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UHURU is an award-winning magazine that aims to promote innovation, creativity and culture through the voice of marginalized students on the Kent State University campus. Having a history of Pan-African teachings and values, UHURU magazine focuses on the plight of all students around the globe.

UHURU, which is Kiswahili for ‘freedom,’ serves as a platform for student creation and expression in art, writing, photography and graphic design, while discussing racial, social and/or political ignorance.

As a derivative of Black United Students, this publication is dedicated to disseminating knowledge of the African-American experience in the past, present and future.

Although we focus on the unification of the African-American population, we also serve as a safe haven for other people of color, as we reflect all people of color at Kent State University.

We appreciate your interest in UHURU Magazine and hope you enjoy our spring 2018 issue, which is centered around the theme of Identity. If you’re not already, we hope you become a supporter by following our social media and sharing with a friend.

We’d also like to give a special thanks to Kevin Dilley, Jacyna Ortiz, Tami Bongiorni, Norma Young, Lorie Bednar and Shannon Christen-Syed!
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A CONVO BETWEEN EDITORS

THIS YEAR, UHURU MAGAZINE UNDERWENT A DIFFERENT TYPE OF LEADERSHIP. INSTEAD OF ONE PASSIONATE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, THERE WERE TWO: SIERRA ALLEN AND ILE-IFE OKANTAH. INSPIRED BY A DISCUSSION BETWEEN BEYONCÉ AND SOLANGE IN INTERVIEW MAGAZINE, SIERRA AND ILE-IFE DECIDED TO DO THE SAME. BELOW, IS A CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO FRIENDS, TWO SISTERS AND TWO EDITORS.

ILE-IFE: When did you know you wanted to work with magazines?

SIERRA: Honestly, I’ve always been writer. I can’t imagine a time where I didn’t write, or read actually. I never asked for fun toys for Christmas, but books, journals and arts and crafts instead, as lame as it sounds. If I had to pinpoint an actual time, it was when I first picked up Cosmopolitan in middle school. I loved the way the magazine felt in my hands. I love the way the colors popped and models looked. I fell in love with print media as a whole.

As far as writing, it was a given. As a child who stuttered growing up and even now at times, writing became my way of self-expression. Writing allowed and still allows me to speak without stumbling. It allows me to be confident and not shy away from syllables that trip me up. I can speak my mind without having stutterer’s anxiety. Working with magazines is a way for me to express myself while being creative.

ILE-IFE: Why do you think representation in the media matters?

SIERRA: I’m not sure if white people know it or not, but they aren’t the only race in the world and artwork should mirror that. Politics aside, that’s just being fair. But if we’re being political, as we always are, representation matters because it’s important to see our reflection as black people. A real reflection and not the whack stereotypes they press onto us. People believe everything that they see on TV, especially children, and I want to be a part of the productions that affirm a black kid’s dream and not crush it.

ILE-IFE: Where do you see yourself in five years?

SIERRA: Wow, in five years, I’ll be 29. I just know I want to be surrounded by love and laughter and engulfed in success and happiness. Success to me doesn’t mean having a lot of money, but making a difference in my community and inspiring others while doing what I love. But I wouldn’t mind having all those things with a big bank account.

ILE-IFE: Who do you identify as: Anna or Elaine Welteroth?

SIERRA: Ah, that’s easy. Anna Wintour is a classic powerhouse, but you already know we’re obsessed with Elaine. I identify with her more and her being black doesn’t hurt. I adore her aura and power and as one of my role models, I hope to share the same success and grace as she does one day.
Sierra: What does the actual word Uhuru (freedom) mean to you?

Ile-Ifé: Of course you would start with a hard hitting question, I love it. But to me, Uhuru represents a safe place. This magazine has been my Wakanda. To me, Uhuru is freedom from being in such a white-washed field. Don’t get me wrong, I love Kent’s journalism program, but it is exhausting sometimes. I feel like I’ve been tokenized. I never feel truly at home. I’m always looked to as the voice for diversity. I’m constantly asked to explain black issues. And I’m honored that people hold me to that standard, but Uhuru is the place I get to go and just be me. No explanations needed.

Sierra: How did you find your voice not only as a writer, but as a black writer?

Ile-Ifé: This is actually something I’m asked a lot, but I haven’t formulated the answer yet. I think it’s because I am still finding my voice. Which sounds crazy because I talk SO MUCH and it’s my job to talk. But the more I speak, the more I find comfort in the voice I’m developing. Sometimes, something will slip out my mouth and I’m like, “OK, that was good sis.” But anyway I talk to myself more than anyone else, and I try to listen to my subconscious. I take time to have conversations with myself and to check in. I don’t think I could do what I do if it wasn’t authentic. What I can say is that over the years, my voice has become stronger because of the relationship I built with myself.

Sierra: What does the actual word Uhuru (freedom) mean to you?

Ile-Ifé: I really really loved Emily’s. I pushed for her as a writer. I met her at some speaking engagement I did and she walked up to me and asked to be a part of the team. I also wanted to have a white person on our staff as a writer because I think it was important to have as many perspectives as possible. Anyway, Emily wanted to explore how she grew up with conservative and slightly racist parents but she doesn’t have the same values as them. I thought that was pretty deep. Especially in today’s society, I think a lot of white people need to look in the mirror and take responsibility for learning about diversity instead of living in their bubble. I admired Emily for that, and I think her voice is one that really needed to be heard.

Sierra: What do you hope the audience’s takeaway is after their journey through this edition?

Ile-Ifé: That we’re dope as hell. Just kidding. But no, really, I want people to see that it’s OK for black people to be proud of their blackness. I want people to see that there is not one singular black experience; we are the most diverse people on this planet. Yes, we all have a special bond, but we all describe our identities differently and that’s OK. I want people who aren’t black to pick up the magazine and recognize that this is our space, but it’s OK for them to support and maybe learn something new. I want people who are black to read it and be proud of it all.
MEET THE TEAM

JOSEPH (JOJO) YOUNG
Art Director

CANDACE SANDERS
Art Director

ALEX THARNISH
Illustrator

AUSTIN COATS
Illustrator

ALESHA WILLIAMS
Illustrator

BRIANNA ROBINSON
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ALINA HOWARD
Writer

EMILY DAHLSTROM
Writer
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Amber Bishop – Multimedia Specialist
James Yarbrough IV – Illustrator

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Jakim Harvey       Ananda Prioleau
Jhariah Wadkins   Hannah Robinson
Courion Williams   Sydney Schweiger
Rachel Christian   Ditz Quarcoo

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Writer

TANISHA THOMAS
Writer

SOPHIA JOHNSON
Writer

YULANI RODGERS
Writer

NICOLE MOSTELLA
Writer

MYA DAVIS
Writer

MIKE ESEWEN
Writer

MARIAH HICKS
Writer

JAYON MILLER
Writer

TIERRA THOMAS
Honorary Member

KIMBERLY DEBNAM
Writer
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BLACK & QUEER?

RUE MONROE, 26, THEY-THEM

Rue is a sophomore at Kent State University studying costume design & technology. They identify as Afro-Latinx(o), Non-Binary specifically Bi-Gender, Pansexual/Bisexual, Polyamorous and Greyromantic. I chose Rue because they have been active in their community as President of Kent State URGE and has participated in many campus protests and events. They have a strong voice within the community and makes sure intersectionality is included in every conversation.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE IN A BLACK QUEER RELATIONSHIP?
It is reassurance and acceptance. I've been in relationships with other black queer people in the past and I never really felt more at home and like myself than I have with another black queer person. There are just things a black person can only understand from another black person. There is a culture with being black that you can't internally explain that one person knows the other person would just have to be black to understand it. Me and my partner both grew up as black femmes. There are just things we talk about and it's almost like we were siblings 'cause we grew up in the same [type of] household. There are things their mom has said that my mom has said we've had similar hairstyles.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BLACK AND QUEER?
To be black and to be queer is to be a part of history. To be black and to be queer is great, but also hard. I love being me and I love these intersections about me, but it can be hard because society almost wants to tear you apart and put you into these boxes that my identity doesn't fit into. So, to be black and to be queer is a blessing and a curse.

WHY AREN'T CERTAIN IDENTITIES IN THE QUEER COMMUNITY INHERENTLY QUEER?
So, Polyamory (for example), is something that can exist that isn't necessarily gay because you can be polyamorous and straight. Queerness is something reserved for someone in the LGBTQ spectrum. Polyamory is an amplifier, not inherently queer. "You can be a part of the LGBTQ+ community, but they could not identify as gay or queer if they are straight and/or cisgender."
JORDIN MANNING, 20, THEY-THEM

Jordin is a sophomore at Kent State University studying psychology. They identify as Non-Binary & Sapphic and uses they/them pronouns. I chose Jordin for this interview because they have worked in the LGBTQ+ community since attending Kent State. Altogether, Jordin has had positions in Threads, an organization that focuses on the intersection of being a queer person of color. They were also involved in PRIDE!Kent, Fusion Magazine and Transfusion. Currently, Jordin is President of Threads and is the Activism Initiatives Chair for PRIDE!Kent.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BLACK AND QUEER?
I think about it a lot because of the oppressive forces that are against time, but I also don’t think about it because it’s just my reality. So, really what it means is that it’s something that is always present whether people like it or not. I think that’s what I like about it, which can be a disadvantage. Especially if you’re somebody that’s flamboyant or gender non-conforming and constantly, pretty much either has too or end up presenting in such a way that’ll give that away for you.

DO YOU EVER HAVE TO LEAVE A PART OF YOURSELF AT THE DOOR IN EITHER OR BOTH OF THOSE SPACES?
Absolutely. There are times where I just know that me being like, “Hi, I’m Jordin and I go by they/them pronouns,” is going to be taken terribly and horribly and will be ignored. Sometimes I’m not so much worried about me talking about “I’m Jordin and I’m Sapphic” in academia because if they do anything extreme, I can report them to student conduct and that’s kinda a privilege for me. But I always been like, ‘Well, I’m never gonna see these people again so who gives a fuck.’ However, with leaving my blackness at the door, it’s a lot more, I feel like at times, a lot more complicated because, well I’m doing it pretty much all the time because I’m at a PWI.

