

“It Wasn’t A Match, It Was A Lesson”
A Multimedia Analysis of Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric*

<https://cems-citizen.samanthabonge.com/>

Sam Bonge, Malorie Hudson, Coleman Richards, Emily Trinh

ENG 220 White Paper

I. Project Description:

a) Original Description

- “It Wasn’t A Match, It Was A Lesson,” began because we found a lack in scholarly work about citizenship and microaggressions in relation to *Citizen*. We wanted to know more about what those concepts meant to *Citizen* and how they colored our reading, but we also wanted to continue the scholarly work about the lyric “you” and the policing of black expression. Our project’s model came from the idea of having a conversation, something interactive and collaborative both for us and our future audience. We envisioned a website that not only included our “talks”—our essays—but also a section of honest reflection of our reactions to *Citizen*, what the book meant to us or what it made us think.

b) Changes

- We had planned to use photographs, audio clips, podcasts, etc. to continue *Citizen*’s multimedia theme, but various supplemental ideas such as recording our own podcast were not completed due to time constraints. We narrowed the scope of our essays, focusing on four main areas, and did not include other topics such as violence against black bodies, and analysis of the art work in *Citizen*, as these topics did not align with our final determination of the project.

c) Final Project Description

- Our final project analyzes how citizenship and microaggressions can be understood in the context of *Citizen*, and how they are intrinsically linked. Our main content is all found under our “Analysis” tab. These four essays all deal with the consequences of language, specifically harmful, on African Americans and their daily lives.

d) Audience

- We hope that our project will help students, both at the high school level and collegiate level, interact with *Citizen*, as well as be accessible both to those extremely familiar with *Citizen*, and to those who have read it and want to know more. We hope our project will start and/or continue contemporary conversations about microaggressions and citizenship in America, specifically their cyclical effect on each other.

II. Individual Roles and Responsibilities:

a) A majority of our work was collaborative, with each of us editing and adding to each other’s work. Each person also wrote their source reports, literature review, reflection, and about me. The annotations on the bibliography were split amongst us.

b) **Coleman**

- Analysis: *Microaggression and Citizenship in Citizen: An American Lyric*
- “It Wasn’t A Match, It Was A Lesson”: An analysis of the final words of *Citizen*, and why we chose this phrase as the title of our website.

c) **Emily**

- Homepage text and introduction to the project, “Unheard Voices”
- Analysis: *The Lyric “You”*

d) Malorie

- *Timeline of Situations Presented in Citizen*
- Analysis: *On Serena Williams* and a timeline of Serena Williams career as mentioned in *Citizen*.

e) Sam

- Analysis: *Defining Microaggressions In The Context of Citizen*
- Short pieces of background information including: *On Citizen: An American Lyric*, *On Claudia Rankine*, *Mission Statement*, *Microaggression Collections and Projects*.
- General website design and structuring.

III. Project Goals and Objectives:

a) Overarching Goal

- Our goal was to create a website to contribute to the conversation about microaggressions and citizenship in relation to both *Citizen* and to our current society. We wanted to continue scholarly work related to *Citizen* and add a link between the, often background, topics of microaggressions and citizenship, bringing them to the forefront of conversation.

b) Objectives

- To gain an understanding of the scholarship surrounding *Citizen*.
- To work effectively and collaboratively.

- To create a digital platform for our argument, through an accessible and well designed website.
- To fill a gap in the scholarly literature on *Citizen*.

IV. Project Activities and Progress:

a) Project Communication and Management

We created a group text to communicate with each other the first time we met up, which was shortly before literature reviews were due. We met up several times, once to twice per prototype. We kept each other updated when we finished parts and when we had new ideas in the group text.

b) Chronological Progress by Prototype

Early Planning

- We read *Citizen* and began broadly researching, without a clear thesis or narrow focus in mind. We completed our source reports and literature reviews separately.
 - A common thread in our literature reviews seemed to be minimal direct critical conversation about microaggressions and citizenship in *Citizen*, and a lack of the interaction between the two. This connection became the crux of our thesis.

Prototype One

- We created a free WordPress site so that we'd all have equal access and claim to the work in a way hosting on one of our domains did not grant.

