

From *Miseducated*

The was part of an interdisciplinary Performance and Interactive Media Arts MFA thesis production called *Miseducated*. I wrote and performed this piece as a monologue. Just before this, there was a long, intense dance sequence exploring a set of gestures in different contexts. I was seated in the audience, so on the first line below I came down the aisle from the audience to the stage.

The piece plays with duality, so to give the sense of being two different characters at once, one remembered and one current, one student and one teacher, I performed all the stage directions and indicators written in parentheses as part of the spoken monologue, save what is written in brackets (ex: my first lines were “a bell rings,” but I did not read [turn]).

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A bell rings. A teacher in a skirt, large Southern floral prints, and clunky, uncomfortable heels clink clacks in. [turn] Students fill in to their desk seats which are arranged all in rows facing the front of the room.

Projection: My Notes in a Spiral Notebook:

- Aszattia is the greek word for abstinence
- Shame is a synonym for sex
- If I don't sign this pledge, my name won't go up on the display outside of the Olympics.
- If I get pregnant, I will be embarrassed.
- If I get an STD, no one will love me.
- If I contract HIV, I will die.

When I was in middle school, all the “older” kids – 7th or 8th graders, I can't remember which anymore – took a class called Azetia. It was taught in the Home Economics classroom where this frail woman – Mrs. Peel I think, or something like that – taught sewing and cooking and whatever else, ironing I remember particularly. She didn't teach Azatia, of course; the Special Presenter was brought in, once a week, to Mrs. Peel's classroom, for that.

On one of these many Wednesdays, the sent-teacher clink clacked in, carrying a roll of scotch or packing tape – clear, I remember, regardless. And she ripped a piece off:

[Cross upstage]

This tape, When it's new? It does it's job; it's sticky, it's pristine. So when I stick it to something, (she sticks it to her arm) it stays.

[cross to Ben, direct question]

But what happens to the tape if it sticks to the wrong thing first, (she rips it from her arm) and then needs to stick to another thing instead?

[pat Ben on his back on the line]

(she sticks it to a student's arm). It gets a little less sticky– (she gestures for the student to rip and pass the tape again)

[cross down to Hilary]

The same is true for your body. If you give it to someone, and then to someone else, then it can't stick as well the second time. (The Tape is passed) Or the third. (The Tape is passed) Or the fourth.

[To Hilary, then Ben, then audience]

And this degradation continues until one day, after you've stuck to too many people, (she gestures for and holds up the dirty, lifeless tape) you can't stick to anyone anymore.

[Cross center during line]

Now, I'll pass around the pledge cards so that you can sign, and after you do, we can send them out to put up on the fence at the Olympics so all the cameras can see!

I have Always known that Azatia is the Greek word for abstinence. I know this to be true because it's what I was told every Wednesday in my abstinence only class. So the fact that I can't find any record of the Azetia program or a cite that will show me the history of the word or even how to spell it doesn't really matter. It doesn't matter. I know.

I write in my notebook:

- Aszatia is the Greek word for abstinence
- And Shame is a synonym for sex
- And If I don't sign this pledge, my name won't go up on the display outside of the Olympics.
- And If I get pregnant, I will be embarrassed.
- And If I get an STD, no one will love me.
- And If I contract HIV, I will die.