



March 20-24, 2023
San Francisco, CA

Incorporating Black Game Studies in the Classroom: Benefits to Everyone

Lindsay D. Grace
Knight Chair in Interactive Media
Master of Fine Arts (MFA) , Interactive Program Director
Vice President, Higher Education Video Game Alliance

University of Miami
<http://www.ProfessorGrace.com>



@mindtoggle

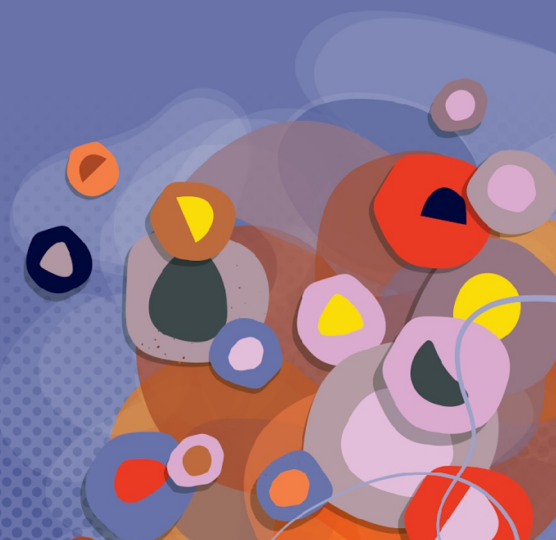
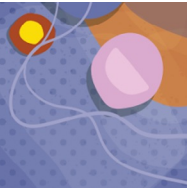


@ProfessorGrace



@ProfessorGrace

#GDC23



Black Game Studies

The What

The Why

The How

An apology

Unforeseen circumstances prevented **2** of our panelists from attending today, very recently.

An apology

Unforeseen circumstances prevented 2 of our panelists
from attending today, very recently.
You're going to get **the same amount of content.**

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Aaron Trammell
Assistant Professor of Informatics, UC Irvine



Kishonna Gray
Associate Professor, University of Kentucky
[@kishonnagray](https://twitter.com/kishonnagray)
(in spirit)

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Latoya Peterson
CXO, Glow Up Games



Lindsay Grace

Knight Chair and Director of the MFA in Interactive Media
University of Miami
Vice President, Higher Education Video Game Alliance

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2 special guests

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Special guests



Jay Justice

Developer & Consultant
Independent

<http://www.jayjustice.net/games>
jay@jayjustice.net

@ThatJayJustice

Special guests



Akil Fletcher

PhD candidate in the Anthropology
department at the University of
California Irvine

Panel Format:

Part 1: Lindsay-General Introduction from Academic Lens

Part 2: Latoya-Observations from Industry

Part 3: Everyone-Questions and Answers

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What is “Black Game Studies”?

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What is Black Game Studies?

An opportunity

What is Black Game Studies?

An opportunity to discuss
inequity

What is Black Game Studies?

An opportunity to discuss:
inequity
history

What is Black Game Studies?

An opportunity to discuss:
inequity
history
culture

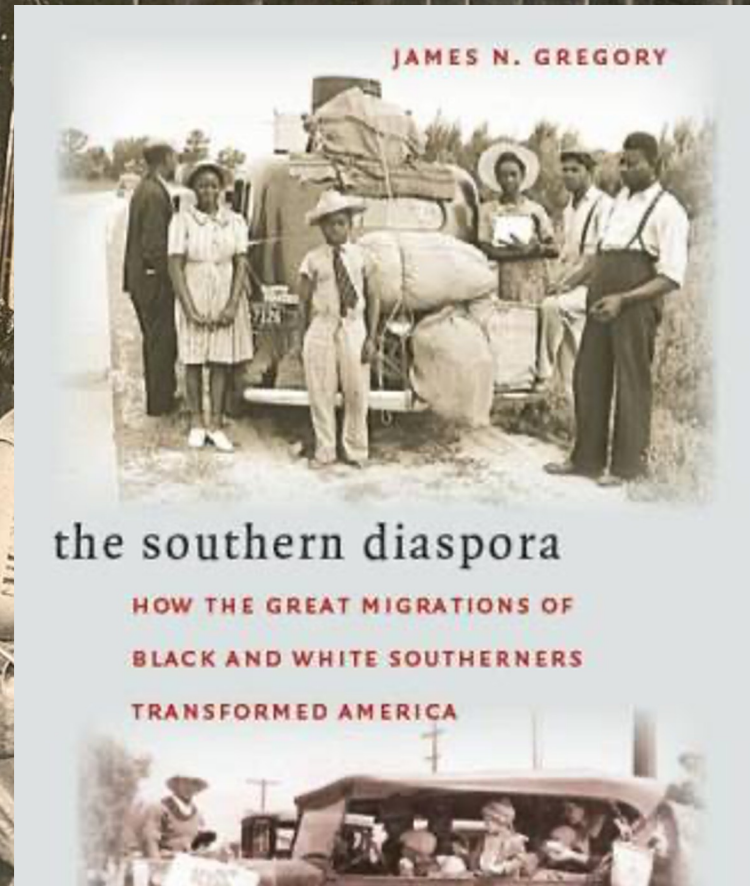
What is Black Game Studies?

An opportunity to discuss
inequity, history, and culture at the
intersection of play and games

Studying jazz



Studying jazz intersects with the “US great migration”





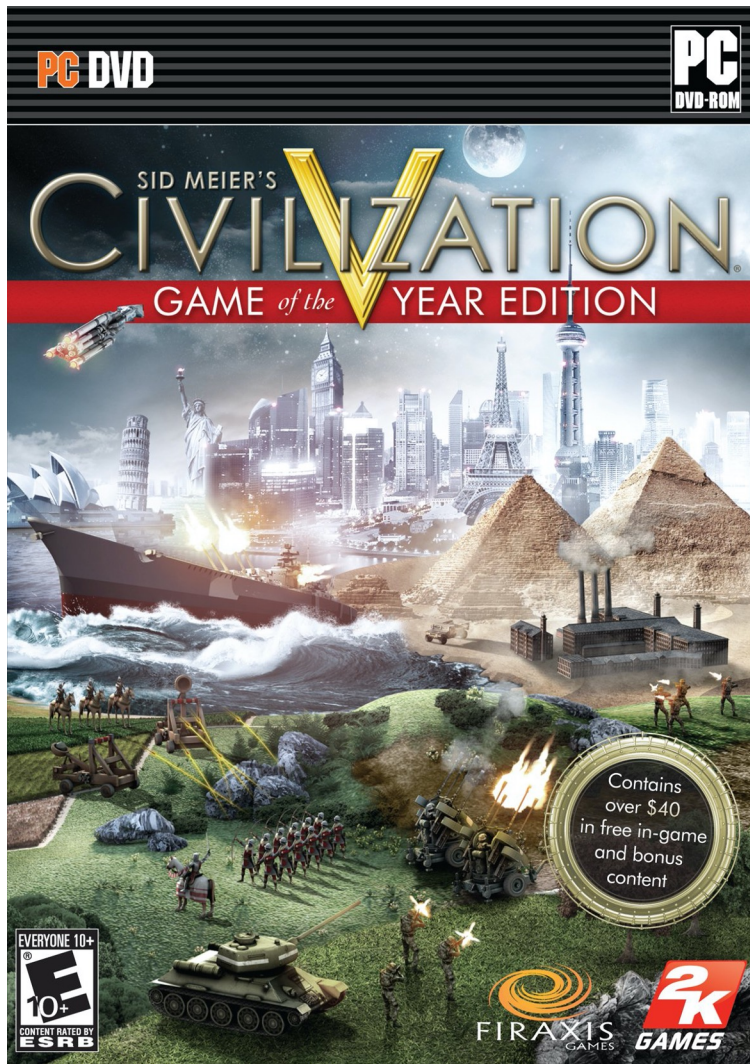
WOMEN ART WORKERS
AND THE ARTS AND
CRAFTS MOVEMENT

— Zoë Thomas —

**Studying the
English Arts and Craft movement
presents an opportunity to
engage in gender studies**

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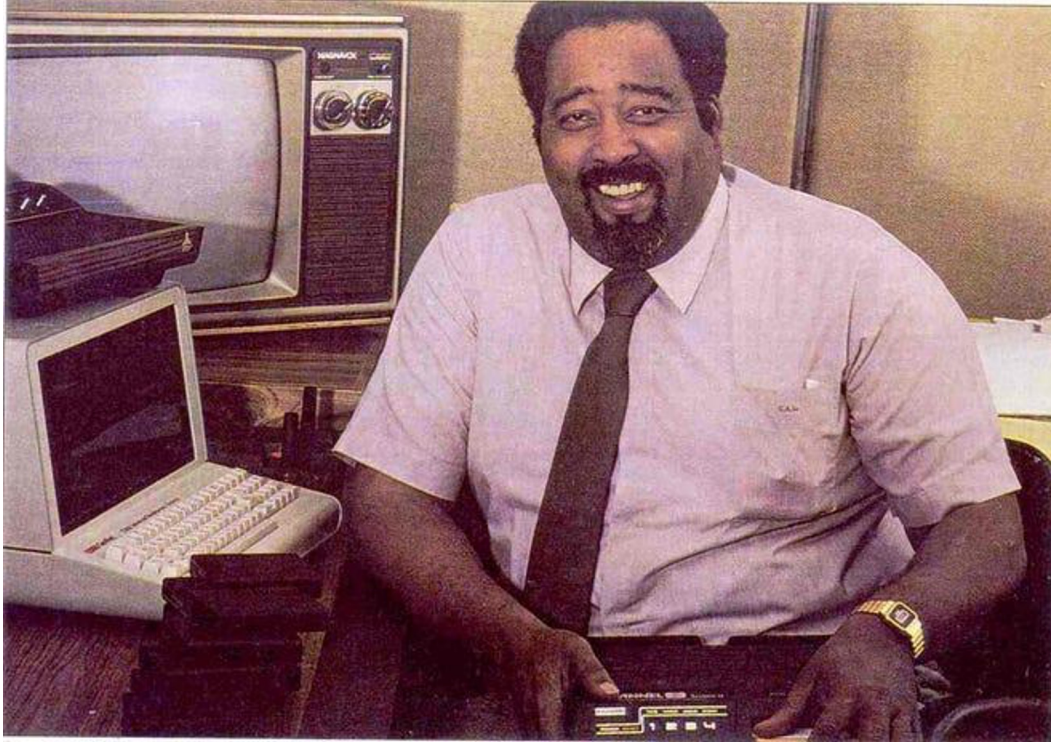
An opportunity to play
with the intersection of
new technologies
and society

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Black Game Studies

Is the study of games made by,
for, and about Black people
globally.



Going beyond Jerry Lawson

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Muriel Tramis

A third black innovator from the early days of the video games industry is Muriel Tramis, who is considered to be the first black female video game designer. She lives in France but grew up on the Caribbean island of Martinique, in the Lesser Antilles, and began her career as an engineer, programming military drones. She first made her mark on video games while working at French developer Coktel Vision, which she joined in 1986.

Muriel Tramis

Interview

Gaming in colour: uncovering video games' black pioneers

Tola Onanuga

The
Guardian

the early days of the video games industry is Muriel Tramis, who is considered to be the first black female video game designer. She lives in France but grew up on the Caribbean island of Martinique, in the Lesser Antilles, and began her career as an engineer, programming military drones. She first made her mark on video games while working at French developer Coktel Vision, which she joined in 1986.



