

# Awakening Esu:

## The Significance of “Redbone” in Jordan Peele’s Get Out

Dr. James B. Peterson

Professor of English, Director of Africana Studies

**Tuesday, October 24, 2017 | 12:00 PM | Williams Hall, Room 070**

In his public comments regarding the choice to use Childish Gambino’s “Redbone” as the opening soundtrack for *Get Out*, Jordan Peele makes a particular case for connecting with his Black audience. “[F]irst of all, I love the ‘Stay Woke’ [lyric] - that’s what this movie is about. I wanted to make sure that this movie satisfied the black horror movie audience’s need for characters to be smart and do things that intelligent and observant people would do.” Peele’s case for this song selection is compelling in many ways. He is upfront and honest about wanting to establish an authentic rapport with his Black audience, an audience he believes is skeptical of the vigilance and intelligence of horror-movie protagonists. He is, in a sense, establishing some rules for a specifically Black “reader-response” experience with/to his narrative about a young black protagonist who (in the film) is subject to an onslaught of racial micro-aggressions, in tandem with the very real threat of racialized violence (psychological manipulation, human experimentation and body-snatching). This presentation will briefly explore the intricate connections between the lyrics of “Redbone” and the themes of *Get Out*. Given the fact that both the film’s creator and the song’s creator rely heavily on the African American practice of signifyin to produce their respective crafts, Gates’ (1989) conceptualization of an “Esu-neutics,” a metaphor for the interpretive process for Black literary critics, seems both appropriate and productive for the interface between the song and the film.



**Lunch will be provided for the first 20 people who R.S.V.P.**

**to Jeanne Kassis, [jek207@lehigh.edu](mailto:jek207@lehigh.edu) by Noon on Wednesday, October 18**

Office of Interdisciplinary Programs: 610-758-3996 | [incasip@lehigh.edu](mailto:incasip@lehigh.edu)