



New Grad's Documentary Screens at Apollo Theater

Daphne S. Valerius' (MA '06) documentary *The Souls of Black Girls*, which she wrote, edited and produced, premiered at the Historic Apollo Theater as part of the organization's Health Time at the Apollo event commemorating Women's History Month. The screening of her film was followed by a panel discussion featuring Valerius along with a noted historian, a cultural critic and an author.

The Souls of Black Girls features personal interviews with young black women talking about their self-image. The film also includes social commentary from rapper Chuck D, actresses Regina King and Jada Pinkett Smith, *Washington Week Moderator* (PBS) Gwen Ifill, and cultural critic Michaela Angela Davis, among others.

"As a young Black girl, I grew up feeling very much like the ugly duckling compared to my peers as a result of not looking a certain way, much like Pecola Breedlove of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. By putting together this documentary, it allowed me to uncover and examine why I, along with many other women of color, feel the need to manipulate our physical appearances," Valerius said in a statement from St. John's University, where she was a McNair scholar as an undergrad and where she began her research. *The Souls of Black Girls* was produced as a fulfillment of the Journalism Masters Program at Emerson College.

The film "takes a critical look at media images and examines the relationship between the historical and existing images of women of color in the media," said the statement. "The documentary also raises the question of whether or not women of color 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."

- *Emersonians in the News April 2007*