Not only
games about
Black History
like
Blackhaven

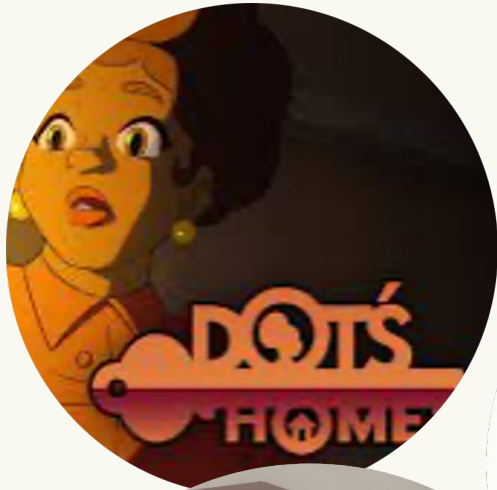
Analog art experiences like Tory Bullock's *The Gentrification Game*

'The Gentrification Game' Puts Boston's Stark Changes In Sharp Relief

October 30, 2018

By [Jacquinn Sinclair](#)





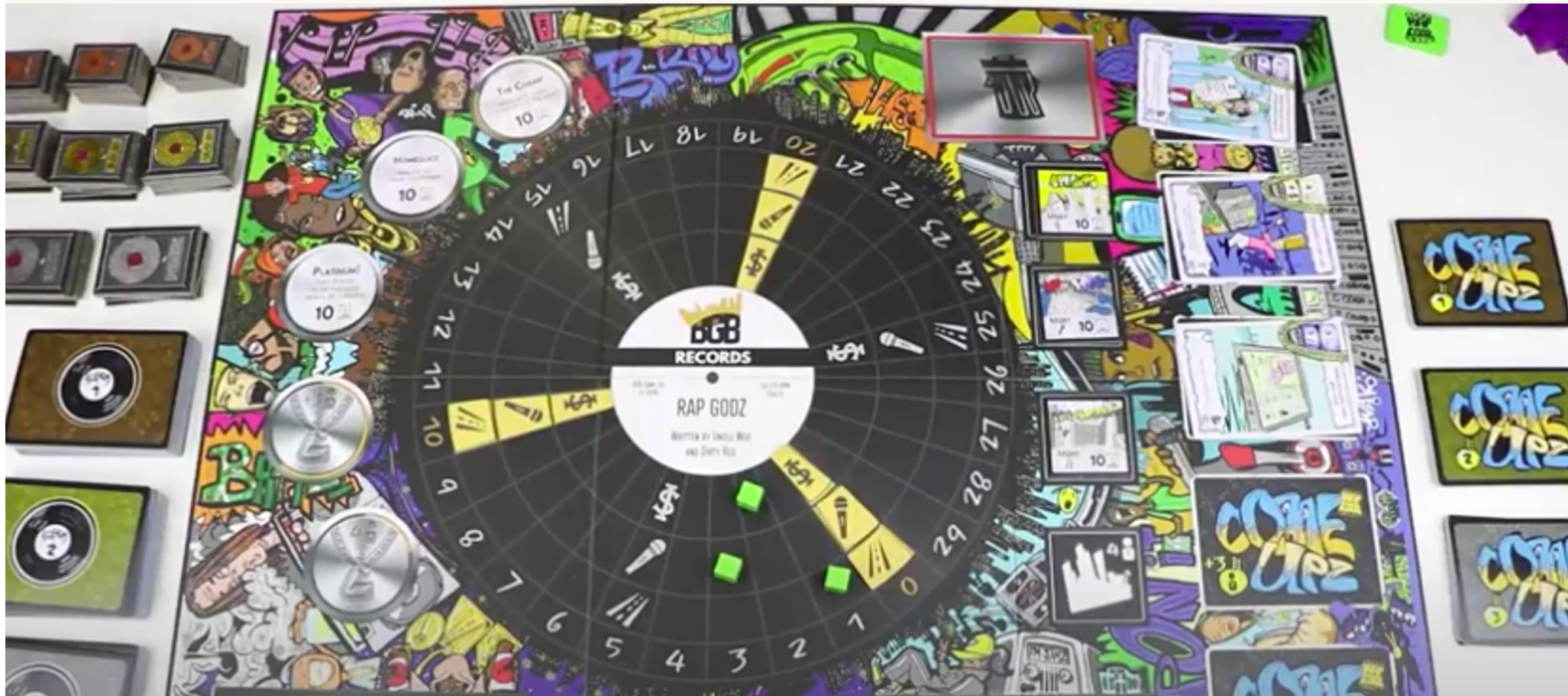
Digital Game experiences like **2022 Games for Change Game of the Year, Dots Home**



Games about community

Games about culture: Rap Godz

<https://www.boardgamebrothas.com/rap-godz>



Games without **Blackness** at their center

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Why Teach Black Game Studies?

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Perspective: Lindsay

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Awarded Game Designer

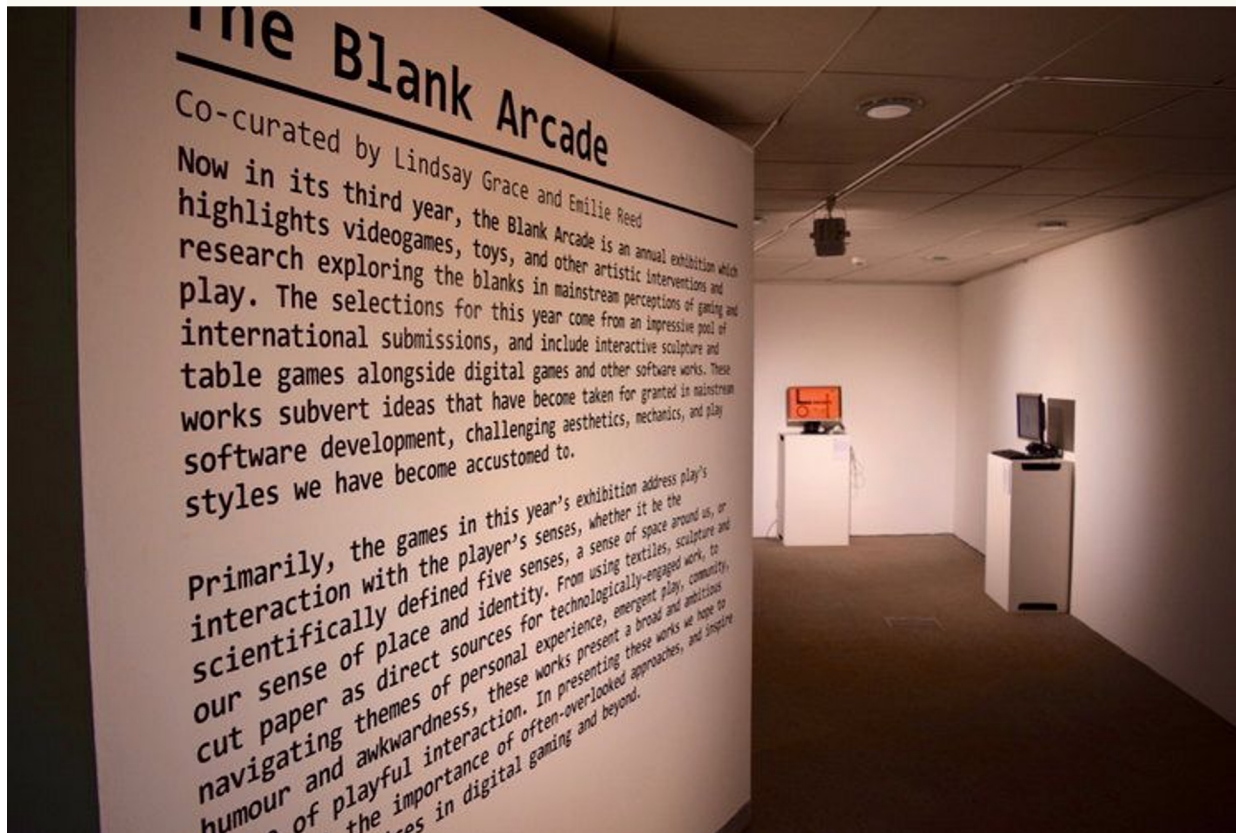


GAMES FOR CHANGE HALL OF FAME BY BABYCASTLES



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Co-curated art exhibits



SAAM Arcade
Smithsonian American Art Museum



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Career Awards

2019

Games for Change
Vanguard Award Winner

2022

Higher Education
Video Game Alliance
Fellow

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A modern office interior featuring two prominent yellow pillars. The ceiling is exposed with various pipes and several large, circular, illuminated light fixtures. In the foreground, there are two grey armchairs and a desk with a computer monitor. A large television is mounted on a grey partition wall. To the right, there are glass-walled rooms and a curved reception desk. The floor is covered with a patterned carpet in shades of green, yellow, and grey.

Created 2 Academic Game Studios

Deloitte.

WAMU
88.5

SAAM

Smithsonian American Art Museum
Renwick Gallery



THE WORLD BANK

KF Knight Foundation



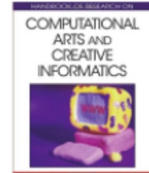
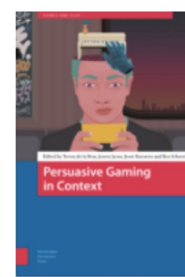
National Institute
of Mental Health



Variety of global clients...



75+ books, chapters, articles and



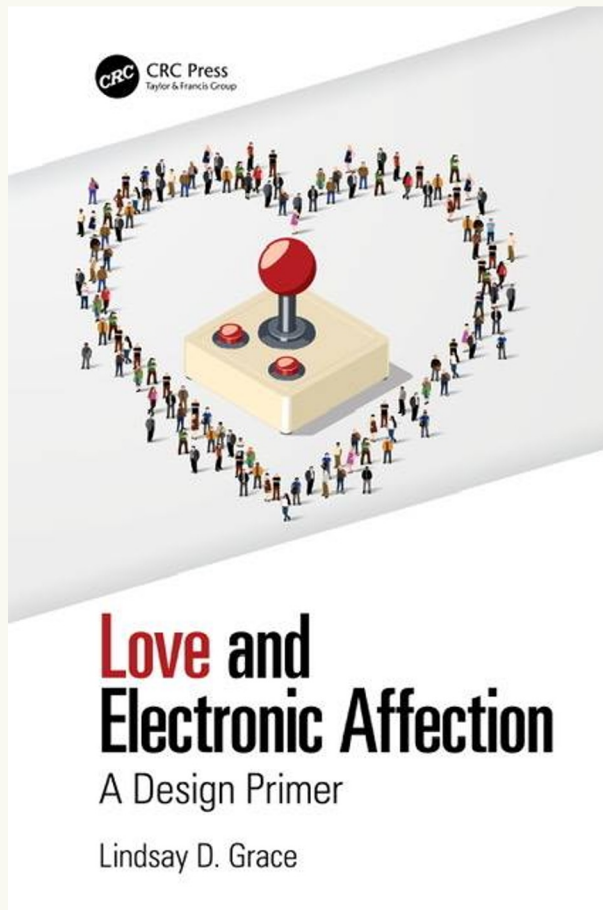
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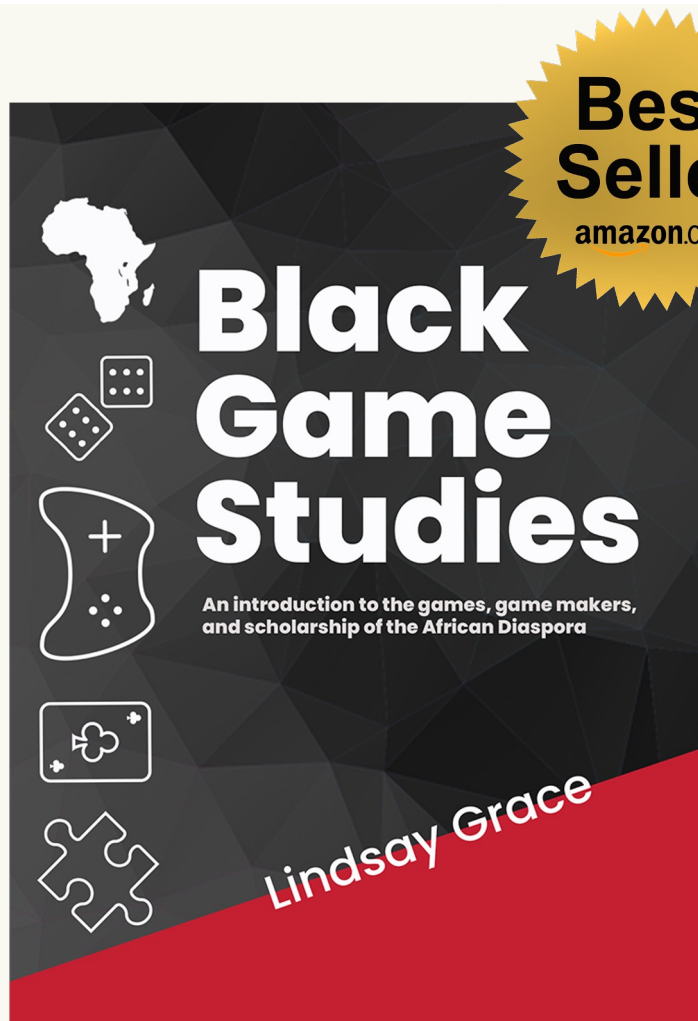
July, 2019

Grace, L. 2019. Doing things with games: Social Impact through Play, Routledge/CRC ISBN: 9781138367265



April, 2020

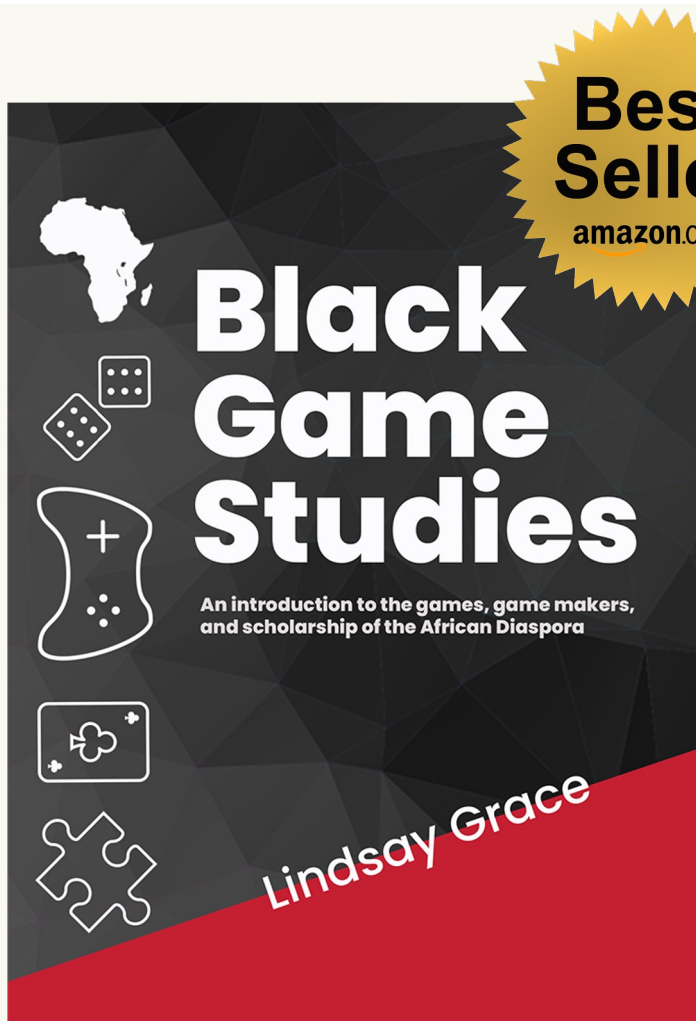
Grace, L. 2020: [Love and Electronic Affection: A Design Primer](#) (editor/author), Routledge / Taylor and Francis (294 pages), 978-1138367234



December 2021

Grace, Lindsay 2021: [Black Game Studies](#). (editor/author)

Carnegie Mellon University ETC Press
9781794779143



**Best
Seller**

amazon.com

For 2.5 months January 21-February 2022
In games category

December 2021

Grace, Lindsay 2021: Black Game
Studies. (editor/author)

Carnegie Mellon University ETC Press
9781794779143



Free download via ETC Press



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AU
 AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
 WASHINGTON, DC



U | UNIVERSITY
 OF MIAMI



Director/Co-director



Founding Director



Director of the MFA



90+

Class sections taught since 2003

15

New classes created since 2010

4

Created/Co-created New Programs:
MFA, MA, Certificate,

Administrative and faculty lens....

