Exploring Detroit’s Community through the Three-Play Cycle “Detroit Projects”

Dominique Morisseau
WHO IS DOMINIQUE?
“DOMINIQUE’S WORK IS A MIX OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS MEETS AUGUST WILLIAMS MEETS LORRAINE HANSBERRY”

—Blair Underwood
The Detroit Projects
A Love Song for Detroit

- A three-play cycle of Detroit concerns the rising and falling of Detroit, three eras in Detroit that were critical in changing the landscape of the city.

**Paradise Blue (1949)**
- Paradise Valley/Black Bottom
- Urban Renewal

**Detroit ’67**
- 1967 Rebellion

**Skeleton Crew (2008)**
- Recession
- factories closing
What is Morisseau’s muse?

- Conversations in communities and the people that she is writing about.
- The Power of Music
- The desire to make history humane.
  - https://youtu.be/H9c2zjByA44
The Detroit Projects
A Love Song for Detroit

What inspired Morisseau to write the Detroit Projects?

Pearl Cleage’s plays

August Wilson’s 10-Play Century Cycle
Paradise Valley/Black Bottom Historical Facts

- a place viewed as freedom.
- an area where blacks could own homes and enjoy nightlife.
- In 1949, Albert Cobo was just elected as Mayor.
- 1949 was the year when the Housing Act was passed
- eventually lead to wiping out Detroit’s thriving Black business community called Paradise Valley.
Detroit ‘67 Historical Facts

• 12th Street Riots/The Detroit Race Rebellion in summer of 1967

• was one of the most violent urban revolts in the 20th century

• an immediate response to police brutality but underlying conditions included:
  • segregated housing & schools
  • rising black
  • unemployment
• was a company was the most successful African-American owned record company of the time.

• gave optimistic energy that helped unify the community during divisive times.
2002-2008
• Under Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, the city's credit ratings plummeted.

September 2008
• Kilpatrick pleads guilty to obstruction of justice charges and leaves office.
Skeleton Crew Historical Facts

• The city's population peaked at 1.86 million in 1950. The 2012 U.S. Census showed the city with about 700,000 residents.

• Factories are closing

• loss of jobs

• etc…
“Fight another day…”

- Reggie from Skeleton Crew
QUESTIONS?