Sometimes things hit me in the face and it’s like, ‘wow you’re really bold.’ A lot of times, literally in my classes, people will make micro-aggressive comments about black people and they’ll put on a “blaccant,” they will appropriate AAVE in my presence or they don’t take me seriously. In academic spaces, or in (for instance), white queer spaces, they will not take my voice seriously and they’ll take it with a grain of salt. Or, they’ll listen to me for brownie points but completely forget what I said and just keep doing it and then expect me to let them know when they mess up, even though I told them already, which is exhausting because why do I have to do that. That’s your part. I’m not doing all the work.

HOW DO PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY REACT TO YOU BEING NON-BINARY?
Since a lot of people don’t care to understand being non-binary, ‘cause there are some people who don’t understand it), they want to and that’s fine. Not everybody is gonna know that I go by they/them pronouns, but there are other people who just have an aversion, or what I have known to be called as, transmisia or homomisia (-misia means aversion,) as opposed to phobia, to not further stigmatize people who have legit phobias. They just have an aversion to being trans period, so being anything but “cis” is going to upset them and make them be super violent or just terrible. I really have to gauge that and sometimes I end up having to present as cisgender which is at my own expense because dysphoria is terrible, especially social dysphoria, so I definitely have to be careful about policing my identity around black spaces. I just have to gauge the room and also see where my allies are because if I don’t know anybody, then no, it’s not gonna happen. But if I already know people and I know they would stick up for me, then it’s like, ‘OK well, I can do this and if they don’t like it, well, sucks to suck.'
“TO BE BLACK and to be QUEER is great, but also hard...society almost wants to TEAR YOU APART and put you into these boxes that MY IDENTITY doesn’t fit into.”

TYRONE BERRY, 19, HE - HIM

Tyrone is a sophomore at Kent State University studying fashion merchandising and costume design. He identifies as a cisgender, gay male. As a recognizable face within the Kent State community, he is Director of Programming for Textures, Vice-President for Exquisite, Director of Fundraising for Voices of Testimony Gospel Choir and also won Prince for the 2017 Annual Renaissance Ball.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BLACK AND QUEER TO YOU?
Motivation. It adds an extra layer of motivation for me. It’s double the motivation. I get motivated by everything pretty much.

DO YOU EVER FEEL THAT YOU HAVE TO LEAVE A PART OF YOURSELF AT THE DOOR WHEN YOU ENTER EITHER SPACE?
In a black space, no because you really can’t take your skin off, so either way, I’m going to be black and always use being black just to really motivate me. Any realm that I’m in, I just allow it to motivate me, but being gay, I do sometimes have to kinda leave it at the door just depending on where I am, just to make sure that I’m safe in certain situations.

DO YOU THINK THAT LEAVING BEHIND YOUR QUEERNESS IS A SURVIVAL TACTIC?
Yes, I do.

DO YOU THINK HAVING A QUEER ROLE MODEL AFFECTS YOU?
It does. Having a queer role model can really motivate you by having someone to look up to. In this world, a lot of times, a lotta people don’t have people to look up to. Having someone that identifies you, not only in one way but both ways of being black and queer, you can learn a lot. Even with being your older self, you’ve made it to being the older you in the time that you were in. It gives me some of the strength to make it in the times I’m in now. So, having a queer role model is definitely important.”
"THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY IS A COMPLEX ONE, SHAPED BY INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, FAMILY DYNAMICS, HISTORICAL FACTORS AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL Contexts."

The above quote comes from "The Complexity of Identity: ‘Who Am I?’" written by Beverly Daniel Tatum. In this passage, she talks about the multiple individual characteristics (which can be interpreted as identities) we have that shape us as individuals.

When asking the question, "Who Am I?", it is important to ask that question in the context of one's past, present and future. In the article, Tatum mentions that when asking a group of her psychology students to complete this sentence "I am ____", a large proportion of students of color and those who grew up in ethnic enclaves mention their racial and ethnic groups.

WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF MARGINALIZED AND UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS, the activation of identity is a daily process, especially in the identification of the ‘in-group’ and the ‘out-group.’

"There is a privilege in not having to identify," said Anna Hutchinson, Teaching fellow and PhD candidate in Political Science. in Political Science and Political Science PhD Candidate. "The historical elements of identity groups don’t get activated...until another group has threatened their identity."

Socioeconomic status also plays a large factor in how people identify. When looking at The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundations analysis on income in the United States, which is characterized as federal poverty percentages, there was a large amount of ethnic populations who live in poverty. Those a part of ethnic groups living in or around the margins of poverty often practice social identity via social categorization.

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE COMPLEXITY OF IDENTITY HAS SO MANY INTERSECTIONS, WHICH MAKES EACH GROUP AND MORE IMPORTANTLY EACH INDIVIDUAL SO UNIQUE."

THESE SOCIAL CATEGORIZATIONS CREATE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THOSE ‘IN-GROUPS’ AND ‘OUT-GROUPS.’ An example is: Two individuals are both on different margins of poverty. Individual A is living within poverty and individual B is one economic status above the federal poverty line. These individuals organically create in-and-out groups because one group has some element the other does not, whether it be political, economical or social.

These political elements of identity have created a salient environment in which change is always challenged at the expense of the out-group. Through these challenges, we see the outward expression of identity more publicly, which leads to further differentiation and the creation of more in-and-out groups.

It is important to remember that the complexity of identity has so many intersections, which makes each group and, more importantly, each individual so unique.
I WILL NEVER BE A FEMINIST.

I understand that is a very extreme statement to make, but the feminist movement relentlessly proves to be a notion that I can not stand behind. I do not believe in achieving women’s rights based on the equality of sexes, when there is not even a less painful, more evident equality between white and marginalized women.

I refuse to be invisible and pose with women who have yet to even acknowledge or allow their thinking to be influenced by the injustices black women and people of color have been facing forever. However, I do not want to make the wrong impression. I agree with the women’s liberation movement, but not in the ways that white women have approached it by making significant actions, actions which actually seem to be hypocritical notions to women who do not look like them. As a result, I find myself in the position to question where that puts me in my activism as a black woman who believes in equality and wants it in totality without ignorance.
I LOOK BACK TO EARLY BLACK FEMINIST MOVEMENTS to deepen my understanding of what it means to conquer sexism and racism simultaneously. The discernible truth that not all has yet to be recognized with integrity. Looking specifically at Kimberle Crenshaw and her analytical understanding behind the demarginalization of the intersection between race and sex, I see vivid representation and coherency behind a valid theory that has yet to receive proper accolades. While if it did, I feel that many other people of color would begin to question their stance in the larger feminism movement.

CRENSHAW FIRST INTRODUCED THE TERM “INTERSECTIONALITY” in 1989, but this overall concept of this “simultaneous oppression” is deeply rooted in the concept of slavery, much like everything else. Similar to other critics of the white feminist movement, Crenshaw connects her ideas to the relevance of Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I A Woman?” speech. Crenshaw responded, “When feminist theory and politics that claim to reflect women’s experiences and women’s aspirations do not include or speak to Black women, Black women must ask, ‘Ain’t we women?’”

Studying past movements and even attending a more current movement- the Women’s March in 2017—I found myself lost in a sea of white. Appearing lost when I am not even feeling lost, making the whole event somehow revolve around the overall white fight for supremacy. Black women were forced to fall to the sidelines and it began to seem as if I were just in attendance to cheer white liberals on. At that point, I tried to remove myself from the movement, but then saw other women of color continuing to move forward only to be the diversity we all want to see.

I realized how this is just one never ending cycle, all taking root in the very eurocentric woman’s suffrage movement, organized by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Whether they know it or not, they aided the rise of white supremacy, therefore, implying that all the women’s suffrage movement was actually good for was to create a way for white women to feel the same superiority as their white male counterparts. While by the 1960s, white women had the freedom to vote, many black women still hadn’t gain that liberty in southern states, officially marginalizing African-American women.

THAT DAY, I LEARNED THAT YOU CANNOT SPEAK ON IT IF YOU ARE NOT PRESENT. A lot of times just being present, in that moment, can help you to understand yourself. I believe some moments, we aren’t meant to fully comprehend right then and there, because they wouldn’t have such a substantial influence on our own paths to self discovery and comprehension of how to exist within a world against us. It all just really makes me wonder how I, a marginalized woman, can gain a real, in-depth, scholastic education from people who have chosen to see my people’s detriment and treat it like a natural disaster. It’s brutal ignorance that I am forced and determined to defeat by creating a world between where I can thrive within it all.

I cannot say what white women experience, simply because that would be ignorant and I do not believe in being what people are to you. Though, I do know that white trauma has no real relevance in comparison to what being a black woman means in this country and the oppression that women of color experience everyday. The oppression that quickly translates to hatred towards an entire population only because of the melanin in their genetic makeup.

THIS IDEA IS SIMILAR TO A POINT TA-NEHISI COATES MAKES in “Between the World and Me.” Majority of white people have still yet to even try and understand the difference between the worlds and when given the opportunity to explain, some will make it seem like we are awakening from the same “gorgeous dream.”

The thing is, I don’t think any black person who’s aware of the past and constant mistreatment of their people, will ever be able erase it when it is treated much like, as Coates puts, “an earthquake, a tornado, or any other phenomenon that can be cast beyond the handiwork of men.”

Until white feminists realize this, the slogan that reads “everyone should be a feminist” will remain irrelevant.

A feminist is supposed to fight for the rights of all women, but what have feminists really done for black women? I believe there cannot be total equality until women of color are not only noticed, but respected. Thus meaning, when all feminists make the conscious decision to utilize their supremacy to fight for women of color first, there will be a transition within the morality of a nation, translating to a real, lasting legitimate change.
HE'S NOT REALLY BLACK. WHY IS HE SO QUIET? HE MUST BE A LAME. REAL BLACK PEOPLE DON'T ACT LIKE THAT. LOOK AT HOW STUCK UP HE IS. HE ACT LIKE HE CAN'T TALK OR SOMETHING.

