

The Spectacle of Blackness: Reconceptualizing the Black Experience in America



To be Black in America is to bear the weight of history while forging a path forward. We navigate a world that often seeks to define, confine, and undermine Black existence—through systemic racism, economic inequality, and cultural erasure. *The Spectacle of Blackness* is a narrative of Black endurance, resistance, and rebuilding in the face of perpetual adversity. This spectacle and reality is rooted in the mother working twice as hard for half the pay, the students who navigate institutions never created for them, and the activists tirelessly advocating against systems designed to silence them. We acknowledge the grief entrenched in loss, the burden of expectations, and the exhaustion of proving one's worth in spaces that undermine Black humanity. Yet, the reality of Blackness is simultaneously conceptualized in the ways we persist—through community, innovation, and unshakable credence that we deserve more than this nation has offered us.

This edition of the *Vanderbilt University African American and Diaspora Studies Undergraduate Research Journal* seeks to highlight these simultaneous truths. Our contributors examine how Black people face oppression yet rise above it. Through historical analysis, cultural critique, and personal storytelling, *The Spectacle of Blackness* tells a story of hardship but, more importantly, one of power. Use this journal to grapple with the undeniable strength of Black people; the reality of Blackness is not just about what we endure; it's about how we overcome.

Miguel Kamgaing Kamgaing, Hananeel Morinville, and Gabrielle White, Guest Editors