Administrative and faculty lens, for public and private institutions,

**Administrative and faculty lens,
for public and private institutions,
in rural and urban environments,
with varied stages of game
curriculum**

**Administrative and faculty lens,
for public and private institutions,
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Black Game Studies....

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The Why and Basic How

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Black Game Studies is Cultural Game Studies

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Introduction to **Black game studies**

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I teach it as

Introduction to

Black game studies

Games at the intersection of

- History
- Society
- Individual experience
- and more

An opportunity to discuss:

- History
- Society
- Individual experience
- And more

In this context

The Washington Post

Education Higher education Local Education The Answer Sheet Jay Mathews

Florida bills would ban gender studies, limit trans pronouns, erode tenure

A raft of laws proposed by the legislature's GOP majority would transform how Florida educates children

By [Hannah Natanson](#), [Lori Rozsa](#) and [Susan Svrluga](#)

Updated March 5, 2023 at 12:33 p.m. EST | Published March 5, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. EST

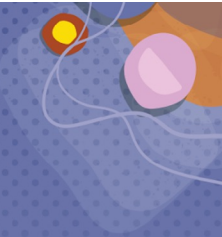
March, 2023

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Growing aim to target diversity



Overhaul of Ohio colleges targets diversity mandates, China and requires U.S. history class

ANNA STAVER, LAURA A. BISCHOFF THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Updated 7:48 am EDT Mar. 16, 2023

March, 2023

Changes to Ohio classroom rules aimed at bias, an end to diversity training mandates, a ban on partnerships with Chinese universities, and mandatory American history courses are all inside a far-reaching bill to change how students learn and professors teach at the state's public colleges and universities.

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Something our students don't want

Advertisement

FAU students protest bill that would end funding for college diversity programs in the state

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USA TODAY

NEWS TO YOUR INBOX
Start the day smarter

NCAA BASKETBALL
March Madness news

WHAT HAPPENED THIS WEEK
Take our news quiz

For You U.S. Sports Entertainment Life Money Tech Travel Opinion

EDUCATION

Ron DeSantis Add Topic +

'We value academic freedom' Students walk out in protest of Ron DeSantis' education policies



Kayla Jimenez
USA TODAY

Published 5:04 p.m. ET Feb. 23, 2023 | Updated 4:31 p.m. ET Feb. 24, 2023



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Nor do many faculty want it...

nature

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CAREER NEWS | 09 March 2023

Academics fight moves to defund diversity programmes at US universities

Governors Greg Abbott of Texas and Ron DeSantis of Florida wage war on 'woke' projects, with other US states threatening similar clampdowns.

[Virginia Gewin](#)

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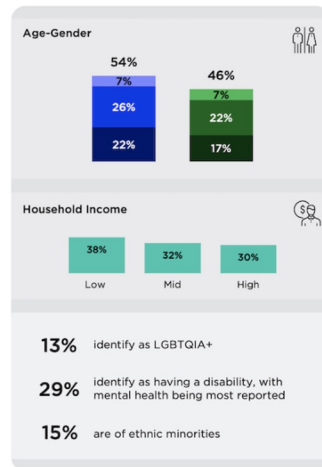
Players also ask for diversity

The Gaming Audience Is Diverse

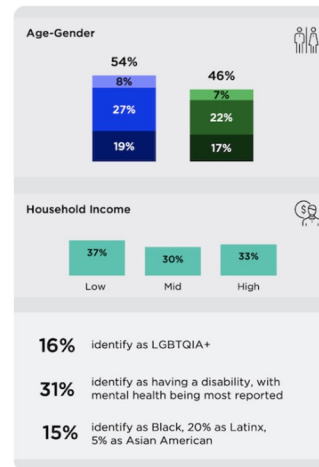
Almost half of players in the U.K. and U.S. think diversity, equity, and inclusion is important



United Kingdom



United States



42%

of players in the U.K. find diversity, equity, and inclusion important.

51%

of players in the U.S. find diversity, equity, and inclusion important.

Source: Newzoo | Gamer Sentiment Study: DEI | Base: Total players aged 16-50 - U.K. (n=1,595), U.S. (n=1,615)



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ONLY IN NEWSDAY

Diversity, equity, inclusion will be soon be required learning for SUNY students



Some states are increasing DEI initiatives

Black Game Studies is a tool to help

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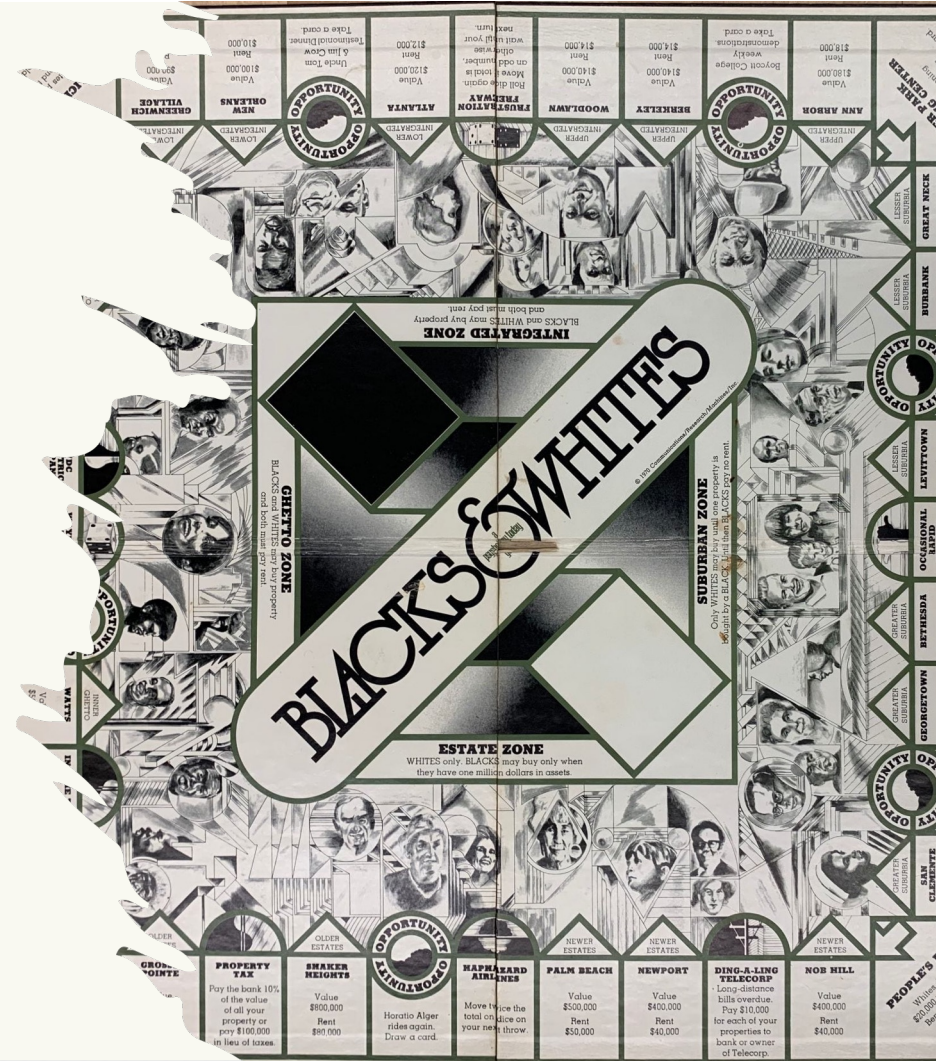
Black Game Studies **serves as a way toward critical inquiry**

Black Game Studies serves as a way to investigate systems



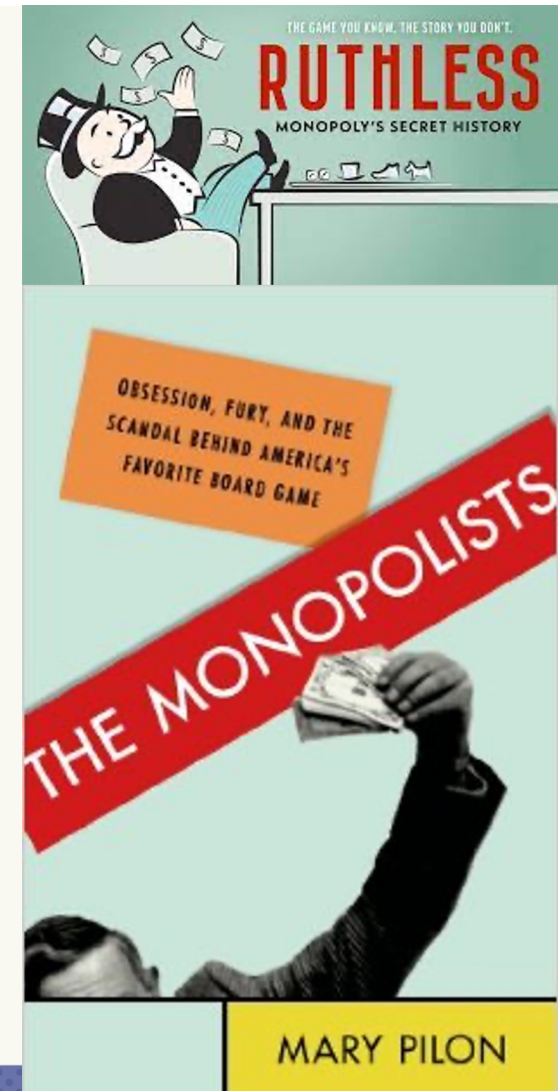
Black Game Studies

serves as a way to investigate systems & their meaning on history, society, and culture



(a history some wish to erase)

Much like how **Monopoly** serves as an opportunity to interpret capitalism, a history of a feminist game maker, and **the communities that play it**



STOP W.O.K.E. ACT.

- The **Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees Act** will be the strongest legislation of its kind:

SCHOOLS

PROTECTING OUR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

- Codifies the Florida Department of Education's prohibition on teaching critical race theory in K-12 schools.
- Prohibits school districts, colleges and universities from hiring woke CRT consultants.

CORPORATIONS

PROTECTING OUR EMPLOYEES AND WORKPLACES

- Protects employees against a hostile work environment due to critical race theory training.

CONSEQUENCES

TOOLS FOR EMPLOYEES AND TEACHERS TO FIGHT BACK

- Provides employees, parents and students a private right of action.
- Strengthens enforcement authority of the Florida Department of Education.

