

The Souls of Black Girls

Written, Edited & Produced by
Daphne S. Valerius
© 2006

Synopsis:

The Souls of Black Girls is a provocative news documentary that takes a critical look at media images—how they are instituted, established and controlled. The documentary also examines the relationship between the historical and existing media images of women of color and raises the question of whether they may be suffering from a self-image disorder as a result of trying to attain the standards of beauty that are celebrated in media images. The documentary features candid interviews with young women discussing their self-image *and* social commentary from Actresses **Regina King** and **Jada Pinkett Smith**, PBS *Washington Week* Moderator **Gwen Ifill**, Rapper/Political Activist **Chuck D**, and Cultural Critic **Michaela Angela Davis**, among others. *The Souls of Black Girls* is a piece that attempts to provoke honest dialogue and critical thinking among women of color about media images and our present condition—internally and externally.

Background:

The birth of the documentary, *The Souls of Black Girls*, came as a result of the personal complexities faced by its producer Daphne S. Valerius growing up as a young black girl in the United States. Like all Americans black, white and others, there is a need to be accepted as an individual within American culture and society. However as a young black woman in American society, the need for acceptance comes at the high price of manipulating one's physical appearance and losing an understanding and appreciation of oneself.

Encouraged by mentor Dr. Lez Edmonds and the Ronald McNair Scholars Program at St. John's University, Ms. Valerius compiled research that examined the relationship between media images past and present with the self-image of women of color entitled, *Self-esteem and Self-confidence: The Effects of Mass Media on Women of Color...Forgotten*.

While pursuing her graduate studies at Emerson College, Ms. Valerius continued to examine how media images influenced one's self-image. And under the guidance of supervising producers Janet Kolodzy, Melinda Robins and other members of the Emerson College community, *The Souls of Black Girls* was born.

Personal Message from Producer, Daphne S. Valerius:

On a personal level, the production of *The Souls of Black Girls* marks the end of my lifelong journey to be accepted as a beautiful Black woman within our society— but it also marks a beginning. *The Souls of Black Girls* marks the beginning for my sisters, my aunts, my nieces, my cousins and my daughters who stand beside me and will have a better understanding of how and why media images affect our self-image. It also marks the beginning for my brothers, my uncles, my nephews, my cousins and my sons to begin taking a stand against the degrading, misogynistic and sexist media images of women of color that continue to dominate the media landscape. As women of color within our society, collectively and individually, we are all suffering internally from a self-image disorder.

And it's our responsibility to accept, define, love and promote ourselves.



Daphne Valerius

Producer – Reporter – TV Host -- Actress

Meet Daphne Valerius, one to watch as the era of women of color redefining the landscape of media images –in front and behind the camera—begins to unfold.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Valerius had dreams of becoming a Flyy Girl on FOX's *In Living Color* or a back-up dancer for singer Janet Jackson. But the relocation of her family to the state of Rhode Island unknowingly placed her on a path towards embarking on a journey to define her *own* destiny. The daughter of Haitian immigrants and the eldest of three children, graduated from Cranston High School East knowing that pursuing an education at any cost was the only way to redefine life as she knew it for herself and future generations of her family.

The recipient of several academic scholarships, Valerius went onto St. John's University in New York majoring in Mass Communications and marked the beginning of her production career, as the Director and Co-Producer of a play entitled, *The Revolution Continues: Changing Times Call for Changing Minds* during her sophomore year. Graduating Magna Cum Laude and a Ronald McNair Scholar, under the guidance and mentorship of Dr. Lez Edmond, Valerius studied media images in a research project entitled, *Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence: The Effects of Mass Media on Women of Color...Forgotten*. This research marked the beginning of Valerius' critical examination of her personal self-image issues and how they had been influenced by society, specifically media images. Upon graduation she immediately enrolled into the Broadcast Journalism Graduate Program at Emerson College.

Never losing sight of her aspirations to "perform" in front of the camera, Valerius completed acting work in independent film projects such as *The Plague*, *Daddy's Girl* and more recently, *Kwanzaa with the Jones's*. It was also during this foray into acting that Valerius was awarded an Associated Press Award for Public Affairs for the production of a news program entitled, *The Film Life*, a television show that took a look at the entertainment industry in and around Boston, MA.

This also marked a time when Valerius' critical and socially relevant undergraduate research came to life as the foundation of her award-winning final Master's project, the documentary *The Souls of Black Girls*. For Valerius the production of *The Souls of Black Girls*, which she also wrote, edited and produced, marks the beginning for "my sisters, my aunts, my nieces, my cousins and my daughters who stand beside me to have a better understanding of why and how media images affect our self-image and self-esteem."

Talented, passionate and committed Valerius aspires to influence, inspire and uplift women of color through positive, educational and healing television and film projects—in front and behind the camera. A member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated, Valerius remains active within her community, travels throughout the country to promote the message of self-love and self-acceptance depicted in *The Souls of Black Girls* while focusing on her upcoming production projects.

"I will always remember Halle Berry's acceptance speech for her Academy Award, 'it's for every nameless, faceless woman of color that now has a chance.' that was my inspiration."

