Encoded Subjectivities: Interpreting Blackness and Representations of Black Women on inDmix.com | Social Media + Society

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The study of Black digital and Internet cultures is a burgeoning site of inquiry. While prior research on identity and the Internet does well to address racialized experiences online, further exploration into so-called niche or under-the-radar Black digital spaces is necessary for a more comprehensive documentation of early Internet applications, practices, and digitally mediated sociality during the early 20th century. This article centers Black southern Internet culture by examining the website, InDmix.com, a photo-based asynchronous web media platform, and one of the first Inrnet visual catalogs of southern Black college nightlife of the aughts. Combining scholarly inquiry with first-person storytelling, this article provides historical references to contextualize an aspect of early Black Internet culture while arguing that Black women, in particular, mediate the process of visibility and valuation since they carry conceptions of beauty and Blackness across the platform. Engaging with concepts of architectural Blackness and informational Blackness, this article demonstrates the ways in which southern Black youth culture combined with early Web 2.0 technology practices provides a digital snapshot of college and urban nightlife experiences along the backdrop of socioeconomic and cultural shifts in the Gulf Coast region of the United States. In the spirit of documenting Black digital cultures, this article concludes with a conversation with founder Ikem Onyekwena, the Phi Beta Sigma photographer and tech entrepreneur who founded InDmix.com in 2004.

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