

Alaina Henderson
Final Project Explanation

“Azubuike”

I decided to do a painting because it was the one thing that I knew could involve a lot of different aspects that could get my point across and could also be a little ambiguous and left up to interpretation. The obvious questions I received when showing my original sketch to others centered around why she was naked. My intentions were not to offend anyone, so I apologize in advance. Her nakedness represents the fetishization of the Black female body by other races. Black women are often times stigmatized and made to feel bad about the shapes of their bodies, and that was something I just wanted shine light on. Black women being sexual in America is often times deemed as deviant behavior, except for when being praised by other races. Even then, our sexuality is something that is praised, but the Black woman is often isolated from that praise and disrespected because of it. She is Black and woman, which represents racism and Black feminism and intersectionality. Black women often face racism because of the color of their skin, as well as sexism because they are women. She doesn't have a mouth, which is meant to represent how Black voices are often silenced, or deemed unimportant in America. Her Afro shows how she is unapologetically Black, but it also represents time for Black Americans. We discussed a concept in class that theorized how time is cyclical for Black Americans, not linear. Black Americans have been experiencing the same things throughout history, just in different time periods and with different situations. Looking back, problems for Black Americans have pretty much stayed the same, but just have evolved over time. The universe or galaxy in her Afro also represents time and how Black Americans defy the odds of time with this cyclical nature, and the universe or galaxy effect represents time and how Black people are pretty much stuck in it and haven't made any progression. I have been told that she looks like Mother Nature, and in a way that's who she is. Her feet represent roots of a tree and her hair represents the leaves of the tree. She is rooted in Africa, which represents where African Americans come from, and without it Black Americans would not be where they are today. It all originated in Africa. Her holding America represents how America is dependent on Black Americans, and without them the country would fall. It also represents how Black Americans are made to not feel apart and she is on the outside looking in. America being white clearly represents White America and how it is dominant, the black and red stains represent how America is forever stained with the blood of enslaved Black Americans for the success and rise of this country, and yet it is still something that their descendants cannot take part in. The red, smeared background represents the many Black lives that have been lost due to police brutality, as well as the few hashtags. The hashtagged names are just amongst a few Black lives that have been lost to police brutality. Last but not least, I decided to name the painting “Azubuike,” which means in Nigerian, “the past is your strength.” Just to represent history of Black Americans.

Like I mentioned earlier, the painting can be very ambiguous and left open for interpretation. Because of this, I can see where my audience would run into problems with understanding my intentions behind the painting; like the concept of time and the different meanings of her Afro. But I do believe as well that there things in the painting that are very clear and easy for audiences to understand.

