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Hollywood Coverage

Date: 6.20.13

Title: Race. The Color of Shame
Author: Marie-Madeleine MacLean
Genre: Supernatural Thriller

Locale: New Orleans & England
Pages: 560
Period: Present

Logline:

As a ballerina uncovers the truth about her past with help from beyond the grave, a rich, powerful and racist American-Caucasian family is destroyed by a Negro wayward gene.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement
Concept:	☐	☒	☐	☐
Story:	☒	☐	☐	☐
Characters:	☒	☐	☐	☐

Recommendation for Adaptation:

- ☒ Strongly Consider
- ☐ Consider
- ☐ Needs Improvement

Best Medium for Adaptation:

- ☒ Motion Picture
- ☐ Television Series
- ☐ Live Theater

Brief Summary:

ANGELA, an exotic-looking ballerina, learns that her African-American parents adopted her. Her Caucasian biological parents gave her away because her skin color expressed a Negro wayward gene hidden in their prestigious lineage. Angela contacts her biological grandmother EILEEN and brother EDMOND, members of New Orleans's wealthy, white elite. Racism leads Edmond to order a hit on Angela. As the hitman closes in, Angela discovers further shocking truths about her past and her past lives with the help of a black voodoo priestess.

Synopsis:

In New Orleans, baby ANGELICA MARIA AURORA is born to a rich and powerful southern Caucasian family: the Hoxworths. Angelica's GRANDMOTHER sees the baby's skin is darkening due to a Negro wayward gene. Despite the mother's tears, the grandmother has the trusted family doctor, like many times before in the past generations, suffocate the mulatto baby to keep their dark secret.

Comments/Suggestions:

Race is a thrilling, thought-provoking and highly imaginative novel. It succeeds at feeling original due to its heady mixture of reincarnation, ghosts, the disparate worlds of London and New Orleans, family secrets, violence, and sensuality. Even more impressive is that all these elements unite into a coherent whole, anchored by deep themes and a set of colorful, compelling characters.

If one wishes to adapt RACE into another medium, film is recommended. Theater could work, and the novel is rich enough to begin a TV series. However, the novel's structure lends itself to film, which will also best do justice to the potential for lush visuals. Regardless of which path one pursues, several themes, characters, and scenes are strongly recommended to any adaptation.

Combining reincarnation with ghosts, and Christian angels with voodoo gods, makes for an interesting and original supernatural cocktail. It helps recast familiar Christian iconography in a fresh way for readers – there are angels and demons at work here, but they are different from those of other films. Maintaining this mixture, primarily through Mambha's methods of worship, place of worship, and visions, is recommended.

Angela is a great protagonist. Her unique beauty, both elegant and exotic, will make quite an impression onscreen with the right actress. Her personality is ideal – she is strong and moral so the audience can admire her, prone to confusion and naivety so they will find her sympathetic, and fiery so they will be entertained by her.

The blind Mambha is a fascinating priestess. Emmanuel and Jeanette will also be a striking pair onscreen and will help boost the film's sex appeal. Elisabeth is a character that audiences will initially feel conflicted over and then feel great sympathy for. Pierce is important to include in any adaptation due to his nuances. His infidelity is initially well-hidden, so even the audience is caught off guard by it. His mixture of subtle racism and sexism is an intriguing and believable response to his overbearing family. Eileen is perhaps the most important supporting character. Films too often portray elderly, wealthy women like her as incapable of change, so when the book peels back her layers to reveal her true character arc, it is a welcome surprise. Her grandson Edmond provides a villain the entire audience can despise. Finally, Grande is a wholly unique character who can instill both fear and pity in film audiences.

Among scenes not already mentioned, Angelica's birth and death are a powerful way to begin the story. A scene of Angela losing herself in glorious self-expression in the ballet could be quite moving onscreen. Rose-Mary's flirtation with Pierce in front of Angela will be appropriately infuriating to watch. Angela's horrible nightmare of rape in the shack, followed by Grande murdering the thugs and Jeanette in reality, will be particularly powerful in a film. The events in the crypt and the climax in Eileen's study will make for thrilling sequences.

Thus, *Race* could become an entertaining film that makes audiences look at and think about the world in a different way. An experienced screenwriter could reduce and shape the story into a screenplay, with the dialogue and pacing required of the format, to best appeal to agents, producers and talent. The elements explored above could be building blocks in such an endeavor, helping bring *Race* to wider audiences on the big screen.