In this
contemporary
context

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An opportunity to
train students in
game design

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An opportunity to
train students in
game design and
learn **procedural
rhetoric**

Interpreting systems through game design



You've already been teaching **other
cultures and communities**

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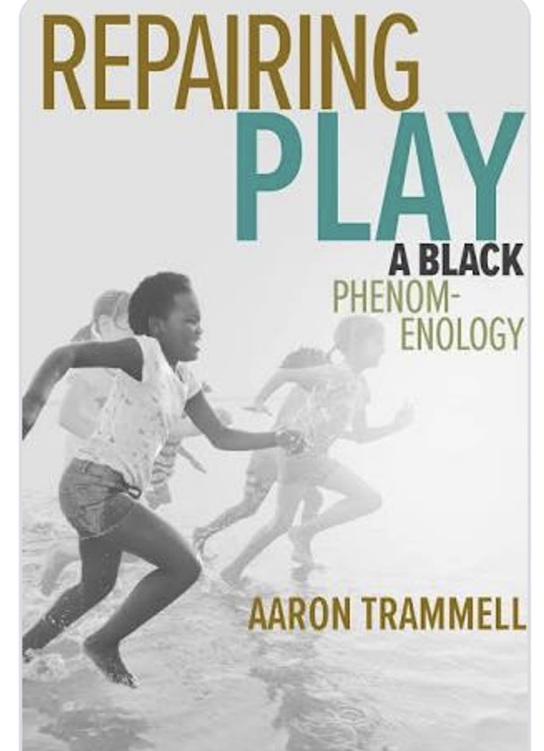
A point emphasized in:

THE PRIVILEGE OF PLAY



*A History of Hobby Games,
Race, and Geek Culture*

AARON
TRAMMELL



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An aerial view of a city in a game, showing a mix of modern and classical architecture, a large body of water, and a ship. The city is built on a peninsula with a river flowing through it. The water is dark blue, and the land is green with some brown patches. A large ship is docked at a pier on the left. The city is divided into different zones by a white line. The sky is blue with some clouds. The overall style is that of a strategy game.

Colonization

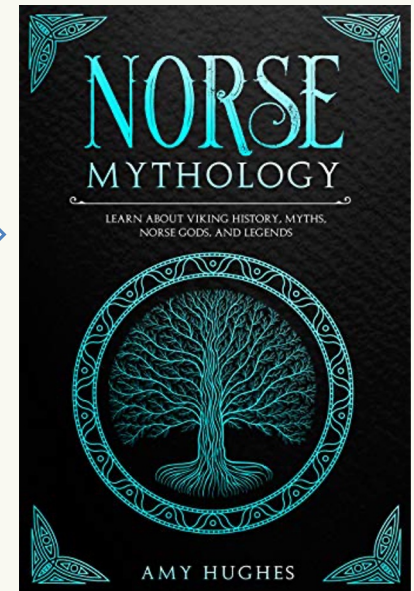
"The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically."

We've been teaching [other] game studies

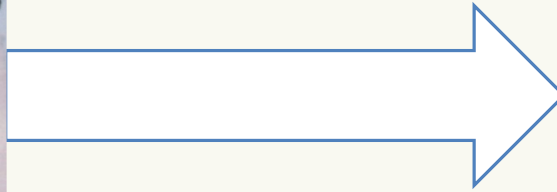
We've been teaching [other] game studies



We've been teaching [Norse] game studies



We've been teaching [other] game studies



We've been teaching [Asian/euro] game studies



King Arthur



Akira Kurosawa's
1958 film
The Hidden Fortress

We've been teaching [~~other~~] game studies

But we don't think of these as other



Black Game Studies: an effort to decolonize

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Aaron's slide for this presentation



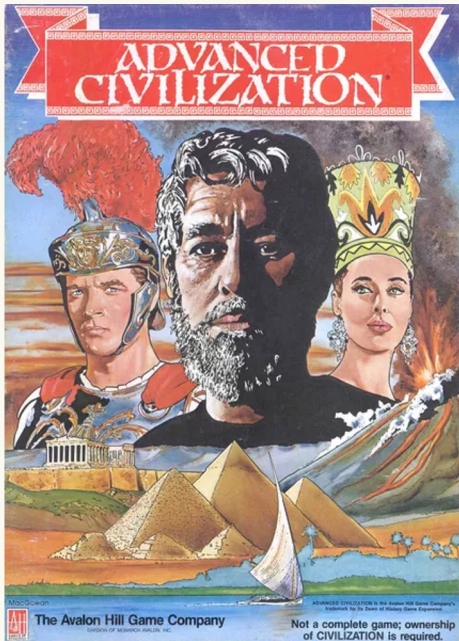
Decolonization



Jennifer Shlickbernd

- Recognizing the historic injustices done toward the victims of colonization and moving toward reparations.

Decolonization



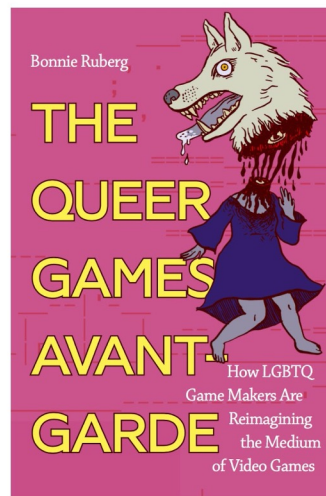
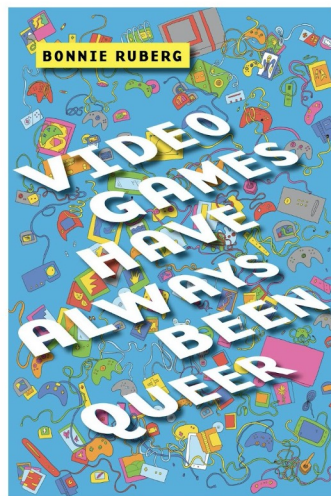
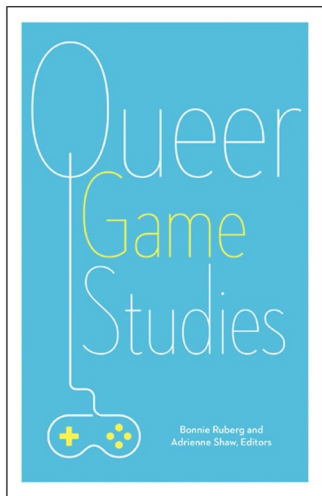
Jennifer Shlickbernd

Recognizing the historic injustices done toward the victims of colonization and moving toward reparations.

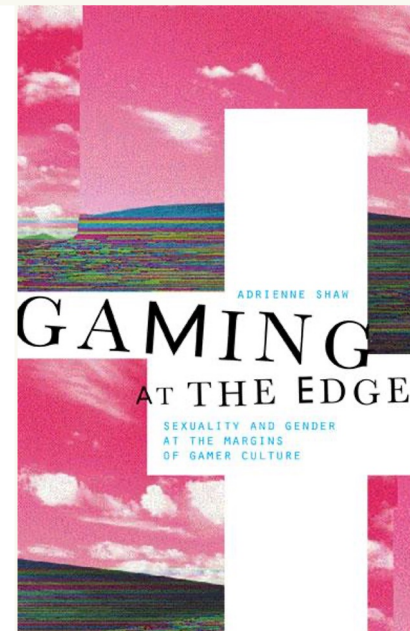
**Like anti-racism, Black Game Studies
is an opportunity to start **anti-othering...****

Adding black game studies, adds **dimension to education**

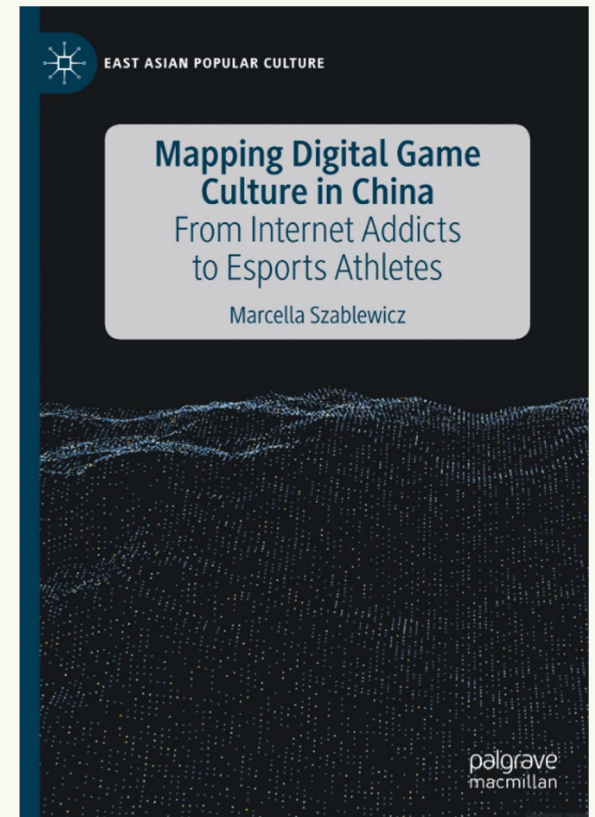
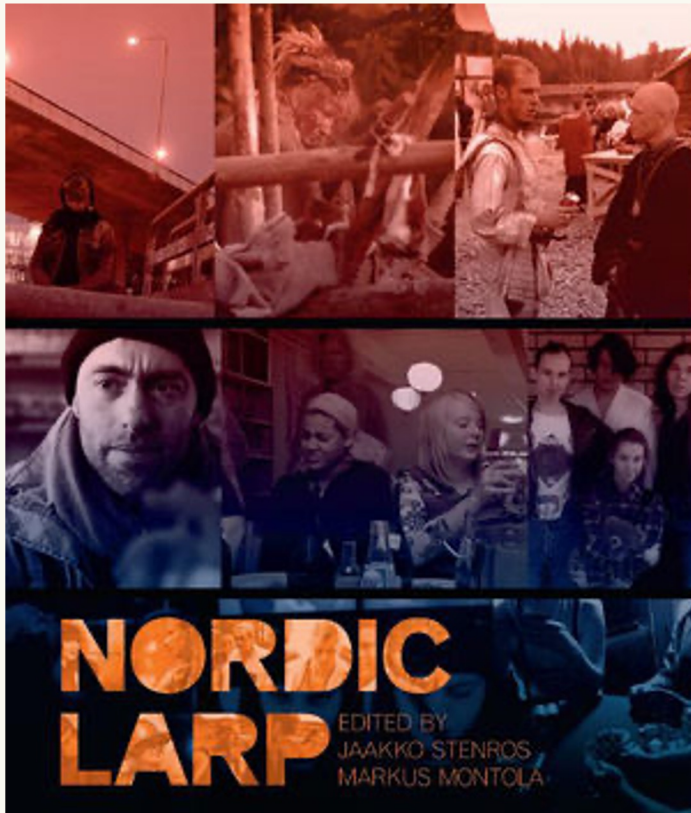
Much as we've done here...



@myownvelouria



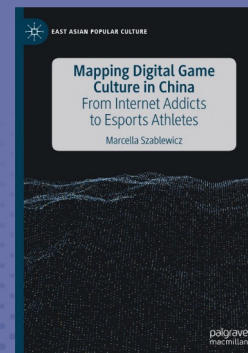
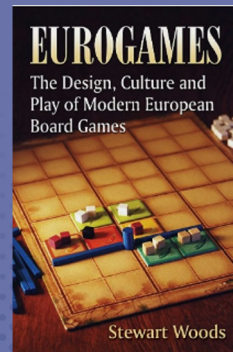
And here...



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Characters, conventions, tropes and cultures that pervade games education



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Folk game history



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Folk game history

JOHANN SEBASTIAN

Foust

The game draws heavily from several folk games and playground games that Doug learned while living in Copenhagen.

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RISK

THE GAME OF GLOBAL DOMINATION • LE JEU DE LA DOMINATION DU MONDE

Designed by a French man in 1957



Designed by a French man in 1957

Date of independence from France:

- 1953: Cambodia, Laos
- 1954: Vietnam
- 1956: Laos
- 1956: Morocco
- 1958: Guinea

BRISK



Designed by a French man in 1957,
Parker Bros. Acquired in 1959

Date of independence from France 1960:

- Madagascar
- Ivory Coast
- Benin
- Mauritania
- Niger
- Burkina Faso
- Mali Federation (today Mali and Senegal)
- Chad
- Central African Republic
- Republic of the Congo
- Gabon
- Cameroon, Togo



Designed by a French man in 1957,
Parker Bros. Acquired in 1959

Date of independence from France 1960:

- Madagascar
- Ivory Coast
- Benin
- Mauritania
- Niger
- Burkina Faso
- Mali Federation (today Mali and Senegal)
- Chad
- Central African Republic
- Republic of the Congo
- Gabon
- Cameroon, Togo



Designed by a French man in 1957,
Parker Bros. Acquired in 1959

Date of independence from France 1960:

- **France was losing the game of**
 - **Risk / La Conquête du Monde**
 - **by 1960** (1 year after Parker Bros. published)
 - **paving the way for decolonization**
- Madagascar
 - Ivory Coast
 - Mauritania
 - Niger
 - Burkina Faso
 - Mali
 - Chad
 - Central African Republic
 - Republic of the Congo
 - Gabon
 - Cameroon, Togo

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Why and How You can Teach Black Game Studies

