ENG257 African American Lit
Weekly Reading and Writing #3

READING

Tuesday
- Harriet Jacobs intro and *Incidents*: pages 279 – 315
- Elizabeth Alexander’s *Emancipation* (on back)

Thursday
- *Literature of the Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance*, pages 541 – 554,
  Paul Lawrence Dunbar *We Wear the Mask* page 918 and *The Blues* pages 48 – 49
  and your choice selections on the cd

WRITING: Choose One

- Now that you’ve read Douglass’ *Narrative* and are familiar with his literary style and voice, compare the work of Jacobs in style and voice and account (or speculate about) the reasons for these differences. Consider the very different predicaments that Douglass and Jacobs faced, not only in bondage but also in freedom. When Douglass periodically celebrates his hard-won emancipation, is he talking about a condition that could be available to Jacobs or other black women, even when liberated from servitude to white masters? How might gender influence and differentiate the experience of these writers? Could you identify a new trope in this writing?
- Identify and discuss some of the rhetorical features and narrative details of *Incidents* that reveal the fact that Jacobs was restricted by being a woman, by the protocol of women’s writing and by literary propriety, by prohibitions against women’s speaking of incidents that violate “literary propriety.”
- Consider all of the responses that you would have to the previous questions. Then place Jacobs in our lives today. Take on the persona of Jacobs and write an address to our LBCC community concerning the situation, the freedoms and the limitations for the black woman in our contemporary lives compared with the lives of black women in the 19th century.
- Analyze Alexander’s *Emancipation*. In your analysis, help your reader understand Alexander’s imagery by explicating the lines and explaining the language (e.g. what is gris gris, mojo, hoodoo?) and then explaining how this language and imagery connects to the imagery of this tradition.
- Do some research on Minstrelsy and make connections between this art form and Dunbar’s poem *We Wear the Mask*, page 918. What trope is this poem illustrating? Discuss this poem and this trope in relation to previous works in the tradition.
- Write your own blues in the tradition using any of the blues selections from our text. Then explain what we mean by the blues.

Due Thursday: FORMAT
- Word-process
- Write one full page single-spaced
- Include a heading in the upper left-hand corner (your name; date; ENG257 Weekly Writing #3)
Emancipation
by Elizabeth Alexander

Corncob constellation,
oyster shell, drawstring pouch, dry bones.

Gris gris in the rafters.
Hoodoo in the sleeping nook.
Mojo in Linda Brent's crawlspace.

Nineteenth century corncob cosmogram
set on the dirt floor, beneath the slant roof,
left intact the afternoon
that someone came and told those slaves

"We're free."