BEING BLACK & INTROVERTED

WORDS BY MIKE ESEKWEN

HE ACTS WHITE. MAYBE HE'S STUPID. WHY IS HE ACTING SO CREEPY, SITTING BY HIMSELF. HE MUST NOT HAVE ANY FRIENDS. HE MUST BE UP TO NO GOOD. MOST OF MY FRIENDS ARE BLACK AND THEY DON'T ACT LIKE HIM. MAYBE HE'S
LATELY, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH EVERYONE IS LABELING THEMSELVES AS AN INTROVERT, EXTROVERT OR AMBIVERT. Facebook and BuzzFeed quizzes allow for self-diagnosing, but they don’t go into deep detail on why a person identifies the way the quiz describes. Out of the three, the term introvert is often claimed due to minimal antisocial behavior, but it's much more than that.

An introvert is a person described as primarily concerned with his or her own thoughts and feelings. In Professor Susan Krauss Whitbourne’s article, “Nine Signs You’re Really An Introvert” that was written for Psychology Today, she shows nine behavioral signs that labels someone as an introvert.

ONE OF THE FIRST SIGNS OF INTROVERSION is when a person enjoys having time to themselves. The second is when their best thinking occurs when left alone. The third is a bit ironic. Despite the idea that introverts are quiet, under the right circumstances, they can be a good leader, opposed to others who are labeled as self-starters. The fourth is when a person is the last to participate in class or panel discussions. The fifth is when they’re forced to share opinions, rather than saying them on their own. The sixth in when they wear headphones when they’re in public. Even though everyone wears headphones now, a true introvert uses theirs to block out the opportunity for any communication. The seventh is when a person prefers not to engage with people who seem angry or upset. The eighth is when they wait until the very last minute to reach out to anyone via email, text or phone call, not out of procrastination, but out of communication avoidance. They also will not talk to anyone on their own; they’re the people you have to reach out to first. And finally, the ninth sign is when a person avoids any type of small talk.

When one looks at the media, follows pop culture or generalizations, black people are usually seen as loud, outgoing, charismatic, social and that of the like. What happens when a black man or women doesn’t fit those descriptions/labels?

Blogger Nichole Nichols wrote about her experience in “Four Lessons I’ve Learned As An Introverted Black Girl” for the Huffington Post. The first one is that regardless of how it may seem, she is not alone and there are more people like her. The second one is that since personality types like hers are opposite of the loud, irrev pertinent black woman stereotype, many people are perplexed by introverted black women like her. The third is that people assume that people like her are blank slates and believe they can fill in the perceived blanks as they see fit. And finally, the fourth lesson, “Quiet confidence is still confidence.”

Being shy and black, as said before, can be difficult and in some ways, worse than being introverted and black. The difference between the definition of an introvert and shy supports the claim because at least for introverts, they will put themselves out there and give more of an effort than those who are shy. Where one is shy, they will try their best to avoid any form of social situation overall.

Being black and quiet can also be nerve racking. Blogger, Shaunese Johnson, talks about how this has affected her life as well. First, she mentions the assumptions people have about quiet people; things like they’re bored, depressed, stuck-up, judgmental and so forth. She also mentions her speech problem and how she was a target of bullying. Although she only mentions her blackness a couple times, her essence of a black woman is still throughout the article.

I understand both Nichols and Johnson, and have lived their experiences myself.

GROWING UP, I was not as outgoing as my brother and didn’t have as many friends in my circle as the rest of my siblings. When I was in a group of a lot of people, I was either in class, on sport team, with family, or church because I had to be there. I didn’t talk much, so “quiet” was the first label given to me. People, whether black, white, or those of other race/ethnicities, would be puzzled at my silence. I just liked to listen and still do today and I didn’t have much to say.

I hated and still hate small talk, which is a trait of introverts and as a black boy, now black man, it didn’t give me an advantage to becoming a popular individual in the black community. I didn’t understand why people treated me or looked at me like I was weird.

I do have black friends and did make some growing up in my childhood and teenage life, but not as much as I wanted, unlike my sister, who’s also an introvert.

Being both introverted and anxious did not help me get out of awkward moments. I would and still make jokes to try to prove a point, but people will look at me in a confused way. This was and still is a challenge, although I have improved tremendously. A girl in high school told my little brother she was surprised that I talked to her for the first time and she was happy. Back then and still today, I didn’t want to be the center of attention, I like socializing, but it must stimulate and really interest me, or I want to leave. Still today, too much intense activity, especially the one that puts me on the spot or gets me out of my comfort zone, drains my energy.

“QUIET CONFIDENCE IS STILL CONFIDENCE.”

I looked to people like Martin Luther King Jr. because it was said that he was an introvert, but still lead the civil rights movement, which confirms the third sign of introversion in Whitbourne’s article. Beyoncé Knowles also said she was shy, until she’s in her element of performing.

I learned to come to terms with who am through the support of my close friends family, religious beliefs and more. It took a lot of energy, tears, sweat and intellectual strength, but it was worth it. Can I be still a black leader or a considerable influence on the black community? I believe I can.

Being black and labeled an introvert, shy and quiet was interesting and tough to handle, but I made it through. I have had my positives and negatives. This gave me friends while also kept me from making friends. It got people to like, hate, misunderstand and praise me, but no matter what I went through, I’m glad I was able to come to terms with who I am and be comfortable with it because there’s no greater love than self-love.
BOYS DON'T CRY

PHOTOS BY CANDACE SANDERS

IT'S IMPORTANT TO CULTIVATE A SPACE OF SHARED OPENNESS and vulnerability for men of color. Boys do cry and they need a space to do so, while also feeling supported. By erasing the social norm that sharing feelings is exclusive to women, men should build a strong community by not doing it alone, but linking arm in arm, thought to thought, experience to experience and bearing one another’s burdens.
AYE!

WHAT'S THE WORD?
AAVE & THE EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGE

WORDS BY BRIANNA ROBINSON
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALEX THARNISH
**HEY! HI. HELLO! YO! WASSUP?**

These are all common greetings that we hear from day to day. A couple of these greetings probably wouldn’t be used in emails to professors, but why not? It’s most likely because professors generally don’t use AAVE. What’s that? Well, African American Vernacular English, or AAVE, is a form of English dialect prominently used by black people in the United States. Popularly known as Ebonics, AAVE is a complex, but still valid form of expression, despite being considered less than or “ghetto.”

The way we think of language has a heavy influence on pop culture, entertainment, marketing and even the way the entire world speaks.

**A LOT OF COMMON SLANG WORDS AND PHRASES** are used in different contexts, depending on the tone and situation at hand. For example, the word “sis” is used in countless ways:

- “OK sis!!!”
- “OK sis.”
- “OK sis?”

It could refer to a person, it could be used as a term of endearment or even in a condescending way. It all depends on pragmatics, or context.

Another commonly used AAVE phrase is “You good.”

- “You good.”
- “You good?”
- “You good!”

This phrase can be used as confirmation, a threat, a question of concern, or even to be dismissive, again, all depending on tone and context.

Despite its popularity and growing use by coffee shops, suburbanites and Kardashians, the AAVE we know and love today was created by none other than marginalized people.

**ACCORDING TO DOCUMENTARIES LIKE “BLACK TALK” AND “PARIS IS BURNING,”** AAVE was created by black people and to be even more specific, poor black people and queer black people. These people probably didn’t expect their everyday communication methods to become as widespread, but much like anything else created by black people, it would later on be exploited by people that lack the origin knowledge of their favorite phrases. (No Karen, “Bye Felicia” is not about a nosy neighbor who brings too much egg salad, it’s actually from “Friday.”)

An issue with appropriation in this sense is how far does it go and where do we draw the line? Wasn’t AAVE a “for us, by us” thing? We’ve seen black culture influence all culture through music, fashion and even language, but how far is too far? When credit isn’t given where it’s due, black culture is then exploited.

For example, in 2014, then-teen, Kayla Newman, also known as Peaches Monroee, made a Vine video where she coins the term “Eyebrows on fleek.” Though it’s impossible to trace the exact origin of the phrase, the influence of “on fleek” in popular culture was very prevalent in the past few years.

Considering the countless amount of times we’ve seen or heard it since 2014, you’d think Ms. Monroee was rich from royalties, but unfortunately, that isn’t true.

The lasting impression of language is often shown in pop culture and media consumption, which unfortunately leads to the exploitation of language and culture. The increasing popularity of AAVE is owed to the prominence of black culture on the internet. Black culture’s presence on the internet through Vine, Instagram and especially Twitter, has truly revolutionized how the world communicates and what we find as acceptable. AAVE’s popularity has created a new means of self-expression that we haven’t had before.

**LANGUAGE SHAPES EVERYTHING WE DO,** it allows us to communicate with others, express ourselves and even though our lingo is misused or misinterpreted, it’s amazing to see how influential the things we do naturally can be. But sis, this ain’t nothin’ new. We been knew.
HERE WE ARE, 20 AND SOME CHANGE. Still trying to find our "ism," our “thing,” our place in the world. Ourselves.

As a soon-to-be graduate, I’m finally entering the stage in life where I won’t identify as a student. That’s right. After years of instructional education, I will no longer be confined to the somewhat cage-like structure of a classroom.

As freeing as that sounds, it raises the question of, “Who am I now?”

I THOUGHT THIS ANSWER WOULD BE A COMPLEX ONE. An identity derived from the mixture of this and that; resulting characteristics from this experience and that experience; collective ideologies of a strict, Christian preacher’s grandchild, yet current millennial Omnist; even displeasing traits from undercurrent issues.

But after reflecting, the answer was simple. I am black and being black is the root of everything I do; everything I am.

“I’m a black woman.”
“I’m a black writer.”
“I aspire to be a leader in the black community.”
“I’ll be a black graduate who beat multiple statistics.”
“I’m experiencing black love.”

I not only arrived to this conclusion by establishing my labels, but by my response to things as well. Everything I do, enjoy, say and believe in, is a direct impression from my race. Being black in America is its own expense, so much that we had to create our own culture. A culture that’s often ridiculed, yet mimicked and looked up to, which is why I take so much pride in identifying as such.