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Types of Black Games

Games about **Blackness**

Games about a **membership**

Games that celebrate **Black Culture**

Games to educate and **serve the community**

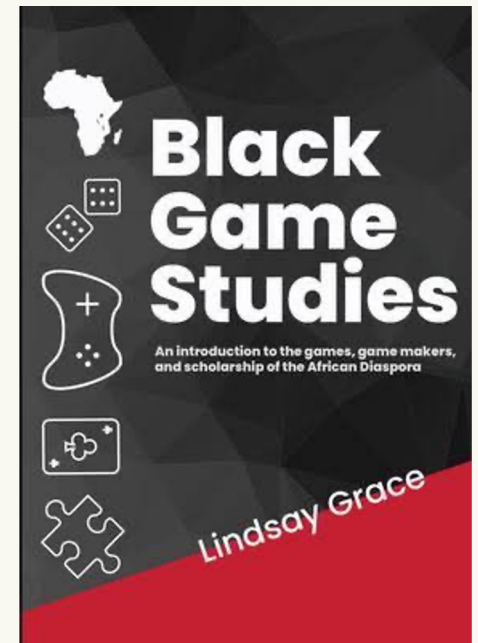
Games to **foster community**

Games about **shared location**

Games that **feature Black People**

Games **by Black People**

Games **about Black People**, but not made by them



Types of [] Games

Games about []ness

Games about a member of the [] community

Games that celebrate [] culture

Games to educate and serve the community

Games to foster community

Games about shared location

Games that feature [] People

Games by [] People

Games about [] People, but not made by them

Diversity is good,

**Diversity is good, because
monocultures are bad**

Monocultures are not healthy



CHALLENGE
ADVISORY

The Dangers of Monoculture

We're learning to
depart from the
game-player
moncoculture



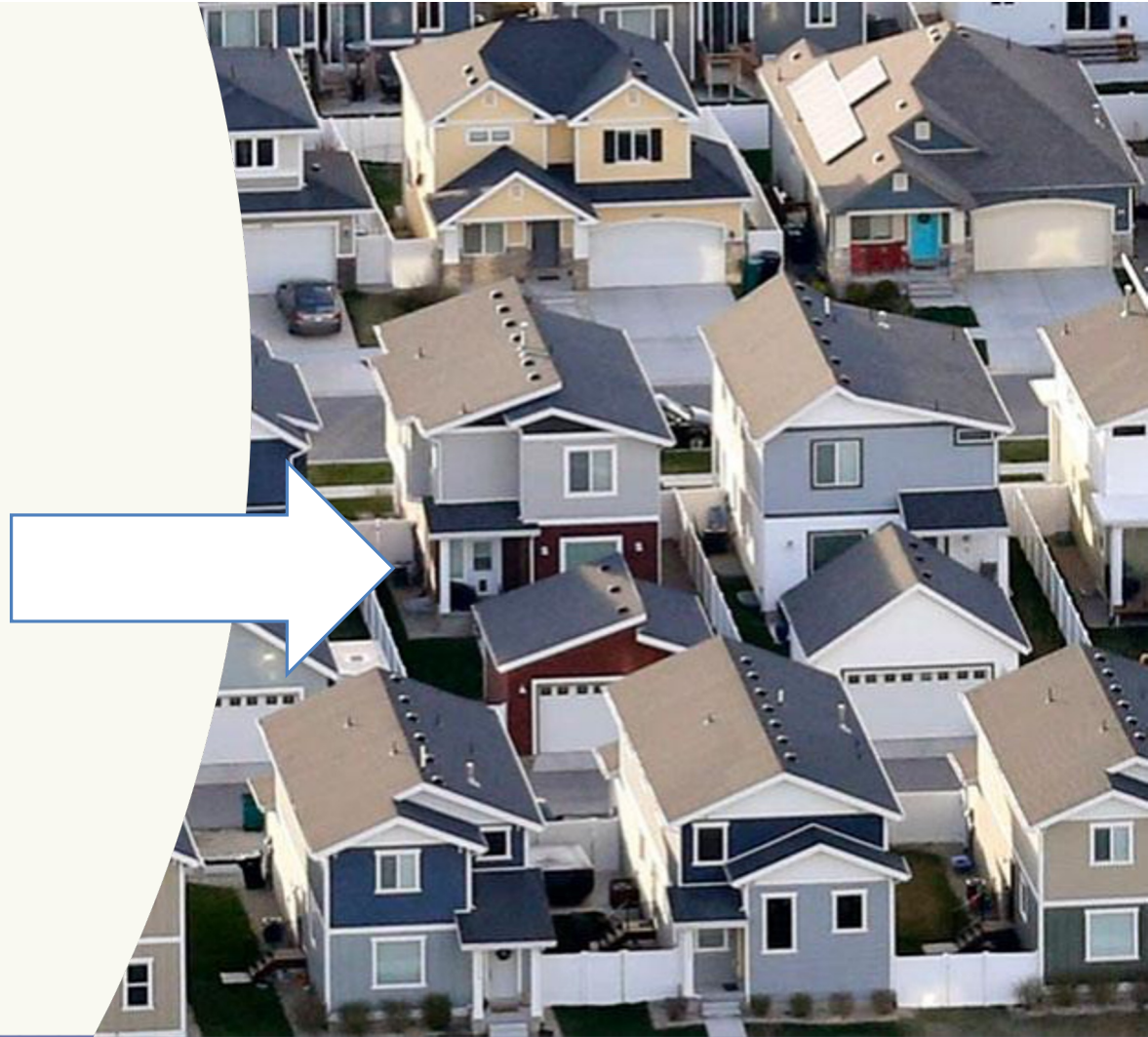
An aerial photograph of a dense suburban neighborhood. The houses are mostly two-story, with varying roof colors (dark grey, brown, tan) and exterior colors (white, light blue, tan, red). Many houses have attached garages. The houses are packed closely together, with small backyards and driveways visible. The word "Vulnerability" is overlaid in a white box with blue text in the center of the image.

Vulnerability

**We never want
our game
content or our
game making
community to
look like this**



**What happens
when people
stop wanting
this....**



**What happens
when people
stop wanting
this...market
disaster**



Diversity,
is a hedge against market shifts

Black Game Studies isn't about one
community's **games being better** than another's

Black Game Studies isn't about one
community's games being better than another's.
**It's about better games
and game studies for everyone**



87%

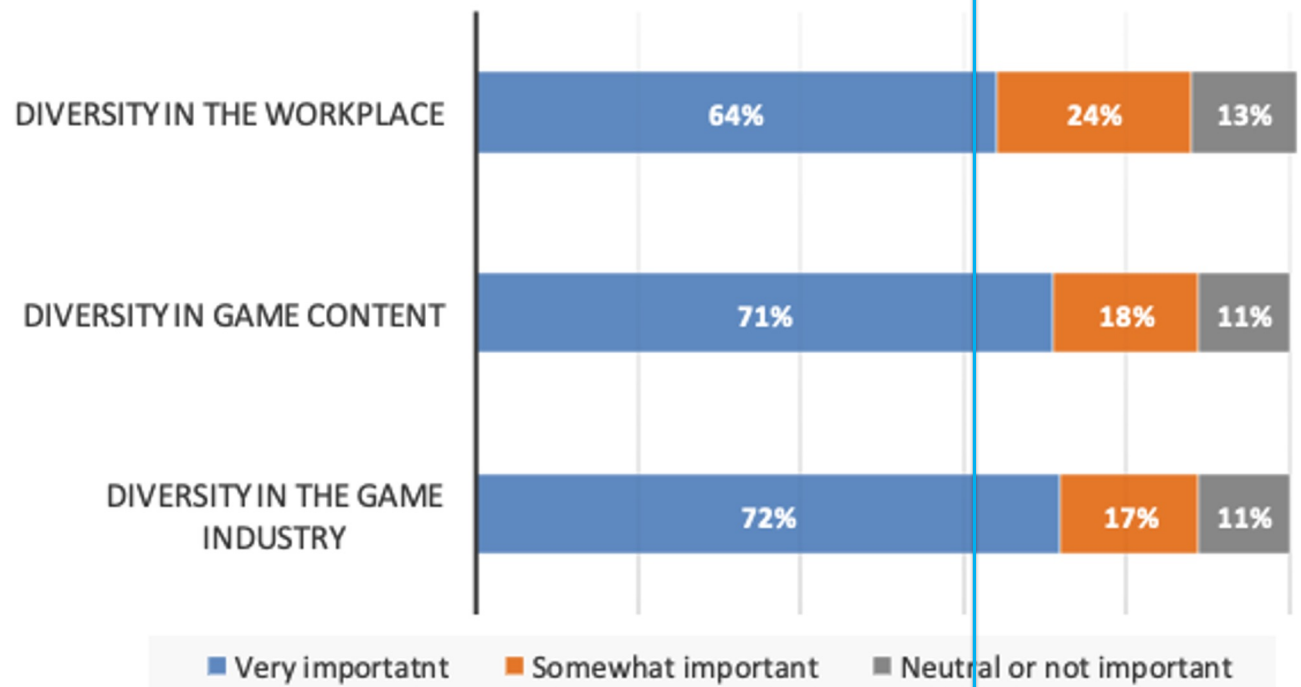
believe there is a
video game for everyone

<https://www.theesa.com/resource/2022-essential-facts-about-the-video-game-industry/>

We believe diversity is important

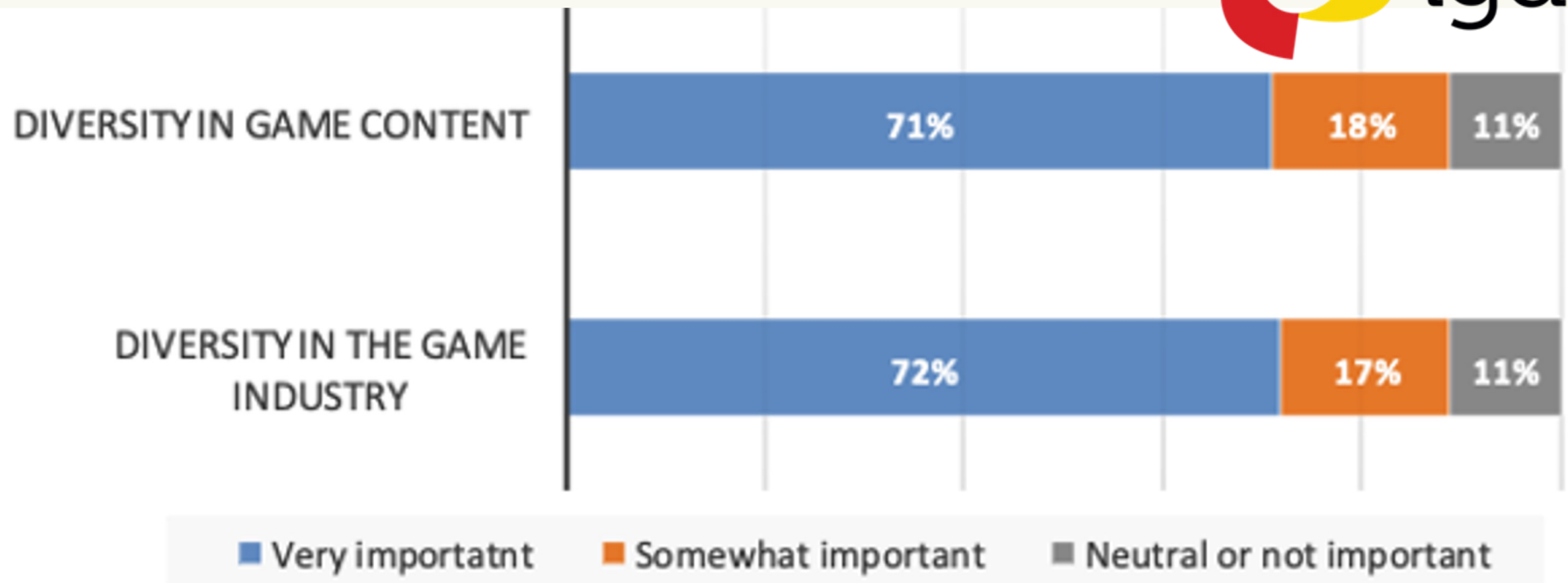


Figure 5: Importance of Diversity



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

We want more diversity...

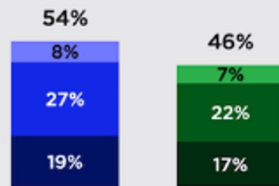


Source: IGDA DSS 2021



United States

Age-Gender



Household Income



- 16% identify as LGBTQIA+
- 31% identify as having a disability, with mental health being most reported
- 15% identify as Black, 20% as Latinx, 5% as Asian American

42%



of players in the U.K.
find diversity, equity,
and inclusion important.

51%



of players in the U.S.
find diversity, equity,
and inclusion important.