The Souls of Black Girls

Written, Edited & Produced by
Daphne S. Valerius
© 2006

FACT SHEET:

- The name of the documentary, *The Souls of Black Girls*, is derived from the book, *The Souls of Black Folk* published by W.E.B Dubois in 1903.
- *The Souls of Black Girls* has been in the making since 2003 as it was based on the undergraduate research of the producer entitled, *Self-esteem and Self-confidence: The Effects of Mass Media on Women of Color...Forgotten*.
- Rapper Chuck D became affiliated with the production of *The Souls of Black Girls* through Dr. Lez Edmonds as the undergraduate research was being compiled for the fulfillment of the Ronald McNair Scholars Program at St. John's University.
- Actress Regina King became affiliated with the production of *The Souls of Black Girls* as a result of the personal/mentoring relationship that she maintained with producer, Daphne S. Valerius after meeting at the African American Women in Film and Cinema Film Festival.
- *The Souls of Black Girls* was originally supposed to be a fifteen minute documentary based on interviews with young women of color from different ethnic backgrounds including Asian and Latino women.
- In addition to writing, editing and producing *The Souls of Black Girls*, Daphne S. Valerius single-handedly shot all interview and b-roll (background) footage.

The Souls of Black Girls

Written, Edited & Produced by
Daphne S. Valerius
© 2006

Supervising Producers

Janet Kolodzy
Melinda Robins

Music Provided

by
Marcos Morales

Principal Photography

Claudia Saimbert

Additional Graphics

Casey Quinn
Tim MacArthur

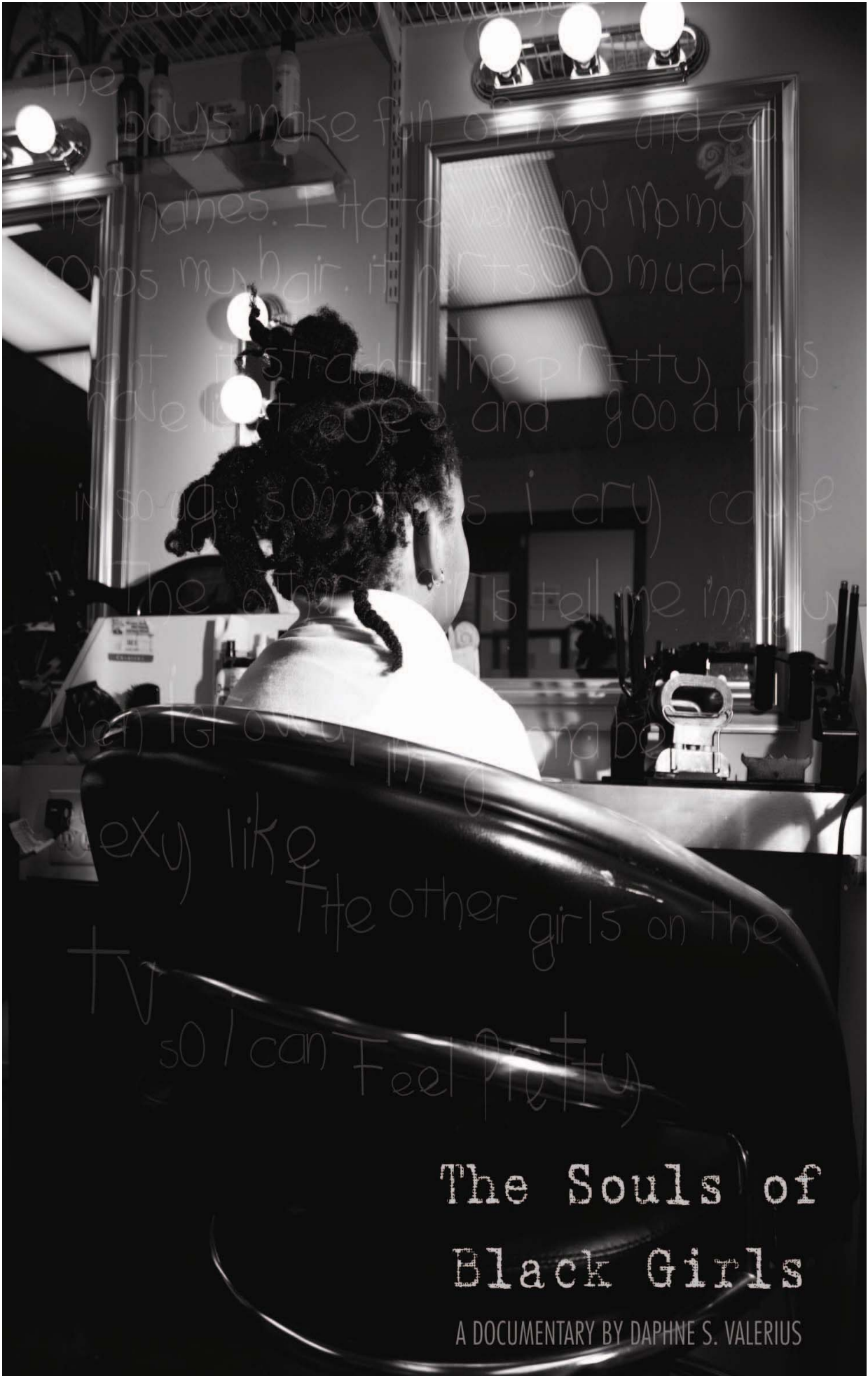
Audio/Mix & Re-recording Engineer

Katerina Dejkoska

The Interviews

(In Alphabetical Order)

Darlise Blount, *106 & Park* Producer, BET
Chuck D, Rapper/Political Activist
Michaela Angela Davis, Cultural Critic
Dr. Lez Edmonds, African-American Historian
Pamela Edwards, ESSENCE Fashion & Beauty Features Editor
C'Nay Hines
Gwen Ifill, *Washington Week* Moderator, PBS
Juanita Jennings, Actress
Regina King, Actress
Katie Magrane, Youth Advocate
Amelia Marshall, Actress
Kadija Minah, Producer
Kenyetta Smith, Screenwriter
Jada Pinkett Smith, Actress



The Souls of
Black Girls

A DOCUMENTARY BY DAPHNE S. VALERIUS