To me, being black is one of the best gifts God has ever rewarded me with. It’s like I was chosen to be a part of a cool club that comes with natural swag, humor, style, creativity, resilience, hustle, art, literature, vitality and magic.
“TO ME, BEING BLACK IS ONE OF THE BEST GIFTS GOD HAS EVER REWARDED ME WITH. IT’S LIKE I WAS CHOSEN TO BE A PART OF A COOL CLUB THAT COMES WITH NATURAL SWAG, HUMOR, STYLE, CREATIVITY, RESILIENCE, HUSTLE, ART, LITERATURE, VITALITY AND MAGIC.”

EVEN WITH THE ODDS SYSTEMATICALLY PLACED AGAINST US, still, we rise. For centuries, our ancestors have found ways of turning nothing into something and mastering the unlucky cards that were and still are dealt to us. I am here today because of them.

Being black is beautiful because it’s a lifestyle in its own. Even though every person of color isn’t related, we’ve most likely had experiences that are analogous to one another, which creates an unspoken, yet loud bond.

We’ve all been purposely late to functions because we comprehend the rules of C.P.T., (colored people’s time) and know it won’t be poppin’ until an hour or two after it starts. We all know loud gospel music on Saturday mornings signaled an unwanted cleaning day. We’ve all had to volunteer our mom for either the ride there or ride back because she “ain’t doin’ both.” We all had different grandmothers, but still seemed to have the same one. We all had different holiday gatherings, but still shared the same experiences. Those #ThanksgivingWithBlackFamilies and #GrowingUpBlack statues on social media aren’t just memes, but a collective recount of shared memories I’m glad to be a part of.

Despite the struggles, I love everything about being black. Hardships made triumphs even sweeter and created generational resilience. We share a vibrant culture of phenomenal talent, knowledge and sass others hate, yet idolize simultaneously. Being black is a huge part of who I am and I wouldn’t want to identify as anyone else. I’m honored to be affiliated with those of a rich background and culture. I’m honored to share the ebony essence only we understand.
Suddenly, techno symphony music played and my attention was glued to the television screen; “Korben Dallas! Here he is, the one and only winner of the Gemini Croquet contest...” My eyes expanded widely as a cheetah printed bodysuit glided to the vocal point of the screen. Interest was immediately sparked when Ruby Rhod, a black androgynous radio host with cutting edge fashion and wigs, stepped onto the television during the 1997 classic, “The Fifth Element.” Not truly understanding at the time, but this was my first glimpse into what being black in the future looked like. *

According to the Oxford dictionary, Afrofuturism is a movement of literature, music, art, etc., featuring futuristic or science fiction themes which incorporate elements of black history and culture.

Ruby Rhod, played by comedian Chris Tucker, exhibits what masculinity and sexuality means to individuals now and will mean in the future. “The Fifth Element” casted numerous black actors in supporting and background roles, but other science fiction franchises were not so generous. “Star Trek,” “Star Wars” and other science fiction platforms have limited black representation in their cinema, causing many black viewers and fans to feel left out of the future.


“But when, even in the imaginary future—a space where the mind can stretch beyond the Milky Way to envision routine space travel, cuddly space animals, talking apes and time machines—people can’t fathom a person of non-Euro descent a hundred years into the future, a cosmic foot has to be put down.”

In 2018, majority of the black community is not aware of the term Afrofuturism or what it means. Ytasha Womack defines it as, “an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation.” Another way of looking at Afrofuturism is visualizing black culture through a futuristic lens. Our generation has been introduced to Afrofuturism through pop culture but has been blinded to it as well. Popular musicians and artists like Erykah Badu, OutKast, Missy Elliott, Kanye West and Janet Jackson, have displayed Afrofuturist elements in their music videos over the years.

Erykah Badu’s “Didn’t Cha Know” music video features Ms. Badu, an innovator of Afrofuturism, wandering a barren desert dressed in a modern spacesuit. Viewers can assume that Badu is an alien from another planet who has landed on Earth, by mistake. Throughout the video, the texture of Badu’s outfit resembles human bones and her headress looks as if it were the skull shape of an actual alien. “Didn’t Cha Know” oozes Afrofuturism because of the visionary look of her outfit and acknowledgement of black people’s existence on other planets. Most people assume that aliens are far more intelligent and advanced than the human race and should be feared. Maybe Badu was making more of an abstract statement with the direction of her video but, her use of science fiction and playing with the idea of extraterrestrial beings is undoubtedly Afrofuturism.

The power duo OutKast is also known for exciting and visually stimulating storytelling through music videos. The video “Prototype,” tells the story of a small family of aliens landing on earth in a spaceship. The creatures who walk out of the spaceship are all platinum blonde and are of different races and ages. The band of aliens are also sporting white jumpsuits with black embellishments. Tip-toeing carefully onto the grass, André 3000 sings his ballad of love with his alien clan surrounding him. Although none of the other aliens speak, they stay close to each other, almost mimicking André’s movements. It can be assumed that his character is the captain of the ship and is respected by his passengers. At the end of the video, the oldest alien transforms André into a human so that he can live happily with his female love interest.

What does this tell us about being black in the future? Maybe being blonde and wearing matching outfits will become a trend, but I see much more. Love is something foreign to these aliens but André’s character is immediately prone to it and accepts the feeling. Maybe this can be interpreted that black men will be more encouraged to show and act on their emotions in the future.

Known and admired for creating amazing spectacles with her costuming, editing and scenery in videos, Missy Elliott’s “Get Your Freak On” was pivotal in expanding my creative expectations. “Get Your Freak On” is top of the list for exhibiting Afrofuturist ideals because of her stage set up, background, characters and fantasy edits. The stage looks like an abandoned sewer under an innovative and exciting alien planet. People are dancing and climbing up walls, there are aliens smiling in the background and creatures are hanging upside down. The music itself seems like club music for a more advanced and fun species. During certain parts of the video, Missy Elliott’s head extends off her shoulders and her body distorts in unnatural ways. Her outfits are blinged out and flashy, which gives her an even more “out of this world” persona. Everything about Missy Elliott screams ahead of her time, but this music video definitely cements her in the Afrofuturism hall of fame.
Kanye West is a self-proclaimed genius and artist but, one thing he has yet to claim is that he is an Afrofuturist. His visual album “My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy” features a wide range of abstract and flattering music videos. One of his videos that shows the most Afrofuturistic love is “Runway.” The video is an array of ballerinas, all white dinner parties and closeups of Kanye passionately performing. Blogger Alisha Acquaye wrote her take of Kanye’s symbolism on okayafrika.com.

“In ‘Runaway,’ Kanye West’s short visual album to ‘My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy,’ horror, beauty, sensuality and wonder meet to narrate an afrofuturistic love story. The sickening red skies, supernatural essence of nature, awkward, all-white dinner party, lonely dark roads and, of course, the stunning Phoenix (Selita Ebanks), all contribute to a sublime, yet symbolic, world that critiques our views on love, fertilization, sacrifice, rebirth and how we interact with people who differ from us. It asks: what does it mean to be a runaway? And can we run away from our realities?”

I was the last in my friend groups to see “Black Panther” and didn’t know what I was going to receive. Memes and chatter on social media branded the film as an instant classic and sparked even more excitement and expectation within me. When I finally saw it, I was shocked at how much pride, love and lust I could feel for fictional characters and a fictional place. But should we say that everything about “Black Panther,” Wakanda and its values are fake when it represents certain black excellence in a future world?

“Black Panther” is about more than a bullet biting, crime fighting Kingdom; it is also a symbol for what black people could’ve been and could be if it weren’t for systematic oppression. Wakanda is an African nation that has never been invaded, is technologically advanced and its residents are every shade of black imaginable. This movie is more than just a blockbuster hit, it is an anthem for black pride and a beacon of hope for the black individual.

“...AN INTERSECTION OF IMAGINATION, TECHNOLOGY, THE FUTURE, AND LIBERATION.”

I agree with Alisha’s analysis wholeheartedly and admire the storytelling chops in Kanye West.

Janet Jackson is no stranger to producing unprecedented music videos that match the rhythm and innovation her music generates. She and Busta Rhymes, who is also known for having extreme creative insight about the future, pulled no punches with “What’s It Gonna Be.” The music video starts with a glass of water mysteriously vibrating off a metallic counter in an empty room. The same water from the broken glass then levitates and transforms into Busta Rhymes himself. Covered head to toe in silver avant-garde armor, Busta Rhymes proceeds to pop-n-lock while reciting his lyrics. The camera pans to Janet Jackson, who is wearing a midnight purple cape with a ridiculous train and a purple and black bodysuit covered in silver ringlets. Throughout the video, Janet Jackson exudes sexuality as she commands the screen. Busta Rhymes continues to dance and turns into a human form of metal. The video is chock-full with Afrofuturism. Their outfits reflect wardrobes from 2081. The sexy bodysuit Janet Jackson is wearing would be something a futuristic stewardess or dancer would wear. Either way, it is definitely an outfit that is after our time. Busta Rhymes’s silver suit is also not something the average citizen on earth wears from day-to-day. Both costume choices for the video read, “To Infinity and Beyond!”

Recently, black America was impatiently waiting for the debut of the film adaptation of “Black Panther,” which came out in theaters February 2018. The movie was originally a comic book that was created by Marvel legends, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby and its first appearance was in a “Fantastic Four” comic back in 1966.

Writer for The Washington Post, David Betancourt, speaks on the effect that the Black Panther comics had on black readers. “The Black Panther had allowed comic book fans of color to look past the medium’s lack of diversity and take solace in an undeniable fact: He’s simply one of the coolest superheroes around.”

Following his statement, Betancourt also writes on how Evan Narcisse, a writer of “The Rise of the Black Panther,” describes what the portrayal of the Black Panther to young viewers could provoke. “We’re in a political moment where the president of the United States called people from Haiti and Africa, he calls those countries ‘shitholes,’” Narcisse says. “If you’re a young person hearing that...you need to see a superhero that’s smart, cunning and noble, who also looks like you. Granted it’s fiction, but superheroes have always had an aspirational aspect to them.”