Diversity Matters to Players

2022



newzoo

<https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/newzoos-gamer-sentiment-diversity-inclusion-gender-ethnicity-sexual-identity-disability>

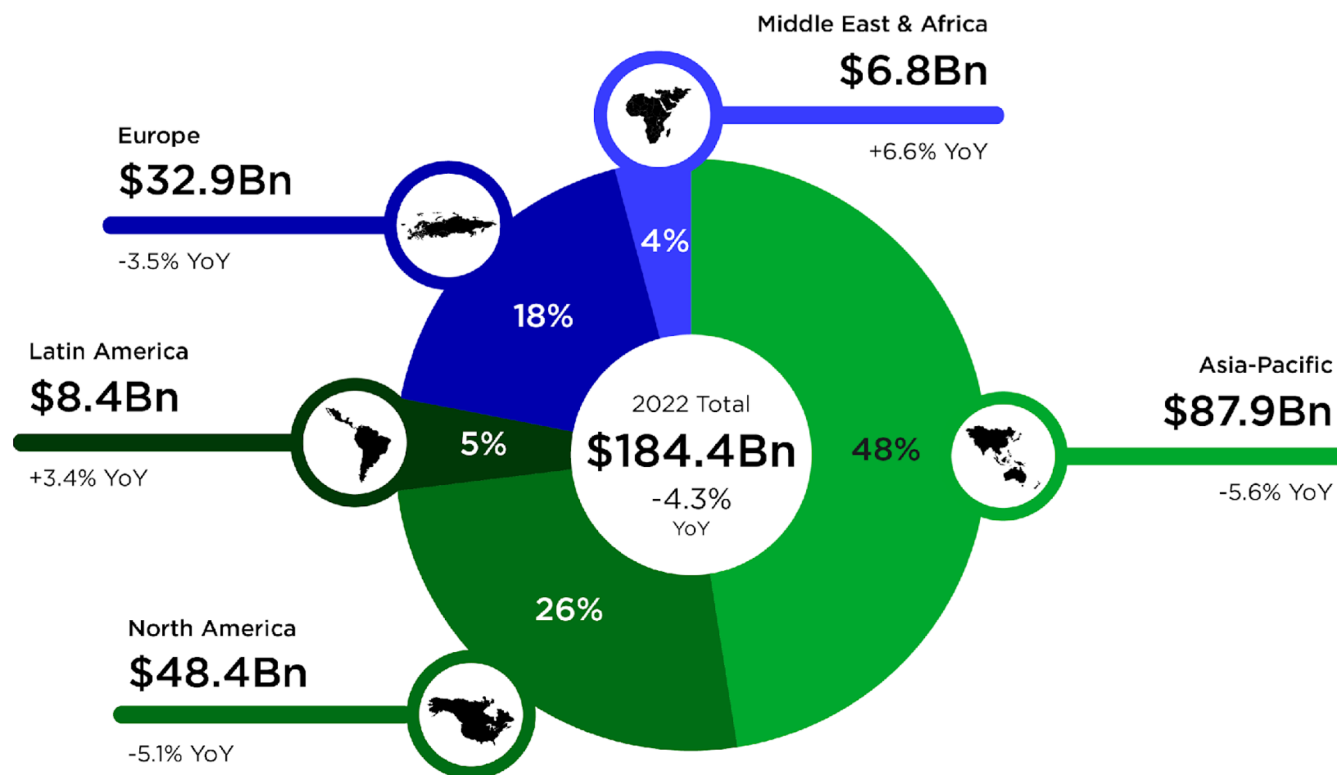
47% of players want the
games they play to include more
diverse characters





2022 Global Games Market

Per Region With Year-on-Year Growth Rates



Source: ©Newzoo | Global Games Market Report | November 2022

newzoo.com/globalgamesreport

49%

of all consumer spending on games in 2022 will come from China and the U.S.



China Total
\$45.8Bn

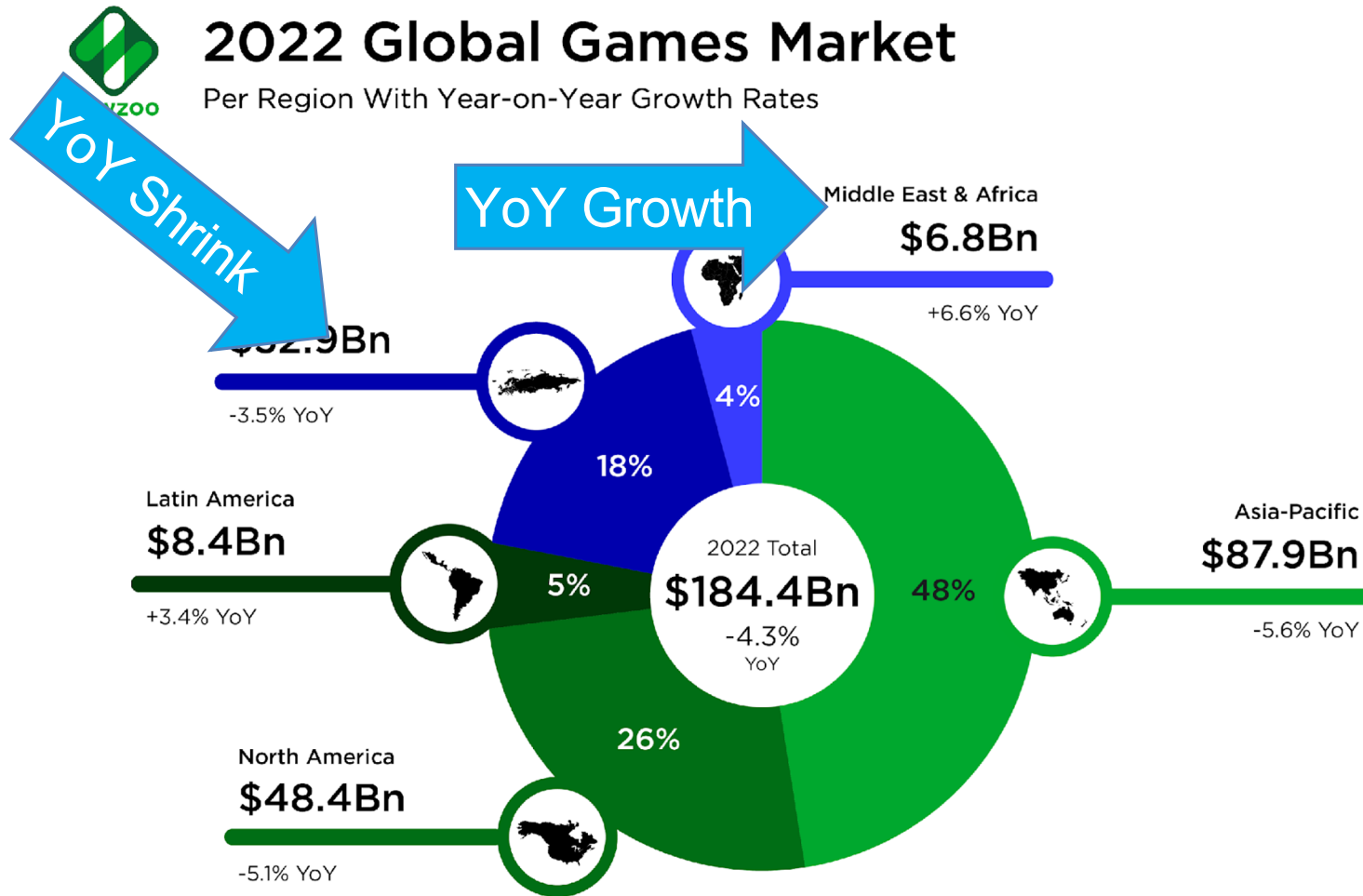


U.S. Total
\$45.0Bn

Our revenues encompass consumer spending on games: physical and digital full-game copies, in-game spending, and subscription services like Xbox Game Pass. Mobile revenues exclude advertising. Our estimates exclude taxes, secondhand trade or secondary markets, advertising revenues earned in and around games, console and peripheral hardware, B2B services, and the online gambling and betting industry.

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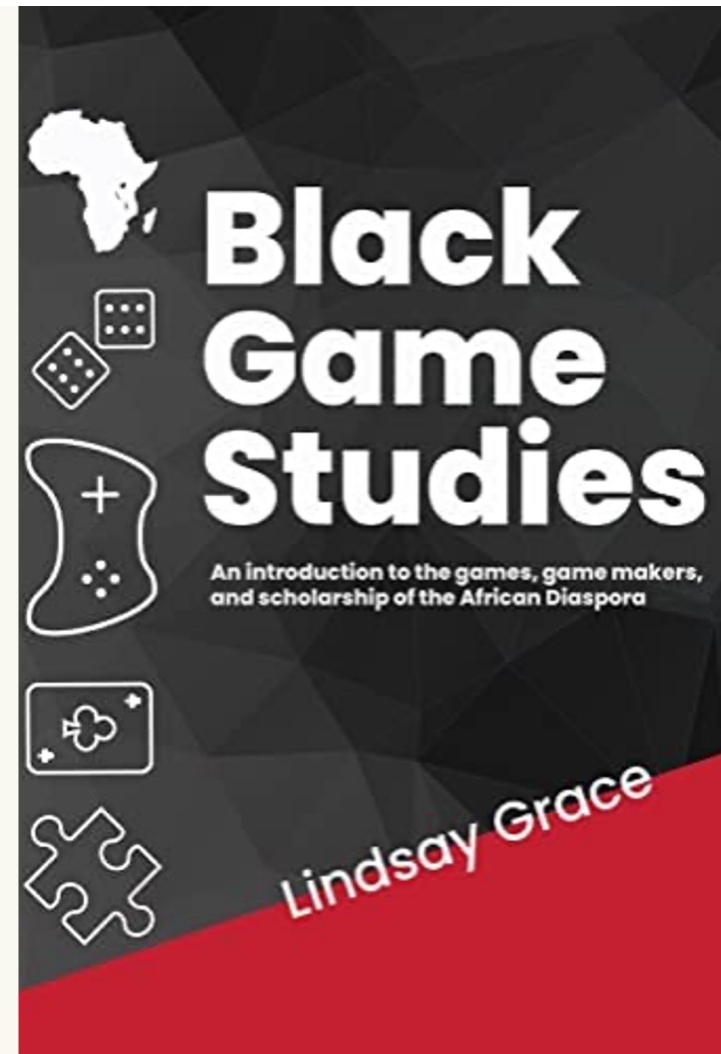
Source: ©Newzoo | Global Games Market Report | November 2022
newzoo.com/globalgamesreport

”almost half of the **black gamers** we surveyed said they *avoided* playing games they felt weren’t made for them “



57% of black gamers want
the games they play to include
more diverse characters

One approach is
By **learning through**
Black Game Studies



GDC

March 20-24, 2023
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How...

#GDC23

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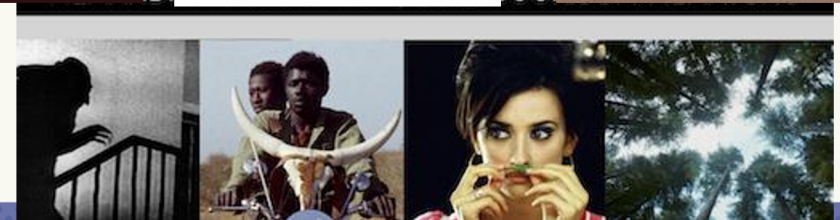
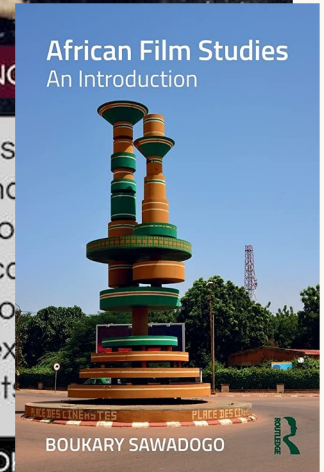
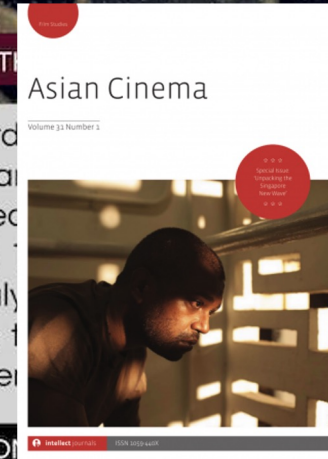
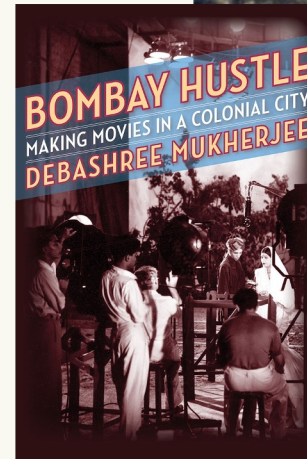
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Strategy #1

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Key Strategy #1

Incorporate
[] game studies,
include Black



Include Black Gamemakers



Muriel Tramis

A third black innovator from the early days of the video games industry is Muriel Tramis, who is considered to be the first black female video game designer. She lives in France but grew up on the Caribbean island of Martinique, in the Lesser Antilles, and began her career as an engineer, programming military drones. She first made her mark on video games while working at French developer Coktel Vision, which she joined in 1986.

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Mike Pondsmith



Pondsmith in 2017

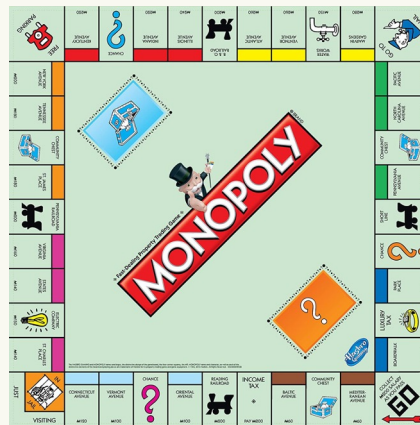
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Have students **play and design**
Black Games among [] games



Have students **redesign** [] games through a [Black] lens




Have students **redesign** [] games through a **[Black]** lens

And help them **analyze** their mistakes, stereotypes,
Biases, etc

Have students redesign [] games through a

And help them analyze their
Biases, etc



Mistakes are
teaching moments

Discomfort Design: Critical Reflection through Uncomfortable Play

Lindsay Grace
C. Michael Armstrong Professor
Miami University
School of Fine Arts
Oxford, OH, 45056
LGrace@muohio.edu

Abstract

Consider that uncomfortable moment in life when people discover a playful experience ceases to be worth playing. Just as an arm is broken on the playground, or a relationship can no longer be mended, there are explicit moments when art transgresses some unforeseen territory leaving us with fear of its potential. This paper explores the potential of taboo game design.

