

## **ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** Rest to resist the grind: A critical rhetoric of Tricia Hersey's The Nap Ministry

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For this thesis, I conduct a critical rhetoric of Tricia Hersey's The Nap Ministry, an Atlanta-based organization that believes rest is a form of resistance and reparations. I argue Hersey's Nap Ministry serves as an interruption to "grind culture" discourses which encourage workers to optimize their labor and time and perpetuate cycles of exhaustion and burnout. Notions of the grind and the hustle have only been exacerbated amid the COVID-19 pandemic, among other events. Tracing neoliberalism, as well as historical and material understandings of the worker, rest, and sleep, I illustrate our arrival at this grind culture moment. Analyzing fragments from The Nap Ministry's Instagram, Twitter, and blog, I apply a critical rhetoric to Hersey's use of religious topoi and illuminate how she convinces her followers to prioritize rest through an array of rhetorical strategies; from her preaching style, to her prophetic rhetoric, to her strategic ambiguity, to her grounding in womanism. I argue The Nap Ministry reconfigures her audience's positioning of the body at rest from an abject body to a resistant body. Implications and further directions regarding perceptions of resistance, social movements, the private/public sphere, and embodied knowledge are discussed.