It can be expected that black children next Halloween will be throwing away their Superman and Wonder Woman costumes and begging their parents to be T’Challa or the Wakandan general, Okoye. The powerful positive representation that “Black Panther” displays could be the medicine that provides joy, togetherness and hope in the black community, as it honors previous Afrofuturism ideas and embodies future possibilities.
IMAGINE HAVING TO RELY SOLELY ON YOUR SOCIAL GROUPS to understand something that goes beyond yourself. What would you know about a race, class, language, lifestyle, or even culture if you weren’t exposed to them on a regular basis? The answer for most people would be nothing beyond what they have learned from the media. The media can be considered the most potent means of communication. From television and movies to books and the internet, we encounter and interpret media for hours on a daily basis. Since its early beginning, the media has, whether intentional or not, always been a means of educating us about math, literature, politics society and, most importantly, culture. It allows every consumer the opportunity to learn about anything that they otherwise would not experience frequent exposure to.

As a society, we often look to the media to understand things about race, class, and culture. The media allows everyone the opportunity to learn not only more about themselves but about other people as well.

ONE OF THE MOST POPULARIZED MEDIA FORMS IS FILM. Movies are often acknowledged for significantly changing American culture. Specifically, black films have historically been a method through which white people are exposed to black culture. Films are created to illustrate a story that can be realistic, or it can be a story of hope and admiration of the possibilities to come.

When a piece required the representation of a black person in early theatre days, rather than hire an actual black person, a white person stood in their place. Blackface became especially famous when actors such as Al Jolson from the show “Amos n’ Andy” utilized blackface instead of having to pay and hire actual black actors. At the time, colorism and racism ran
rampant and were defining parts of a culture’s identity. In the theatrical pieces, the actors would literally paint their faces black and outline their mouths in white to exaggerate them so they’d appear bigger. This methodology faded out as black actors slowly, but surely, made their way on to the small and big screens. By the 1930s, this trend suddenly faded and the practice was viewed as another form of bigotry to more audiences.

**AT THIS SAME TIME, MORE BLACK ACTORS WERE BEGINNING TO TAKE ON ROLES.** It was a small step but a step nonetheless. Yes, we were able to represent ourselves, but the representation we were chosen for was just as limited when they gave us blackface. A black doctor was never a character in blackface. A black professor was never depicted. We were, however, shown as being unintelligent and lacking in value. This portrayal is seen primarily with the first black actor to gain credit for a film, Stepin Fetchit. Unfortunately, his race and typecasted roles gave him the title of “laziest man in the world.” Fetchit’s career started to waver in the late 1930s, but just as one door closed for Fetchit, another opened for Hattie McDaniel. McDaniel is mostly known for her role as ‘Mammy’ in “Gone With the Wind,” which helped her to become the first black person to earn the Academy Award.

Both entertainers were pioneers in making white America acknowledge the talent and value of black people. There are many critiques of these performances, especially within the black community today, because the characters they portrayed often fed off of negative stereotypes of black people. These roles and the actors subjecting themselves to this type of representation is perhaps where the term “cooning” came from. To coon originally meant when a black person’s sole purpose was to entertain white people. This is when names such as Fetchit and McDaniel are mentioned, but the same is also said of modern actors such as Chris Tucker in “The Fifth Element,” Tyler Perry as Madea and just about any Wayans Bros. production. The issue isn’t that these narratives are being told, the problem is that this isn’t our ONLY narrative. White production companies have already spread the stereotypical behaviors and many feel as though the aforementioned actors are doing the same.

**THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF BLACK ROLES WE’VE SEEN OVERDONE IN MOVIES AND TV SHOWS ALIKE.** The thug is seen in any crime show. The magical negro, who comes to aid the white lead as seen in “The Green Mile” is almost a given. The black best friend is the character thrown into a show to fulfill the diversity quota and has limited dimension, which is commonly found in Disney and Nickelodeon shows. The domestic, like a housemaid or nanny, is unfortunately, a classic. And the one who escaped, like the black person who always quotes, “I pulled myself up by my bootstraps” is often depicted and most likely seen as “the one who forgot where he came from.”

Following the civil rights movement, many people began to question and seek answers in what way black people could succeed. At some point, we recognized we could no longer wait for white directors, producers and money to give us a chance, but we needed to make those environments on our own, for us and by us.

**FROM THE MID 1980S TO THE 2000S,** Spike Lee was a name that was often heard and referenced when discussing thought-provoking films that were a lesson to, from and about black people. Lee’s films were always compiled of political and social topics that were waist-deep in controversy. His most famous being “Do The Right Thing,” “School Daze” and “Malcolm X.” Lee is also noted for helping some of today’s black actors gain their recognition. Samuel L. Jackson, Nicholas Turturro and Denzel Washington were used in several of his films. The social and racial issues that Lee illustrates in his movies are depicted in more than urban neighborhoods, but in middle-class settings as well.

In 2017, Jordan Peele made history by writing and directing the critically acclaimed film “Get Out.” By using humor, drama and a touch of horror, Peele created a project that pushed the boundaries of what movies can do for society. This movie took scenarios that black people deal with daily and turned it into a science fiction think piece that provoked conversations about race in America. Some even argue that Peele created a new genre all together. The film earned him an Academy Award.
Award, making him the first black person to ever win the award for best original screenplay.

Recently, black people anticipated this year’s “Black Panther” with as much enthusiasm since its production announcement in 2014. This film was directed by Ryan Coogler who also directed “Fruitvale Station” and “Creed,” all of which starred Michael B. Jordan. “Black Panther” is the film many of us have been asking for even before we knew we needed it. None of the categorized black roles described earlier are in this film. Instead, we get to see black excellence in all forms. This film is the reverse of any stereotype people have made about black people and the continent of Africa. Wakanda itself represents a society in which slavery, racism and imperialism did not affect us.

All these representations, good and bad, derived from times where stereotypical ideologies were shared prevalently amongst non-black Americans and black Americans who wanted to change it. These negative characteristics and traits were forced on to black people until some decided to push back. Seeing more representations of us outside of the typical is long overdue.

IF THERE HAD NOT BEEN A STEPIN FETCHIT, WE MIGHT NOT HAVE HAD A WILL SMITH. If there had not been a Hattie McDaniel, we may not have our Lupita Nyong’o. Today, it is considered unacceptable to even imagine that we also accepted roles like those played by Fetchit and McDaniel. But in all honesty, these roles seemed positive, considering the limited options and opportunities black people had at the time. It encouraged us to see what we thought was right and then demand something greater from ourselves and society when we learned better. Though the roles we held came from demeaning and racist origins, that doesn’t mean that is how our story, lives, or representation has to end.

There are pioneers in history that we don’t talk about because they progressed our cause through a different method. They might not have marched. They may not have ever protested, but they did give us a starting position. A position that has placed us where we are today.
BEING BLACK
AT A PWI

WORDS BY YULANI RODGERS

GOING TO COLLEGE IS ALREADY A COMPLEX AND RIGOROUS JOURNEY FOR STUDENTS. From understanding how to receive the most financial aid, to balancing a social life with academics, it can be overbearing for anyone. For some students, however, the journey is even more complicated for reasons out of their control: their race.

If someone identifies as African American or black, they’ve already beaten one of many statistics by attending college. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 34.9 percent of black students attended college in 2015. However, beating the odds stacked against black students is only the first step in being successful.

Out of the thousands of universities and colleges that exist in the United States, most of them are labeled as a PWI or predominantly white institution. These are institutions where the community makeup has more white people than any other ethnic group on campus. Historically, PWIs have been places where black students must compromise their blackness just to be accepted and recognized.

In 1945, African Americans were limited by where they could go for education due to the control of wealth and power by white people. It wasn’t until pioneers like Thurgood Marshall took a stand against the “separate but equal” claims of the Supreme Court, that resources for African Americans slowly became available.

THESE RACIAL DIFFERENCES AND EVENTS HAVE NOT STOPPED IN THE 21ST CENTURY EITHER. As recent as last August, racially charged incidents are still happening on college campuses. The most infamous, as of late, was the Neo-Nazi rally that took place on the University of Virginia’s campus in Charlottesville, Virginia. Many people were severely injured and someone was even killed.

In the same way that Africa has the most genetic variation in the world, black students, faculty and administrators have various ways they navigate their blackness in a space that was not designed for them. Here’s a glimpse:
EUGENE SHELTON, JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION PROFESSOR:

Q: WHAT’S YOUR EXPERIENCE BEEN LIKE BEING A BLACK MAN ON A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CAMPUS?
A: My experience started before I was a student at Kent State. I grew up on the East side of Cleveland, and I was always in a predominantly black environment. The white world existed only through what I saw on television. I received a scholarship for a summer journalism program [at Kent State] and for the first time...I’m the only African American. It was very clear that I was different. Some of them didn’t like me there; pranks were played, names were called. It was a very unpleasant experience. I was contemplating leaving simply because this isn’t worth it, these people are crazy. What made me stay was when a professor read my lede as a good example. That’s all I needed to hear. Since then, that’s been my experience at Kent State. I’m the only African American. What I experienced as a teenager, I experienced the rest of my life. It requires you to have thick skin and a great deal of confidence in yourself. They don’t want you? So, what? You need to be here.

Q: DO YOU THINK IT BECAME AN “US VERSUS THEM” MENTALITY WHILE YOU WERE HERE?
A: I don’t think it was an “us versus them,” that’s just how they were raised...But I think you have to be selfish if you’re a person of color on this campus and not let that interfere in any way with your goal here...to get a degree, not be liked. That doesn’t mean let them disrespect you. You have to stand up for yourself.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME TIPS YOU HAVE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING PWIs?
A: Take advantage of the situation you’re in. Stay focused on why you are here. That other stuff is not what’s important. That would be my words of encouragement; don’t let others derail you from your goals and accomplishments in life. You have to believe in yourself enough.

Q: DO YOU THINK YOUR EXPERIENCE WOULD’VE BEEN DIFFERENT IF YOU ATTENDED AN HBCU?
A: I never thought about attending an HBCU. For my son, it was the most unpleasant experience for him because he was chastised for speaking “too white.” We all have our own biases, even within our own culture.

Q: WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM ATTENDING A PWI?
A: I’ve learned the real world.