Introduction

Taboo is a construct that defines borders. It tells us where we can and cannot go. The social more is as much a looking glass to reflect on our values as it is a place to test our mettle. This paper seeks to explore how games offer unique critical experience through socially prohibited play. It simply seeks to discuss how play through taboo gameplay exposes that which we may not want to discuss. Taboo game experiences are more than just uncomfortable situations, they are opportunities in rhetoric. They punctuate an experience and offer opportunities for thoughtful reflection on social values.

Games are structured play, and it is their structure that reflects social value. The game of tag gives players two options, hunt or be hunted. So too, when designers of games construct play, they are defining a world and its options.

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17th International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA2011),
Istanbul, Turkey.

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Strategy #2

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Strategy #2



Assign student **research**:

Play Black Games

Research Black Game makers

Send them to places like these
for research

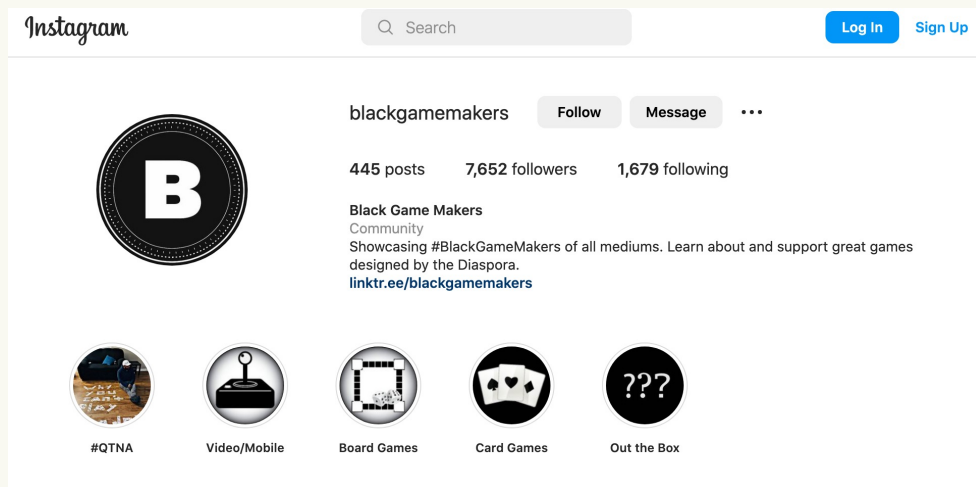
<https://www.buyblack.games/>

<https://www.thebigfoundation.org/>

<https://www.blackgamedevs.com/>

<http://blackgamestudies.com/>

Follow and encourage students to follow



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Strategy #3

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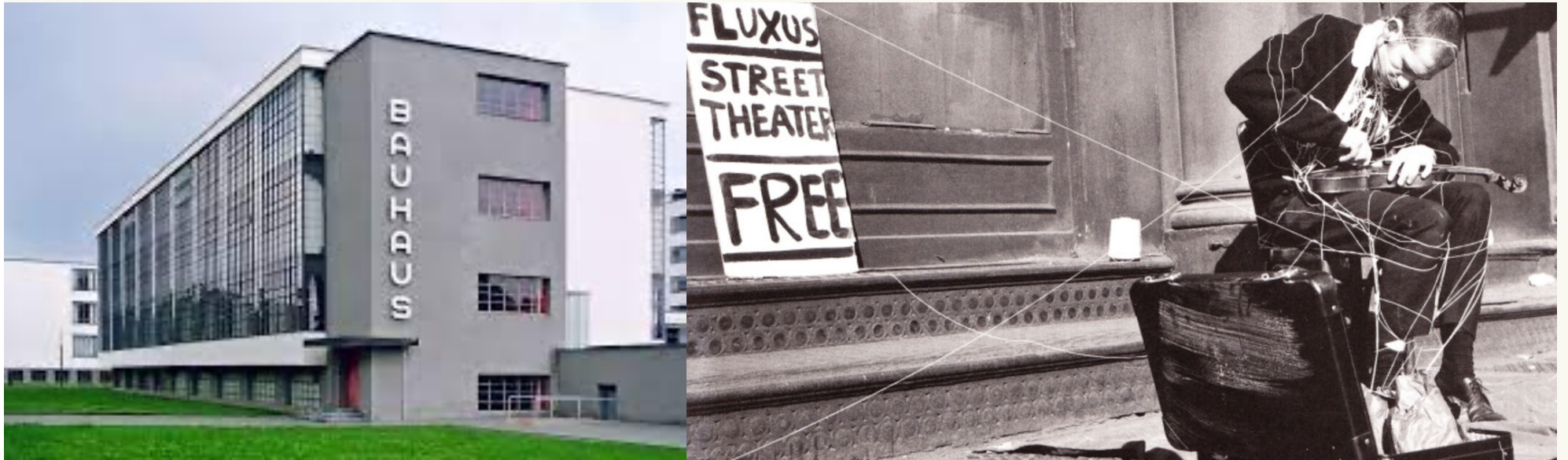
Strategy #3

Practice designing games about

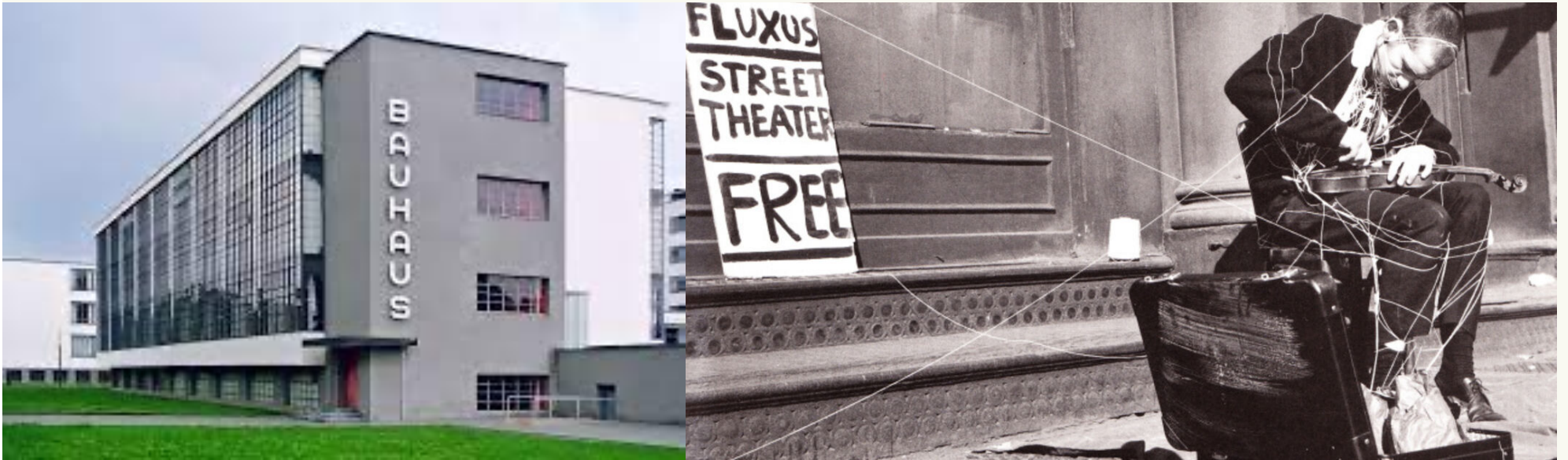
Black history and Blackness

<https://www.buyblack.games/>

Like you'd teach art movements



Like you'd teach art movements



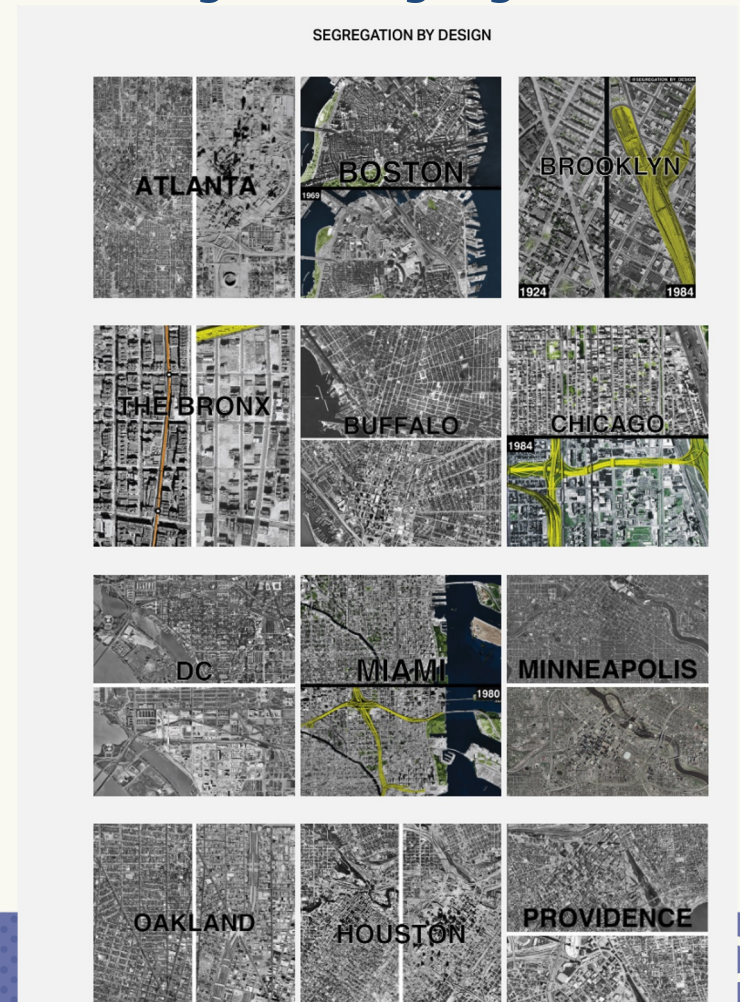
Encourage students to explore principles ...

Practice designing games about

Segregation

(not only about Black people)

The design of segregation

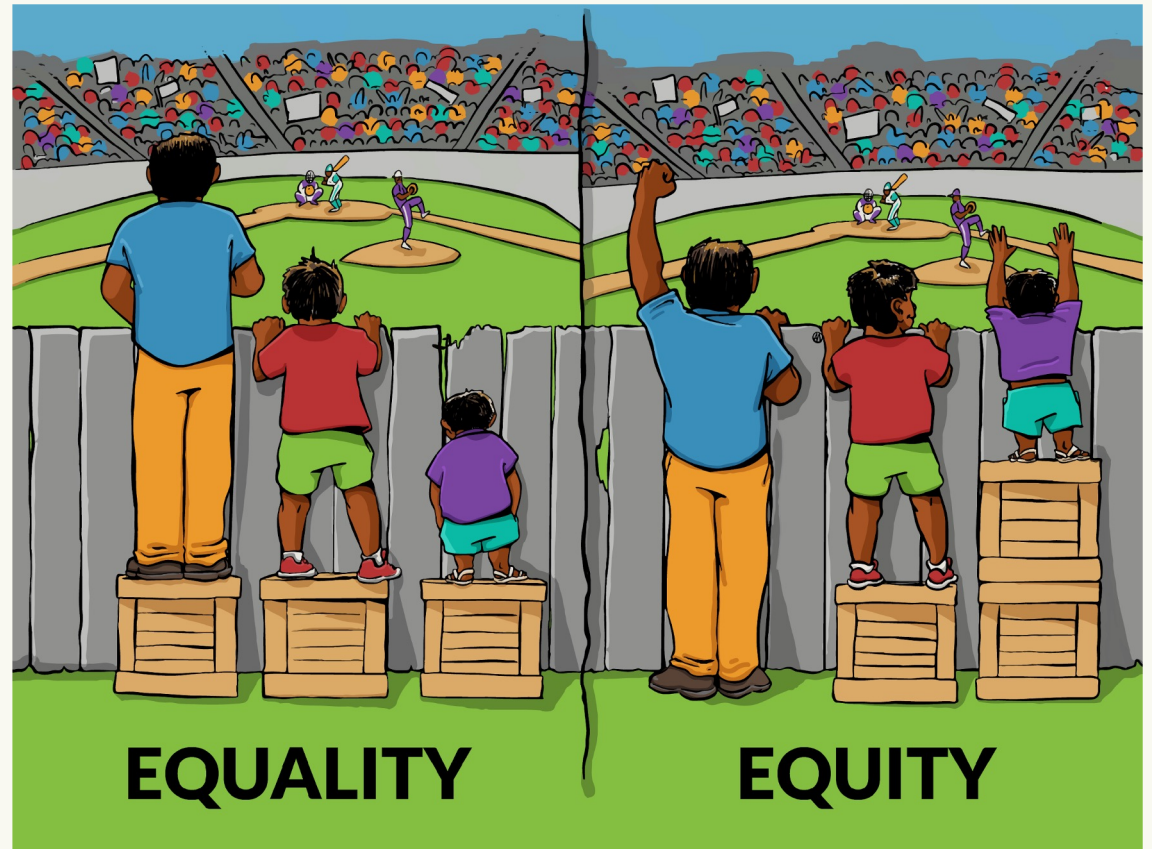


Design games about:

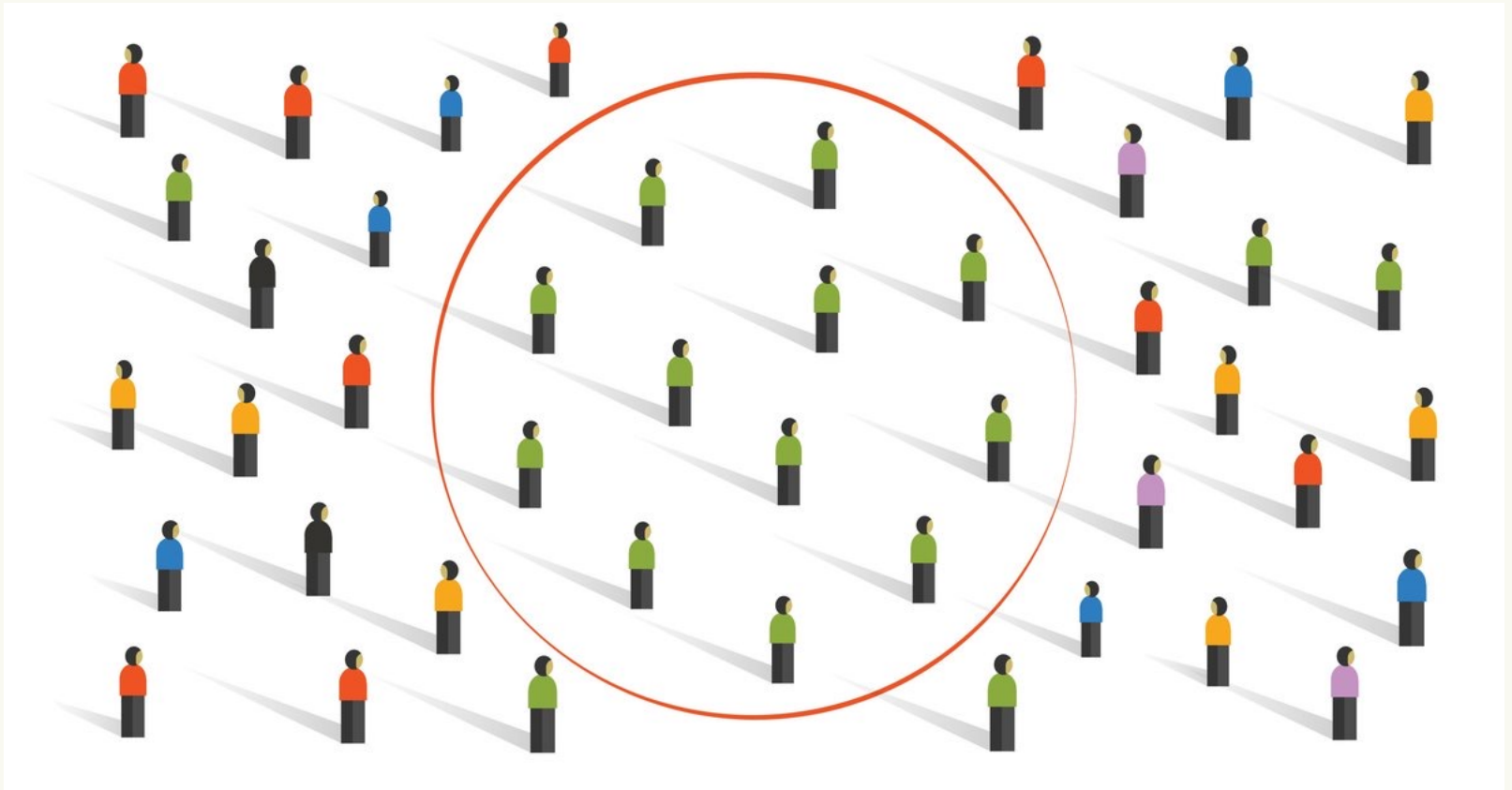
Decolonization



Design games about:



Design games about **discrimination**:



- Colonization
- Discrimination
- Segregation
- Equity/Equality

**These things aren't unique to Black people,
but teaching them through Black Game
Studies will be useful**

- Colonization
- Discrimination
- Segregation
- Equity/Equality

**These things aren't unique to [] people,
but teaching them through [] Game
Studies will be useful**

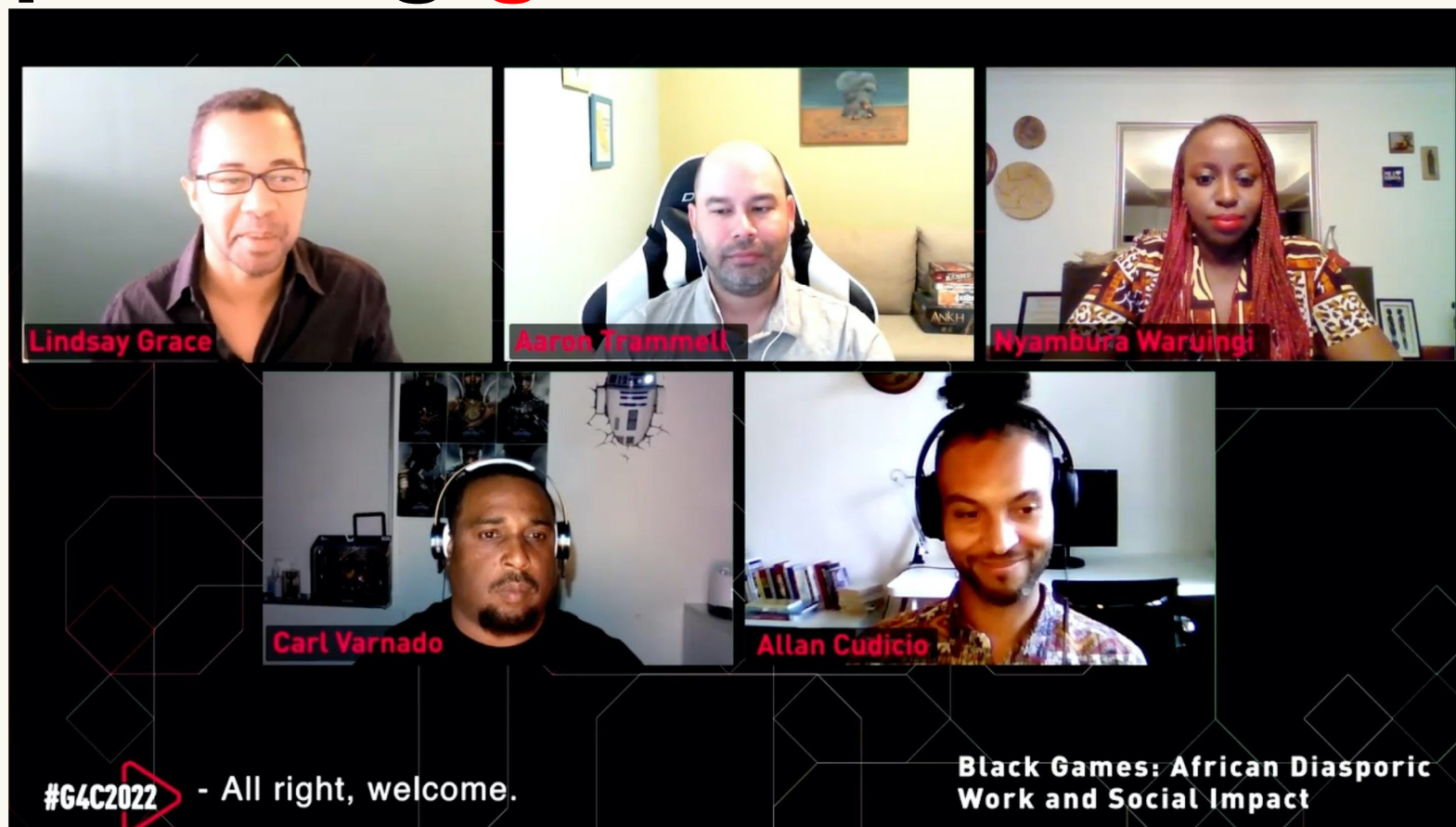
Teach them
about the
mistakes and
help them avoid
them



And the ones
that weren't
mistakes, but
were
problematic



Keep having **global conversations**



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Strategy #4

#GDC23

Strategy #4

(have me do it for you)

Strategy #4

New announcement!
As of today!

Black Game Studies Open Online Course

March 20-24, 2023 | San Francisco, CA #GDC23



Black Game Studies

This course introduces students to the fundamental of Game Studies as a discipline and learn what is unique about Black Game Studies as a focus. This course focuses on learning the fundamental elements of how games impart meaning and values, reflecting both culture and educating players about other perspectives.



About This Course

Meet The Instructor

About Us

This course introduces students to the fundamental of Game Studies as a discipline and learn what is unique about Black Game Studies as a focus. This course focuses on learning the fundamental elements of how games impart meaning and values, reflecting both culture and educating players about other perspectives.

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Open to anyone, anywhere



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[About This Course](#)[Meet The Instructor](#)[About Us](#)

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Open to anyone,
anywhere
(even in places where **DEI is a bad word**)

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About Us

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Let me teach it for you:

Course Learning Objectives


- Describe the value and key characteristics of general game studies
- Describe the relationship of games to culture, community
- Define Black Game Studies and the many ways in which games can be analyzed from pragmatic to intention
- Identify characteristics of Black Games as distinctly reflective of the community's experience and the nature of the diaspora
- Identify games from African developers and the significance of the African market to the global economy

 UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
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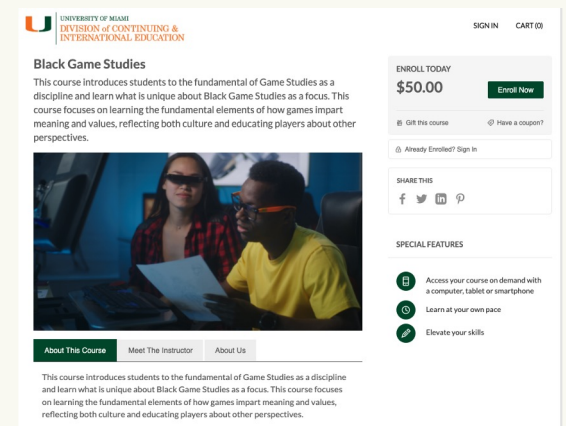
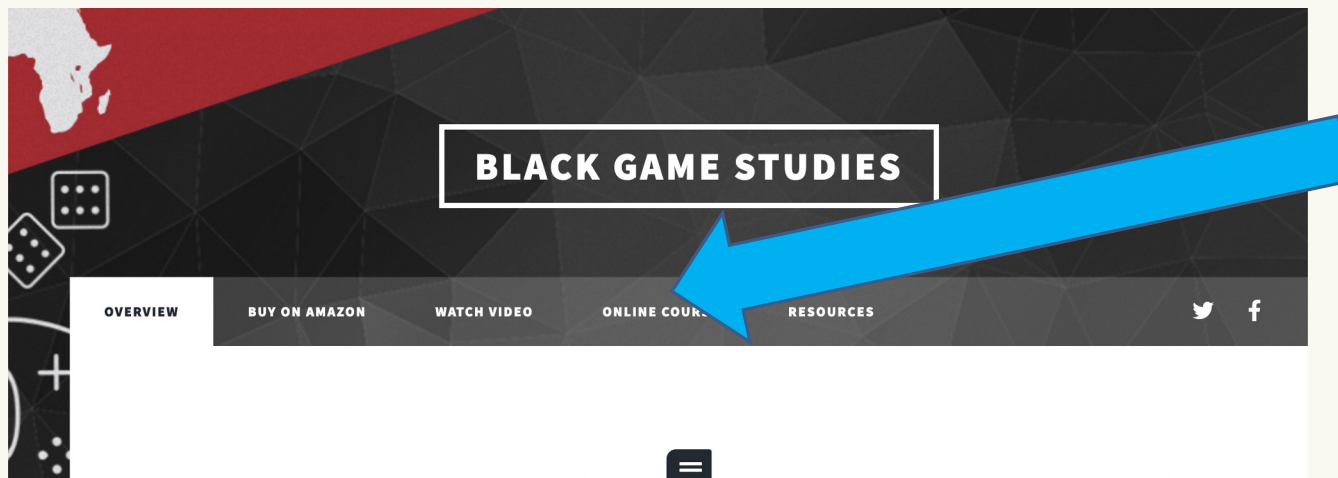
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 Learn at your own pace

 Elevate your skills

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Questions and Answers

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