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The Language of Film

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The Language of Film

by alrick brown

I teach the language of film -- screenwriting, directing, mise-en-scene, text and subtext on the page and on the screen. I teach directors to listen with their ears and their hearts. I teach film as research into life, literature, people and culture. I teach public speaking as students learn to share their ideas. I teach the history of the Black image in film, so students understand the power of an image to build up or to break down. I have influenced the voices of many emerging filmmakers. None of this, however, would be possible without my English Language Arts Education. I teach because I was taught the power of words and the power of my own voice.

When I was studying for my Ed M., a professor introduced me to storytelling as a vehicle for teaching. She changed my life. At the core of my storytelling practice is a tradition older than the title of “teacher.” It is that of griot. Teaching filmmakers I am also the teacher of the next generation of griots who, with their stories, will educate, influence and pass on culture to others.

I teach students that the foundation of their stories, every story, or blockbuster film is the word. Universes are built on these words. To understand the word and how to communicate it is to understand the power that each student possesses. It is to understand Language Arts. Understanding the word or the image makes one literate. In the future, film literacy must be integral because what we watch has such a powerful influence over how we see others, how we see ourselves and how we see the world. These images have the power to make us hate or love. I teach the language of film so that we choose love.

alrick brown is a filmmaker and educator. He has found his calling writing, directing and producing narrative and documentary films focused on issues affecting the world at large. He graduated from Rutgers University with a BA in English and an Ed. M., where he has taught undergraduate courses on the African American image in cinema. He received his MFA from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, where he later taught courses to both undergraduate and graduate film students. He has chosen not to capitalize his name.