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Rihanna: Diasporic Citizen, Bajan Daughter, American Superstar

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Rihanna: Diasporic Citizen, Bajan Daughter, American Superstar

Presentation by Dr. Heather Russell
at the Caribbean Studies
Association, Grenada 2013

OUTLINE

- DEFINING DIASPORIC CITIZENSHIP
- GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN BARBADIAN/CARIBBEAN RECEPTIONS OF RIHANNA
- STATE INTERESTS IN “BRAND RIHANNA”
- RIHANNA’S OWN PUBLIC ARTICULATIONS OF NATIONAL BELONGING
- GOOD GIRL GONE BAD : RIHANNA’S SELF-FASHIONING PRE HER DOMESTIC ASSAULT [SLIDE]
- RIHANNA’S SELF-FASHIONING POST HER DOMESTIC ASSAULT

Defining DIASPORIC CITIZENSHIP

“The question of diasporic citizenship, occupies the interstices of the nation-state and other forms of politicized community, for being a diaspora citizen entails culturally and politically aligning oneself with communities beyond the borders of the nation-state...in addition to negotiating legal and cultural positionalities in relation to this very nation state.” Alex Weheliye

DIASPORIC CITIZENSHIP cont.

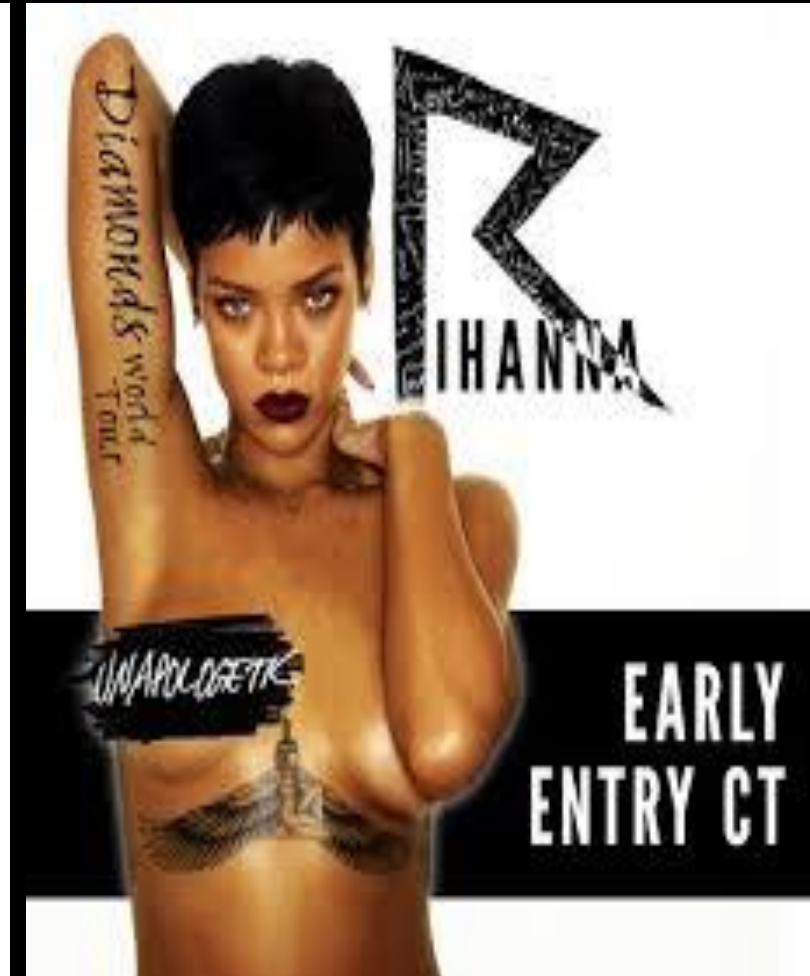
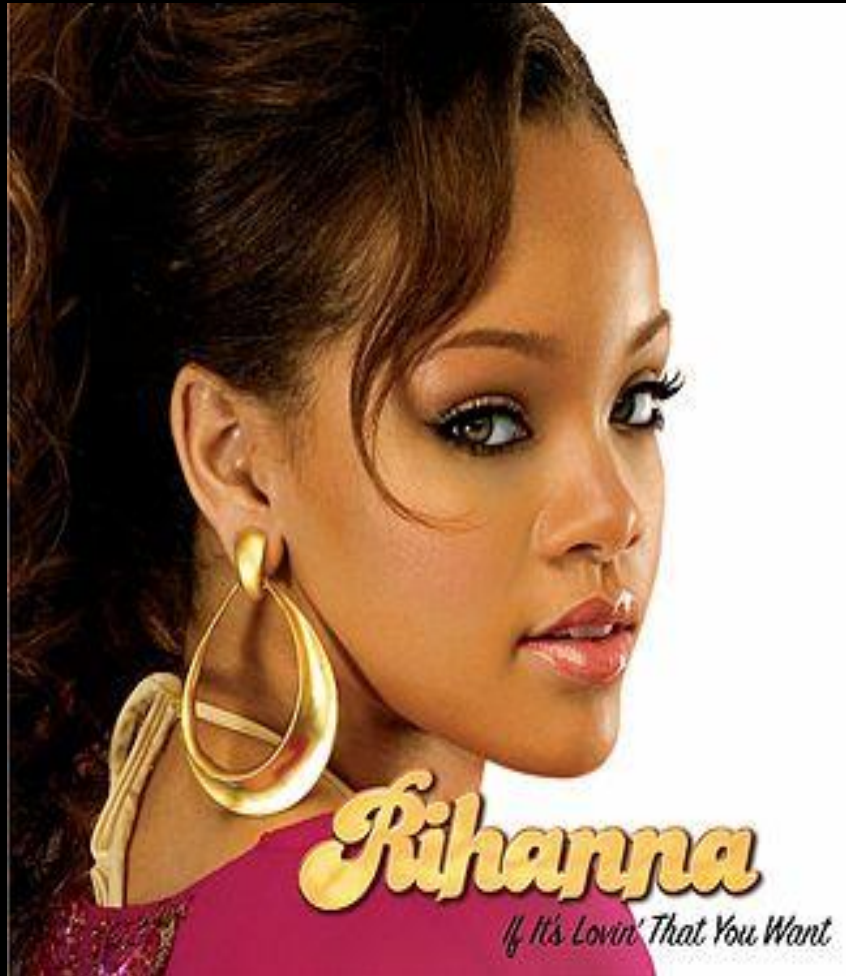
According to Weheliye: “the national and the transnational are quasidialectical partners in the movement of globalization...”

