term violence, they’re not talking about what happened to any of the people named above. The brutal and unnecessary killing of unarmed Black women, children and men by police officers isn’t called “violence” by any of these people. They’re also not talking about protestors of this police violence being tear-gassed or shot with rubber bullets by police for exercising their right to peaceably assemble. That, to these journalists and Twitter trolls, isn’t ‘violence,’ either. What is “violence” to these people? Property damage. Looting. The destruction of things.”

“Narratives of anti-blackness, however, tell us that Black people are never victimized. We are only the perpetrators of violence. That means that even when we are the ones being victimized by the state, or by individual white people wielding the power of the state (which they do, often), we are still seen as the villains, the criminals, the animals, the violent perpetrators. There is no space in the narrative for our innocence, even our children’s innocence, ever. So we can be brutalized by the state with impunity. This is violence.”

Carol Anderson, “Ferguson Isn’t About Black Rage”

“When we look back on what happened in Ferguson, Mo., during the summer of 2014, it will be easy to think of it as yet one more episode of black rage ignited by yet another police killing of an unarmed African American male. But that has it precisely backward. What we've actually seen is the latest outbreak of white rage. Sure, it is cloaked in the niceties of law and order, but it is rage nonetheless...[T]he real rage smolders in meetings where officials redraw precincts to dilute African American voting strength or seek to slash the government payrolls that have long served as sources of black employment. It goes virtually unnoticed, however, because white rage doesn't have to take to the streets and face rubber bullets to be heard. Instead, white rage carries an aura of respectability and has access to the courts, police, legislatures and governors, who cast its efforts as noble, though they are actually driven by the most ignoble motivations.”