- The website was given a basic layout with placeholder posts, a section for our research, a section for analysis and a homepage. We wrote individual about me posts and posted our research.
- We wrote a mission statement, and decided to write four main sections of analysis, with each of us taking the lead on a different one, though they would all be edited and worked on by all of us.
- We wrote the “*Defining Microaggressions In The Context of Citizen*” analysis.
- We sent out a survey about experience with microaggressions to STRIDE students (a group for students of color at Davidson).
 - Few answered the survey, and as such we could not complete our plan of creating a collection of experiences, similar to those collected by Rankine, as well as creating our own photo-series.

Prototype Two

- We became researching different tools which would enhance our website - we decided on using timeline to create a timeline of the situation scripts and of Serena Williams career.
- The timelines would not embed in the current website as a free WordPress site does not allow the installation of additional plugins. As a result, the website was re-created on a Davidson domain. This gave the website greater functionality and creative control.

- This required making a subdomain, and replicating everything from the original website to the new one.
- At this time, we attempted to add a plugin for facilitating the embedding of an HTML flash game of brick breaker, which illustrated the “tennis metaphor” explained in our section “It Wasn’t A Match, It Was A Lesson”. We were unable to use it in the end, as even after trying about six different plugins, we could not get it to work.
- We wrote background information including: summaries on Claudia Rankine and on Citizen, as well as a short section detailing the meaning of the quote we picked for the title of our website.
- After speed dating/user testing in class, we overhauled the organization of the website and added videos to add color.
 - This overhaul included a complete change of the homepage.
 - We wrote a true thesis statement and introduction to the website.
 - We added a recommendation for how to progress through the site on the homepage.
- We made pages for research, behind the scenes and analysis to fit along the top navigation bar rather than their placeholders. These allow for navigation within that category. The other option is to use the drop down menus. We also restructured the menu to make more sense.

Prototype Three

- We finished the remaining three essays: On Serena Williams, The Lyric “You,” and Microaggressions and Citizenship in *Citizen*, and we added subheadings and abstracts to each essay.
- We added a permissions statement to the master bibliography updating the bibliography with our added sources.
- We attempted to use the soundcite tool to add audio to block quotes but ran out of time to fully learn how to use the software, and then record.
- We began making a reading soundtrack for the book, and had mostly completed it at this stage, but realized it no longer fit the tone or goals of the website as a whole and so was not included.

Final Additions

- We wrote our reflections, and added captions and alt text to images and videos.
- We proofread and checked the links throughout the website, and we updated the directory.

V. Accomplishments and Lessons Learned:

- a) Our essays explore the importance of microaggression and citizenship in *Citizen*. We gained an understanding of the broad conversation surrounding *Citizen*, and what aspects are lacking in that conversation.
- b) We explored the importance of placing microaggressions at the forefront of scholarly discussion on *Citizen* by writing about what the term microaggression means, linking the

term citizenship to microaggression, and discussing the ways the lyric “you” affects the reader’s experience of the microaggressions described in *Citizen*.

- c) We presented our findings on a digital platform. Using Wordpress, we created our own website. We divided the website into sections that met our needs and facilitated a good user experience. Our website guides a user through our arguments by way of our menus, and we got the most from our digital platform by adding timelines and videos to the site, which we used as argumentative tools and ways to offer connections to background information. We followed UX and accessibility principles in building the menu, and adding alt text to all images.
- d) Though each essay was spearheaded by one group member, each essay had the entire group contributed to research, discussion, and determination of how it fit our website overall.
- e) In hindsight... (“**had we world enough and time.**”)
 - Each essay discusses microaggression, but I think the project as a whole could have been improved by reference to each-other’s work in each essay. This way, the collaborative nature of the project would have been more clear.
 - Had we had more time, we would have added other uniquely digital tools to the project, such as audio clips and a photo-series.

VI. Grade Recommendation:

- A-
 - Our project accomplished many of the goals we set out to achieve. We reviewed and added to scholarly discussion and presented our findings on a website that

uses timelines, menus, and videos. However, we think the project could have been improved by having more supplemental work on the website and greater conversation between each-other's arguments.

VII. Works Cited:

- See either our website or the link below for our bibliography.
- [Master Annotated Bibliography](#)

VIII. Appendices



