

Doctoral Recipient finds archive of performance at Tyler Perry Studios

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The Ph.D. students in our Moving Image Studies program arrive with a passion for Film, Media & Theatre. Some of our students, such as Shady Radical (Ph.D. – Moving Image Studies, '22), have already turned this passion into a profession, yet they come to our program to understand their craft more thoroughly and research ways of improving it.



Like many undergraduates, Radical had a difficult time deciding what her future would hold after school. “After I graduated from NYU, I wasn’t sure what I was going to do,” Radical explained. “My mentor at the time told me that I should move to Atlanta because there were a lot more opportunities. So, I moved here in 2011 and took a job with Tyler Perry Studios. I was working in the film and tv industry making a lot of money, but I didn’t have a life. I started to get depressed.”

Being unfulfilled in her role, Radical knew she wanted to make a change. After having a conversation with one of the most famous film makers in the world, Radical decided on furthering her education at Georgia State University.

“I started talking to Mr. Perry about establishing an archive for the studios,” Radical said. “He expressed interest and gave me the opportunity to do so. Once he said that, I realized that I needed to learn as much as I could about film, television, theatre, preservation, and archiving. That’s when I applied to Georgia State’s Ph.D. program in order to train myself to be what the studio would need.”

Radical said coming to Georgia State was a no-brainer for her. She knew the faculty and staff were people that would help her reach her goals. “It was Alessandra (Raengo). It was being involved with *liquid blackness* and being in Atlanta. I think one of the really cool things at Georgia State is that there are a lot of practitioners that are working there. So, it was a community that really respected the craft.”

Radical’s dissertation, *The Radical Archive of Preservation: From Act to Archives in Black Production Culture*, applies black performance theory to an examination of the work habits and creative practices that she observed in her work at Tyler Perry Studios.

STUDENTS FACULTY & STAFF ALUMNI  

“My idea of the Radical Archives comes from Fred Moten’s book “In the Break” and Cedric Robinson’s book “Black Marxism,” Radical explained. “So, the way they think about resistance and performance as a part of the experience of blackness, instead of thinking about how there have been times in our history where black people have had to submit, they say black people have never ever submitted. We’ve always resisted, and there were different moments and different situations that required us to perform differently.” Radical identifies the ways that this tradition is apparent in Black creative practices, such as within Tyler Perry Studios.

Radical says she learned a lot about herself as well during her time in the Ph.D. program. “I learned that I am a lot stronger than I think I am,” Radical said.” “Over the course of these seven years, I got married, had a child, got divorced, and then graduated. The one thing that I admired about the staff is that they didn’t require me to debase myself in order to keep going or move ahead. They supported my academic work and they always kept things professional. Despite everything I was going through personally and dealing with the academic rigor of the course, they always were willing to help and made me feel welcome. Ethan Tussey, Jennifer Barker, Greg Smith, and Lenay Guyay, were great mentors for me, and they’ve been amazing. I was able to stay focused and feel supported with them being on my team.

Upon completing her dissertation and graduating, Radical accepted a position at Spelman College as an Assistant Professor in the Art History program. Radical says she believes that her time at Georgia State prepared her for her new role. “I very much think it was because of my teaching experience. I taught at Georgia State for almost seven years. When I applied for the program, I didn’t know I would have to teach, but it definitely helped me get to where I am today.”