

Thesis: Gender, sexuality and race has a great impact on women in the 1950s.

Evidence: “Feeling Pretty” by Negron-Muntaner indicates how Puerto Rico is legally a part of the United States, but socially it is not accepted by white people in America. The Puerto Rican was not considered a “regular” American by society, and was constantly misjudged and stereotyped. Negron-Muntaner explains how Puerto Ricans were described as violent, sexual and more likely to be a criminal throughout West Side Story and that these representations were translated into the way most people viewed them in real life.

Song Analysis: The well known song, “America” juggles the positive and negative aspects of migrating to America. The song is meant to show the collision of cultures, within the Puerto Rican ethnic group. Anita is the more optimistic character in this song, as she only focuses on the positive aspects of America. Bernardo is seen as the more pessimistic character, as he acknowledges the positive aspects of Puerto Rican, rather than the women in this song and that reinforces gender stereotypes. Through the lyrics of the Puerto Rican women in the song, it can be revealed that gender roles towards women in Puerto Rico were more strict than that of America at the time.

Scene Analysis: Anita’s attempted assault supports the theme of sexuality on women in the 1950s. When Anita goes to Doc’s store to let Tony know to wait for Maria and that she is going to be late, she encounters the Jets and they quickly judge her and believe she is not trying to help out and they sexually assault her. They begin with mocking the language they believe is spoken by Puerto Ricans. Then they strip the clothes she is wearing off of her. Towards the end of this scene, Maria is on the floor and the Jets seem as though they are ready to rape her, but Doc walks in and stops this from happening.