GREGORY KING, THEATRE ASSISTANT PROFESSOR:

Q: WHAT’S YOUR EXPERIENCE BEEN LIKE BEING A BLACK MAN ON A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CAMPUS?
A: There’s this real need for diversity, but I don’t think they [Kent State] understand it in its truest sense of the word. They want you to look different but have the same way of thinking. They enjoy what I bring to the table, but they don’t want me to do it the way I do it. They like my voice, but not what my voice is saying. I can only protest police brutality if I do it the way you want me to do it. There’s always push backs and they provide me with a small space to evolve. In everything that I do, I have to make sure my Ts are crossed and my Ls dotted and it’s exhausting.

Q: DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE SPACES OF PWIS FORCES STUDENTS OF COLOR TO CHANGE THEIR BLACKNESS TO FIT INTO A WHITE MOLD?
A: They’re just ignored. They become invisible. I’m no longer going to live in the shadows or mute my words and be careful, no. People don’t take the time to give us the chances because somehow we become invisible and they make excuses for it.

Q: WHAT TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING PWIS?
A: Don’t. The schools aren’t equipped with the tools that you need. Ask the hard questions. What resources do you have available for students of color? What events do you have for Black History Month?
“THEY WANT YOU TO LOOK DIFFERENT BUT HAVE THE SAME WAY OF THINKING. THEY ENJOY WHAT I BRING TO THE TABLE, BUT THEY DON’T WANT ME TO DO IT THE WAY I DO IT. THEY LIKE MY VOICE, BUT NOT WHAT MY VOICE IS SAYING.”

A COMMON DEBATE IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY is about going to PWIs and historically black college and universities, also known as HBCUs. The challenge is deciding whether PWIs or HBCUs are adequate spaces for black people to prosper.

On one hand, HBCUs offer a more intimate and close-knit community than PWIs. Black students may feel included from the very first moments they step onto campus. Student life on HBCU campuses is also amplified with a sense of fellowship and familial ties with everyone around. However, many question the rigor of courses compared to PWIs.

PWIs were established longer than most HBCUs and had the experience to develop a higher level of intensity required from their students. Another plus of PWIs is that they tend to hold more weight in the academic world. Athletic programs at PWIs are usually better equipped, compared to HBCU programs and facilities. Students tend to pay the price for these perks. At HBCUs, more financial aid could be readily available for its students than black students attending PWIs.

The most common opinions are that PWIs prepare students for how society is in the United States because they are the most marginalized. In comparison, HBCUs allow students to be in an environment where they see more people that look like them; for black people, by black people.

HBCUs were created because educated white people deemed black people inferior and therefore, were not allowed to enroll or were denied by universities. So institutions like Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, Howard University, Lincoln University and Wilberforce University, just to name a few, were founded to provide a place that would directly serve the black community.

Ultimately, the decision should be based on each person and where they feel the most comfortable, but it’s important to remember that black is beautiful and uncompromising and should never be dimmed to fit a certain space.
As a child, I remember sitting at the kitchen table with the TV blasting Fox News and headlined with the crime of the day. I waited for my mother’s weekly rant about something being wrong with society as she too, watched the screen and drank her orange juice. Most of the time, I’d continue to eat my cereal in attempt to block her out. These memories seemed like nothing then, but whenever I reflected on the topics she ranted about, I uncovered the folds of the prejudice perspectives she was taught and was subconsciously teaching me.

The poem below is about my perspective living in a majority middle-class white community and the subconscious racist chain that continues to bond people.

Don’t date a black boy,
You’ll end up beaten, broke or worse, dead.
You’re a little white girl,
You deserve a white man.
That’s what they said…. underlying.
I grew up seeing one color and one color only…. white.
Surrounded by the fantasy of suburbia,
Recite.
The invisible laws of racial interaction,
Like roll your windows up, they don’t deserve compassion.
They’re lazy, violent and are taking from the government.
But when they try to get empowerment,
Fuck ‘em.

My childhood consisted of a bubble,
A bubble that had the easiest puzzle.
This is what is right and this is what’s wrong.
Simple and easy, or so I believed.
Wait, what about them do they belong?
No!
Why not?
Because that’s what’s wrong.
See, my childhood was a small factory.
And I was a toy,
Being manufactured as a soldier to be deployed
To a country called racism
To which I was supposed to protect.
But instead, I’d rather get shot in the head.
You see, the bubble I mentioned is not transparent but rather one-sided,
To which it reflects one point-of-view,
Which makes people divided.

Through these lies I lived...blindfolded.
Mindlessly absorbing false truths.
Molded.
Into the “perfect creation.”
As I swallow the poisonous tea,
My mind goes numb to pleas.
The plea of injustice.
Of inequality.

With limited vision, I still sought to understand,
Why this way is that way.
What about their circumstance?
STOP!
“I’m sorry, but we cannot pick up the phone right now,
Please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.”
On hold I felt,
Waiting for an answer that would never come.

You see, the factory that created me has one objective.
It can control, bend and rip away perspective.
Until what you believe is what they want you to see.
They are cautious.
Meticulous.
Calculating.

Employees mindlessly clock in,
To a job that holds them to a state of mind.
No thinking required.
 Doesn’t that sound nice?

Kids are taught the same lessons over and over,
“They don’t seem friendly” (because of their color).
Stereotypes develop, without actual context.
“That is what the news said.”
Nonsense.
Minds twisted without even knowing.
Overflowing.
With excuses that to them, seem logical,
“Why doesn’t Black Lives Matter change their name?”

“I mean, it’s confusing anyway.
“Like, don’t all lives matter?”
No shit they do!
But my friends couldn’t understand.
That black lives matter TOO.

As I grew older, I continued to struggle
Off the blindfold and out of the bubble.
Understanding
Was my main purpose.
To which I was certain
I would escape.

I assumed that leaving this bubble would be like leaving a prison,
High security up and no one gets out.
However, leaving the bubble was like free admission,
It was easy.
Yes, people tried to stop me.
Or they wouldn’t agree.
But I was still free.

But why?
No. “Why Don’t more people leave?” I thought.
Then, I realized that I was caught.
I was caught against my own thoughts.
As I exited that bubble,
My mind became a puzzle.
What I thought before about others,
Now I was truly ashamed to see my own colors.
The color of prejudice.
See, most people do not want to admit what they once thought.
That the clashing of two minds is what makes them distraught.
They’d rather be in the bubble,
Where there is no discomfort or trouble.
They can shut out the “difficult thinking.”
And live their life ever convincing.
That life is perfect.

I do not believe what I have said will change many lives,
But I do hope I will make people realize
A different point of view.
No matter how old we become,
Understanding others is something we can never get enough of.
I do not wish this poem to blame a certain person or people,
But to fix a cycle.
A cycle that has held people to the same state of mind.
If broken could give people new eyes.
BKSU ORGANIZATIONS

Ase Xpressions
Barefoot Dance Tribe
Black United Students (BUS)
Big Brotha’s Program
Black Femme Collective
Flashettes
Focus on The Future (FOF)
Golden Reflections
Kent African Student Association (KASA)
Kent Kulture
Legacy Dance

Male Empowerment Network (M.E.N.)
National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)
Sister Circle
Student Organization of Caribbean Alliance (S.O.C.A.)
The Impact Movement KSU
Textures
Threads
Voices of Testimony
W.O.K.E.

GREEKS:
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated
Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Incorporated
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated
GROWING UP, I never imagined I would find pop culture and politics merging as one. I always thought it was politicians’ responsibility to influence American citizens on what they should believe in or stand up for. I also never thought I would see the day I would contemplate an Oprah or Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson presidential run.

The presence of public figures becoming vocal in social issues is nothing new. Throughout history, figures such as Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali and Tommie Smith, were prominent figures who brought politics into their sports careers. Musical acts such as James Brown, Marvin Gaye and Nina Simone used music as a tool during the civil rights movement to uplift black people.

Now, with the help of social media, fans are able to see popular figures such as Gabrielle Union, Laverne Cox, LeBron James and more, say their true thoughts on where the country is going in the future. As the stream of celebrities taking a stand in social issues outside of their lane continues, one question still remains: is it the responsibility of public figures’ to use their platform to become a voice for the voiceless? After all, they have enough power to influence masses to rally for change in the United States.

NOTABLE MOVEMENTS, SUCH AS #METOO, BLACK LIVES MATTER AND THE WOMEN’S MARCH were amplified by the efforts of celebrities participating in the messages they produced, which was something
“SEEING CELEBRITIES USE THEIR PLATFORMS BEYOND THEIR CRAFT TO INFORM THEIR AUDIENCE ON POLITICAL POLICIES AND IDEOLOGIES REVEALS A VULNERABLE SIDE WE NORMALLY DO NOT GET TO SEE.”

not seen every day back then as it is now. Before, the entertainment industry and politics were often mutually exclusive to people who wanted to escape politics and have the leisure of passing time with something they enjoyed. This is fair because politics are exhausting at times, but celebrities are not immune to social issues happening in society. Just because they made it to the top of the ranks.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE #METOO MOVEMENT ENCOURAGED THE FOUNDING OF THE TIME’S UP MOVEMENT, which funded legal support to those who experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. It was created in the wake of the many sexual allegations against famous Hollywood director Harvey Weinstein. Reese Witherspoon, America Ferrera and Kerry Washington are just a few of the many actresses who advocated behind the cause. Actors and actresses showed their support to the movement by wearing black to the 2018 Golden Globes and musicians showed their support by wearing a white rose at the 2018 Grammys. It was one of the rare instances where we saw Hollywood take a collective stand against a social issue to show it affects them too.

During George W. Bush’s presidency, celebrities such as Kanye West, the Dixie Chicks and Green Day expressed their dismay to how he handled Hurricane Katrina and the Iraq War. Yet, they were met with negative reactions from those who saw them as just entertainment rather than political figures. The Dixie Chicks faced the worse end of the stick with the backlash as they were blacklisted by country fans and radio for their opinions.

