

The Absolute Right to Exclude: Reflections on and Implications of Cheryl Harris' *Whiteness as Property*

Kandis Williams
Cassandra Press

LAXART is pleased to present *The Absolute Right to Exclude: Reflections on and Implications of Cheryl Harris' "Whiteness as Property,"* a Cassandra Press exhibition. Founded in 2016, Cassandra is an extension of the multi-disciplinary practice of Kandis Williams. What began as a publishing platform to highlight texts on issues of race, feminism, power, and aesthetics, Cassandra has since grown to become a multi-faceted educational resource, hosting virtual workshops and organizing artist residencies in addition to its publishing program.

Over the past five years, Cassandra has published thirty-one Readers. Organized around a central theme, these Xeroxed, spiral-bound anthologies are a healthy serving of theory, history, sociology and criticism by a panoply of intellectuals and activists. An unabashedly heady and pedagogical affair, these volumes can be intimidating, prompting the question, *who is the mind behind these publications?*

While its core subject is race, this exhibition is also a portrait of Williams as a reader. Toward that end, the gallery's walls function much like pages containing text from two sources: passages from legal theorist Cheryl Harris' seminal 1993 essay, "Whiteness as Property" placed alongside a towering list of URLs that, all totaled, represent a running discourse on race, gender, and power. Switching between legal history/theory and an index of clickbait headlines, the texts inform one another in ways that are at once humorous, harmonious, and antagonistic.

Race, however, is as much a visual as it is a textual discourse. The gallery's center wall features hundreds of images culled from on-line sources ranging from Tik Tok to the Smithsonian website. A byproduct of digital culture, this bustling collage of pop culture and historical images reflects the heterogeneous nature of a discourse whose dramas range from the lowest

comedy to the highest tragedy.

Williams began *Cassandra* after being both alarmed at the rise of right wing authoritarianism and inspired by a new audience coalescing around Black Lives Matter. With titles such as *Porn and Power in California*; *Faces of the Colonizer*; *RE BLACK TWITTER*; and *Medea: Suicide, Free Will, and Self Determination*, *Cassandra* remains a platform to explore academic and aesthetic conversations. As part of this exhibition, LAXART is reprinting six readers and has commissioned two new ones: *Black Journalism*, and *Cassandra's* most ambitious reader to date, the three volume set *Cultural Property, Images and Ownership*. We will highlight these in a reading room featuring signature shelves that are a nod to the defunct Berlin-based PROGRAM, Initiative for Art and Architecture Collaborations.

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