Thus “the phrase “diasporic citizenship” excavates the tension between the national and the transnational rather than one subsuming the other” - Weheliye

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN BARBADIAN/CARIBBEAN RECEPTIONS OF RIHANNA

- She dresses too provocatively
- She's a terrible role model for young girls
- She has been corrupted by Hollywood
- She is a young girl who needs protection
- She too sexually promiscuous and open

RIHANNA DEPICTED...



STATE INTERESTS IN “BRAND RIHANNA”

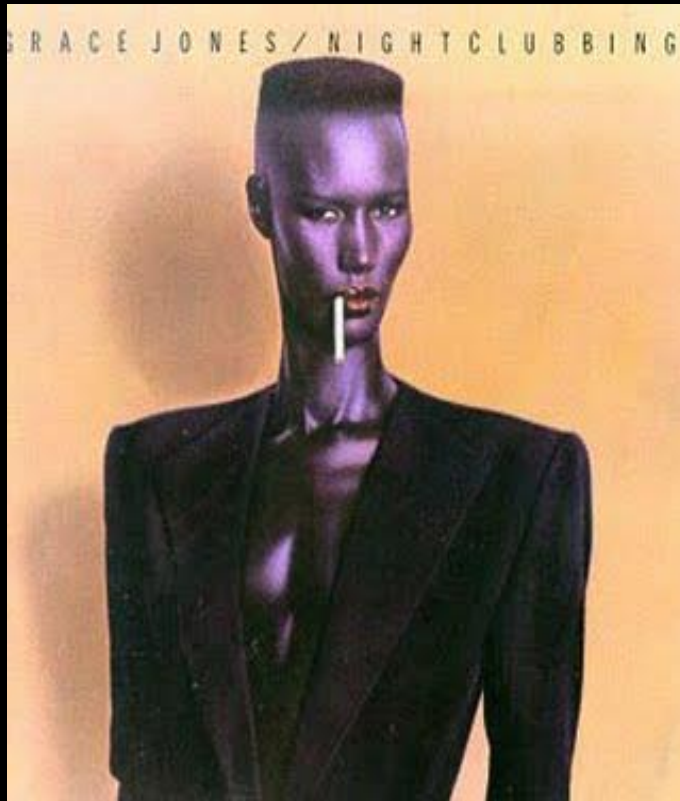
- Named Face of Barbados Tourism Authority
- On 22 February 2008, one month after assuming his post as Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable David Thompson named Rihanna, “Honourary Youth and Cultural Ambassador” of Barbados.

RIHANNA'S OWN PUBLIC ARTICULATIONS OF NATIONAL BELONGING

- Upon winning the Grammy in 2008, Rihanna's concluding remark in her acceptance speech, "Barbados I love you, we got one", enunciated with unmistakable Barbados.
- Branding Barbados: use of Trident on album covers and in music videos
- Filming music videos in Barbados
- Oprah Winfrey interview conducted in Barbados, featuring a tour
- Final leg of concert tour ended in Barbados (2012)

RIHANNA'S SELF-FASHIONING POST HER DOMESTIC ASSAULT

GRACE JONES
Album Cover (1981)



Rihanna, (2009)



“Rihanna pulls a Grace Jones for Italian Vogue”



Rated R (2009)



DIASPORIC CITIZENSHIP again...

Entails negotiating
“legal and cultural
positionalities in
relation to this very
nation state.”

Current concerns in
Barbados:

- Is she an appropriate national symbol
- Where does she pay taxes?
- How can she stimulate the Barbados economy further?