HIP HOP AND RAP MUSIC OFTEN BLUR THE LINES BETWEEN ENTERTAINMENT AND POLITICAL COMMENTARY, Notable acts like N.W.A. and Public Enemy tackled the issues of civil rights, racism and police brutality through their music. It showed that music artists could use their art beyond entertainment and create a dialogue or change in the country.

Today’s artists continue that tradition. In Beyoncé’s “Lemonade” album, her song “Formation” provided visuals of police brutality and lyrics expressing pride in her baby’s afro and Jay-Z’s nose with “Jackson Five nostrils.” She even paid homage to the Black Panther Party at Superbowl 50 while performing the song.

ATHLETES HAVE ALSO BROUGHT POLITICS INTO SPORTS. Former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick became a prominent topic in the media after he sat down during the national anthem at a game. In response to the criticism he received, Kaepernick said, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color.”

However, critics were quick to dismiss public figures’ efforts to create a dialogue and promote change. Laura Ingraham, a Fox News anchor, took jabs at Lebron James, telling him to “shut up and dribble” as a response to his opinion on Donald Trump in his interview with Cari Champion. Ingraham’s statement reflects the thoughts of critics who believe elite celebrities have everything they need and have nothing to complain about. She also exemplifies the feelings some white citizens have about black celebrities too, which makes her statement multifaceted.

LAUREN JAUREGUI, who is a member of Fifth Harmony, made a valid point in an interview with Teen Vogue about celebrities getting involved in activism. “I can’t be quiet. I can’t. If I was given a platform where 3.8 million people are going to read what I say, I’m going to say it...I’m going to make sure people understand that this is not a joke. This is not something we can ignore. It’s not something we can just let pass by. This is something we have to be passionate and active about daily,” she said.

It is important public figures use their platform to promote activism because they have a powerful voice and influence. They have millions of followers on social media and fans who watch their every step. Seeing celebrities use their platforms beyond their craft to inform their audience on political policies and ideologies reveals a vulnerable side we normally do not get to see. By using their platform to create change, they are helping in the process of rebuilding a country by focusing on the discussions they think we should be having.
This past summer, Jay-Z released his 13th album, "4:44" and gave us all a clear view on ways we can build wealth in a system that isn’t particularity for us. His lyrics brought awareness to an issue that has affected the black community for decades: financial stability. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the average wealth for white families is seven times higher than the average wealth for black families. These same statistics mention that more than one in four black households have zero or negative net worth.

In 2018, it’s up to us to live our best lives and change the ways of monetary culture. Cheers to a year of investing, saving and building wealth.

SET REALISTIC SAVINGS GOALS

Start small with your savings goal, with the intention of working your way up. Set a realistic goal that makes sense with your monthly income. You don’t want to become discouraged because your goal of saving $100 wasn’t successful when it’s impossible to save that much. Focus on your ideal number and divide it into small weekly increments. Even just $5 per week brings you to over $250 in just one year.

SEEK ADVICE & EDUCATE YOURSELF

Before obtaining financial wealth, you must first gain financial literacy. Building wealth is not linear and it takes TIME. Gaining advice from business books, credible articles and financial mentors will put you in an active mindset to accomplish your goals. You must invest in yourself by learning all that it takes to achieve success. Financial wellness takes education, curiosity and willingness to learn new and unexpected things.
"WHAT'S BETTER THAN ONE BILLIONAIRE? TWO. 'SPECIALY IF THEY FROM THE SAME HUE AS YOU."

START BY INVESTING YOUR SPARE CHANGE

Investing can be intimidating and confusing, especially as a college student or recent graduate, but it's very important to start investing as early as possible. Getting started can be quite the challenge, but a few apps are making the process a little easier. The app, Acorn, works to debunk the stereotype of only investing large amounts of money. Acorn makes it easy and simple to invest the spare change that is left over with card purchases. There are a ton of other apps tailored toward investing and it's easy to find the right app or website that works for you.

KEEP TRACK OF CREDIT

Credit card history is one of the most crucial steps towards securing any bag. Good credit allows us to unlock numerous opportunities because it acts as a track record and builds trust. Having good credit is always the goal, especially if you plan to buy an apartment or car in the future. It's important to use credit cards very wisely. Yes, building credit is important, but it's also important not to swipe irresponsibly too. A lot of smart college students use credit cards to only make purchases such as gas or groceries. It's also important to only spend what you can pay off the following month.

BUILD & GIVE BACK

Building credit definitely takes time and will most likely will take at least 5 plus years. But it's really important to develop these practices and tactics. Consider starting a 401k at your job or a separate savings account for big purchases and emergencies. It's important to start these practices now and also educate your family and peers. As a community, we all have to come together, give back and support one another if we want to obtain wealth as a black community.

Unfortunately, financial literacy is often overlooked in the black community. As millennials, future parents, leaders and teachers, it's up to us to break the cycle. By educating ourselves and taking the proper steps for financial gains individually, we're creating the blueprint for collective wealth.
ODE TO MY SOUL
A PSALM OF PRAISE FOR MY PIECES

WORDS BY MARIAH HICKS
PHOTOS BY CANDACE SANDERS

I fear that I have wasted too much time not loving or wholly accepting myself. I have spent too many years dishonoring my pieces, sometimes knowingly, other times with an unconscious mind that was not aware of the damage it would cause my soul. In attempt to please everyone else, I found myself at the kitchen counter subtracting my truths and measuring in the right amount of lies, but there was no substitute recipe for what God had already molded with his own two hands. My dish was malnourished because I was missing the most essential ingredient: myself.

I lost touch with the woman I truly was. I lost her in the words of I am not good enough, I am not beautiful enough, I am not enough. After years of swallowing this bitter recipe, it was hard to disengage myself from the brutal practice of shaming and neglecting my pieces. I lost touch with the woman deep within, but now is an act of reclaiming all of her.

The journey of fully loving myself has been a clashing and calming of waves. Some days I can ride them with strength. Other days, I find myself drowning beneath the tide.

I was in the bad habit of comparing myself to others, a negative practice I am sure many of us engage in. I allowed the differences to define my beauty, values, success - and even my journey. It slowly turned into me shying away from myself, becoming unsure of what purpose or worth I held.

I believe I have just began to find that purpose, which lies within the powerful woman at the core of my soul. I had abandoned her - a careless act - and she was only beckoning to be tended to. I had to travel back to the nest of my spirit.

The journey is one where I became intimate with my pieces. Through reconnecting with myself, I am now able to put reason and passion into everything I do. If there is an exact word for my purpose, I am not sure what it is. I can only describe the feelings: free, beautiful, and intentional.

I am sure many of you have been or are currently in my shoes. Taking steps of soul-searching, digging deeper and trying to find your purpose and a sense of self. My advice to you is to take your time. As human beings, we often search outside of ourselves when everything we need resides in the essence of our beings. So take the journey back to your roots. Dive into the depths of your soul, and find that woman or man who has been pleading for your return home.

And when you find your pieces, broken or whole, offer up a praise for the beauty that inhabits every inch of your being. You deserve to be celebrated. You deserve to celebrate.
PILLARS OF POTENTIAL

DO YOU KNOW YOUR POTENTIAL? IF SO, ARE YOU TRYING TO REACH IT?

First, understand we are human. We were created for a purpose, which means we have a significant amount of worth and value, not only to the people around us, but to God, our creator. Many of us believe we can't achieve our purpose and potential due to our flaws and lack of abilities, but we have the potential to be much greater through God's mercy, grace and love, despite our flaws, weaknesses and brokenness.

WHAT IS POTENTIAL?
Potential is having or showing the capacity to develop into someone great in the future. When we understand our capacity to develop, cultivate and achieve in each of "The 8 Dimensions of Wellness," we are going to feel satisfaction, fulfillment and happiness.

WHAT EXACTLY ARE THESE DIMENSIONS AND WHAT CAN WE DO TO BLOSSOM INTO OUR BEST SELVES?
"The 8 Dimensions of Wellness" are the main aspects or features of a person's life, as stated below:

EMOTIONAL: FEELINGS, ATTITUDE AND COPING ABILITIES
Emotions are a byproduct of our intellectual, social and spiritual dimensions. When we control our thoughts, we regulate our emotions, which ultimately shapes other dimensions. To cultivate our emotions, we should surround ourselves with positive people and grow in our faith. Remember, it's a part of the human experience to have positive and negative emotions, but it's how we handle them that matters.

ENVIRONMENTAL: SURROUNDINGS, PLACES OF INTERACTION
Our environment plays an important role in who we are. It's important to surround ourselves with positive places because just like people, they influence our dimensions. We should seek an environment that enhances our growth and provides safety and comfort.

FINANCIAL: CURRENT AND FUTURE MONETARY/ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES
Our financial dimension is crucial. Creating a budget, saving money, spending wisely and investing are all ways to generate income and build wealth. While money is essential, it's important to never let it consume our heart. When God blesses us, we shouldn't raise our standard of living, but our standard of giving instead, by using it as an instrument to help others.

INTELLECTUAL: MIND, KNOWLEDGE AND MENTAL ABILITIES
The mind is one of the most powerful things we possess. It controls our thoughts, perspectives, beliefs, emotions and actions. The knowledge and entertainment we digest affects our dimensions, especially our spiritual one. In the Information Age, social media is a given, but it's important to balance it out with positive habits, knowledgeable entertainment and goal planning for growth. "The mind is a terrible thing to waste."

OCCUPATIONAL: CAREER, PROFESSION, VOCATION AND WORKING ABILITIES
Our occupation is what we are going to do for the remainder of our lives and will be a big aspect of our identity. It's important to figure out what we're passionate about and equally important to impact the world with that passion. When that passion is found, it can always be innovated and enhanced.

SOCIAL: RELATIONSHIPS, SUPPORT SYSTEM, NETWORKS AND INTERACTIVE ENGAGEMENTS
Our social dimension consists of every person we're interconnected with. We should always reflect on the circle we keep because forming and cultivating relationships is key to our support system and the contribution to our dimensions. Whether it's our family members, friends, mentors, co-workers, bosses or strangers, they all influence and shape us into the person we are now. They reflect who you want to be in life and have an effect on our thoughts, actions and decisions we make.

SPIRITUAL: FAITH/RELIGION AND SENSE OF DIVINE PURPOSE
Spirituality has a huge effect on our lives, specifically thoughts and actions. Faith is the foundation of our divine purpose and without purpose, we can't realize and believe our potential. Involvement in a church or faith community, while being active and applying the Bible to our daily lives enhances the spiritual dimension. When we do this, we begin to view the world through a spiritual lens. When we begin to desire a better life spiritually and do so by pleasing God, that's when we know faith is real.

What potential can you reach while following the principles in "The 8 Dimensions of Wellness"? We all have room to improve and following these steps will help to fulfill our potential. All of the dimensions are connected, so it's important that we work on them equally. What dimension will you focus on first?
PRO-BLACK
PRO-CHRISTIAN

BELIEVING IN A GOD WHO’S FORGOTTEN YOU

WORDS BY CANDACE SANDERS

“JESUS CAME FOR THE POOR, THE BROKEN AND THE OPPRESSED AND FREEDOM IN HIM IS THE TRANSCENDENCE OF IT ALL.”

PRO-BLACK AND PRO-CHRISTIAN.

Those things don’t sound like they go together right? When we hear the term “Christian,” we think of white men’s unwieldy power and capability to subdue the masses, all in the name of this great “book,” right? Right. Although this is true, it was not God’s intentions for the Christian Bible to be a pawn in controlling countless cultures and regimes. The Bible is God’s living, breathing and active Word that has stood the test of time, despite claims of it being rewritten and altered throughout history. Because all humans are subjected to sin, the Bible became perverted through human hands. But the Word of God has remained the same since it was first written.

The only thing that has changed is us.
THAT DOESN'T MEAN GOD DOESN'T CARE ABOUT RACIAL INJUSTICE LIKE MANY PEOPLE CLAIM and the Bible is proof. Jesus came for the poor, the broken and the oppressed and freedom in Him is the transcendence of it all. This does not mean that we should negate the realities we're currently experiencing, heck no. But it means that because we understand the true freedom we have in Christ, we are able to have a different approach when of handling racism and oppression.

OVERALL, IT IS HARD TO LOVE. It is even harder to love a God that cannot be seen, but this is what it means to have faith. On top of that, specifically as a black person, it can be hard to conceptualize God when it feels like He hasn't been there for "our people" throughout history. But in scripture, we repeatedly see that these are the exact types of people Jesus came for. While on this Earth, it may not look like justice has been or will be served, but there will come a time when God will restore things to the way He originally intended.

WHEN WE LOOK TO THE BIBLE, WE SEE THAT WE ARE NOT FIGHTING A NATURAL BATTLE, which means that racism is not as simple as surface hatred. We are fighting a spiritual battle against our greatest foe, Satan, who has strategically placed the seeds of racism to keep us all divided and at odds with one another. Ephesians 6:12 tells us that "our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." The thing is, Satan knows God is real and knows that God has already won the battle against sin and death, but while we’re here on Earth, he will do any and everything to keep us away from our true purpose of knowing God and receiving salvation through Jesus Christ.

"I CAN BE PRO-BLACK BECAUSE I UNDERSTAND THAT MY INDIVIDUAL SKIN AND MELANIN WAS INTENTIONALLY CREATED BY GOD."

Racism is just one of the ways he does this.

I can be pro-Black because I understand that my individual skin, my melanin, was created intentionally by God. He loves us and created us intentionally and knowingly. Psalms 139:13 says that before we were even born, God was there, knitting us together in our mother’s womb. Genesis 1:27 tells us that we were created in His image, and just as He’s not limited to one kind of expression, neither are we. We don’t have to pick and choose! We can love the person He created us to be AND worship Him because of it.

DISCLAIMER: THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE IS NOT TO "CONVERT" OR IMPRESS MY "BELIEFS" ONTO ANYONE, but to write an encouraging and introspective document about navigating through a world that forces me to pick and choose. In our world of labels, categories and monolithic constraints, we are constantly trying to figure out where we stand and who we are. But the Word of God says in Isaiah 41:13, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God that brings salvation for everyone, first the Jew and then the Greek." We can stand on this promise that we are all welcome in His kingdom.

In lamest terms, through Christ’s equalizing power, we have been restored and everyone has the same opportunity for new life through Him. This is important because many claim that Christianity is the white man’s religion, is based on African religions or is the misconstrued version of the Islamic faith, which is not true. God created us to be different and individual, but unified under Him. He has expressed himself differently through each of us, as His masterpieces and individual creations.
"CREATIVITY MEANS TO PERFORM ACTS THAT LEAVE OUR COMMUNITY MORE BEAUTIFUL AND BENEFICIAL THAN WE INHERITED IT."

-DR. MAULANA KARANGA
Identity Issue | Spring '18

Mirrors:

I thought I saw myself today.
Or maybe myself saw me.
Through Parallel paradigms we both pondered what it would be like on the other side.

On the other side of this window we cannot see thru...
On the other side of what I already see...
On the other side of nowhere...
Where could my identity reside?

I thought I recognized myself today.
Or maybe myself recognized me.
I never thought it could be possible to identify with the same person I am.

With the same person I wasn’t...
With the same person I haven’t become yet...
With the same person that never existed...
Has identity died?

I thought I felt myself today.
Or maybe myself felt me.
That touch... So reflecting...
So real... So false...
Do I really know if I do or don’t exist? Who touched who first?
My identity has been compromised.

I thought I talked to myself today.
Or maybe myself talked to me.
I took heed to everything and nothing the one that has spoken first.

The one that has spoken last...
The one that has spoke all
The one that hasn’t spoken...
My identity has been manifested.

But which one am I?
But which one isn’t?

We reached a stalemate...

At this point... We both turned around and went on about our lives.

AlanT Jones

Pig

A guilty pleasure
In its inertia
Relinquishing freedom
Burnt paws have no slime
To say burnt paws have no slime
Shame in all grades
Pour into the basket, frozen tears
Yet heart beats still
And I breathe
Cogs the rice doesn’t iron
Cogs the rice doesn’t blue
My shades fuse
He smiles and waits
Waits away for me to walk away
And stride never left
Slider remains, if not for His love
For when guilt abounds
In green peace we Trust
There will be another win.
Sulf knows the egness of this labyrinth
For the egress electifies all pigments
Green blanket over a cold sound
A sound of drum and bass the gifted know
The gifts are all over
The gifts are inside you.

Eugene Meriku
"ANDROGYNY" BY LAQUANN DAWSON
BEAUTIFUL CREATURE

They call me a Negro
I am judged by my swarthiness
They should judge me
By my trustworthiness

I am judged by the price
Put on my head
But they just don't understand
That I am a priceless individual

They don't even think I'm human
I am a creature in their hateful eyes
But that's ok because...

Beautiful creature I am
I am strong and powerful
And intelligent and sure

Pure beauty emanates from me
The fact that I know who I am
And where I come from
Fuels my pride

The sheer bliss I feel abounds me
The others drown in jealousy
They are shrouded in darkness
Step into the light
Release the rotten sludge within

Come immerse yourself
In the knowledge of my heritage
Enrich yourself
In the bold, luminescent brilliance
That shines from deep within
Each and every African American

KATIA ROBERTS

BRANDON MAHONE
THE "MINORITY"

Tell me how it feels to be protected from the sun....?

What does it mean to come to terms with the bloody footsteps of those who broke their backs shaping a world that still shuns you....?

Greatness is something that you were born with... It's something that flows through your blood like the river Nile.

Long lines of royalty who's lineage was lost so that their oppressor could wear their blood as an engagement ring...

A rose that grew through the cracks in the concrete in a world where people only want to see you do well if you aren't doing better than them themselves...

Even when there seems to be no nourishment from the sun continue to grow...

Your predecessors sculpted the world as we know it...
So don't let anyone tell you that you are a minority YOU ARE NOT LESS THAN

Mothers love their sons and raise their daughters because they never know if their child will be killed for fitting the description of a black man in America today.

Toddlers having nightmares of gators skulking next to their crib and ignorant educators embedding stereotypes into our children

But who do you want to be...

An unforetold story of young kings and queens... silenced and gun downed for uplifting when they were told to do the opposite

Should you fear greatness because it's secrets are buried with the body's of those who didn't live long enough to share them??

Riches are dangled in front of our face to distract us from our homes going up in ashes.

Fighting for change doesn't bring wealth... and the wealthy succumb to ignorance to hold on to their status

So naturally we are ignorant to the truth. We only hear what we want to hear and.... pull our eyes away from the elephant in the room just as we subconsciously make them ignore our nose.

The revolution will not be televised...
Only the mass confusion carefully formulated by a society that would love nothing more than to plunge you deeper into a void of self inflicted genocide

Short choppy steps or long strides?
Either way the end isn't in sight
As a people we are still fighting the same battles we thought were won decades ago

So be the change that you want to see in the world...

KHALIL LOONEY
black, enough.
it’s a 4:30 pm phone call with my mom
“when i grow up i want to be...”
more black.
more “hey sis!”
more
for the culture.
less
feeling more comfortable around the colonizers.
more
being okay with the fact that my hair is a museum.
a museum that
i only recently held the grand opening for.
you see,
after years of applying hair crack to the perimeter
in the hopes that the lawn would grow,
i was naive to the fact that i was chemically altering the true beauty of grass.
for two months i am senegalese.
another month i am box braids.
the last month i am natural.
i know that i don’t have to prove my blackness to anyone.
yet,
my sixteen-year-old superficial self keeps staring at me
and making me uncomfortable.
she always makes me uncomfortable.
with the subtleness of the internal self-hatred of her heritage
sometimes she says confidently,
“i am not from africa.”
all the time.
anyways.
with her eyes oblivious to what the red, green, and black mean in the black liberation flag
her gaze does not deflect mine.
she says in the nastiest tone “yes, you do.”
i say, in a tone of my own, “i guess i do.”
i am not a girl from the island of caucuses
i am black before anything else standing before society.
i am a rising black woman in america.
i am black before i open my mouth.
i am,
black enough.
i can’t keep stumbling around asking myself and everyone,
“is that black enough for you?”

ARIANNA SHERRELL
ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN

R.I.P. DEVIN MOORE

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