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Instructors

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Final CK

My Skin is A Crime

We live within a society that shows us in all almost every aspect of life that black lives don't matter. Here we are some four hundred years after slavery and still we are dealing with the same problems and nothing has changed, but the name. The new racism is pretending that there isn't any racism. Over the course of the semester I have learned a lot of things in the #BlackLivesMatter course. We have touched on tons of topics surrounding #BlackLivesMatter and really dissected racism as well other oppressions present in society. When it came to creating an aesthetic that could summarize some of the things that I've have learned over the semester, specifically those that stood out the most to me, I began by just writing some lyrics down. As I focused hard on writing what I felt, eventually the words "my skin is a crime," came to my head. From there the rest is history.

For my aesthetic I created a song entitled "My Skin is A Crime." The song has a soothing soulful sound, yet still has that hip-hop bass that we all love. The lyrics share the narrative of a black father who speaks on his struggles supporting his family and his fears that his children will have to deal with the same problems black people face today. The father in the song is a future version of myself and I imagine myself having a son and a daughter and struggling to provide for them. In class we discussed systematic racism, how it works, and a lot of the struggles that come along with it. We discussed how it is a system built on power and for one group of people to

have power another group of people must be oppressed. So within the song you hear me rap “For there to be a top, they need me on the bottom.” Thus illustrating the power system and my awareness of it. Further along I rap a narrative that discusses how I work two jobs and still my family is struggling to survive. I even discuss having to swallow my pride and deal with my boss’s daily microaggressions that he believes are just jokes. In CRT we learned that microaggressions are those many shocking and saddening interactions people of color face everyday. The lyrics then discuss my fear as a father for my son to have to encounter police brutality and die as a result. Police brutality is a serious topic in the #BlackLivesMatter movement and is real concern in the black community. It is not only a fear for our sons to be murdered unjustly by police, but also our daughters. Reflecting on cases like that of Sandra Bland I rap about my fear for my daughter to have to face the same oppression, yet my fear is even greater for my daughter because of the fact she will also face oppression based on her sex. In class we learned about the concept of intersectionality. Basically its when a person falls between two forms of oppression. For example a black woman is oppressed due to the color of her skin and her sex and intersectionally between the two. This is a topic that really grasped my attention during the semester and gave me a different love and respect for black women and everything they go through. That is why I rap about my fears for my daughter to have to deal with living within a society that tells her through the media that she isn’t beautiful. My fear is for her to not know her worth which is why I rap the lyrics, “And they gone try teach and baby that’s she not a queen, have her feeling insecure cause she don’t have the genes of all the white women in the magazines.” After that the lyrics continue to address different forms of racism with the black community. I rap about environmental racism and the Flint, Michigan water crisis taking place. I discuss segregation and how the system is set up to keep black people in the ghettos and

keep them poor and hungry, which results in violence amongst each other. I also talk about the education system and how they don't teach our youth anything, but how to be a good slave. They don't teach us about economics or how to invest and start businesses. They teach us how to get a job and be obedient. The song concludes with my sister singing the powerful lyrics,

“I just want my freedom
I just want the chains broken
They don't know 'bout freedom
They just let the chains choke them.”

The lyrics illustrate a cry for freedom for people of color, but as well as a statement that alludes to the fact that many people of color are not awake to the oppressions around them. Essentially they don't know their slaves. “My Skin is a Crime,” is heard all throughout the song and its means exactly what it says. In this society I feel like it is a crime to be black. This entire system of racism is built on my people being on the bottom. So my inspiration for this song comes from everything I've learned in class, all the racist experiences I've encountered, all the black lives murdered that made it to the news and those that did not. This song is for anybody black who can relate to feeling like black is a crime and can relate to the daily oppressions we deal with. It is also for anybody of any other race seeking a narrative to understand what people of color go through and how some of us feel. I believe this song could inspire my people or at least one person to change the world. I believe it can be an anthem for my people and used as encouragement to keep fighting through this system of racism. At the same time I believe some negative problems could occur in result of this song's use of the word “nigga.” There are different opinions on use of the word and I'm sure there are some people who would feel offended by use of the word. Regardless of the fact that I'm black to some people they don't

want to hear the word used at all. Nonetheless the song means a lot to me and is a canvas filled with colors I poured out of me to describe how I feel and what I have learned over the course of the semester. I hope it inspires you and or enlightens you. #BlackLivesMatter.

My Skin is A Crime
Lyrics

I walk through the valley of the shadow death
 I fear no evil and I love myself
 Try and teach me that my skin is a sin
 Systematic racism it's the government
 Keep a nigga falling like the leaves in autumn
 For there to be a top they need me on the bottom
 Swallowing my pride just to make out alive
 I work two 9 to 5's Putting in that overtime
 Yet my family still deprived
 And my boss a white guy he's a thorn in my side
 Wanna hear a black joke? Ha ha nice try
 Almost met your demise, but I'm hold my tongue
 Put up with your nonsense for my daughter and son
 And I pray that my son learn the ropes while he younger
 Cause I know that his color is a crime on its own
 Officer please, leave me and my child alone
 I wanna see him graduate and have some kids of his own
 Instead of his brains blown cause of a gun you ain't find

My skin is a crime
 My skin is a crime

And pray my daughter understand
 Though she not a man like Sandra Bland
 She can face police brutality
 She gone face the same realities
 The intersectionality of being black and a woman
 She gone deal with some things that I can't even stomach
 Two oppressions racism, sexism his cousin
 And they gone try teach and my baby that's she not a queen
 Have her feeling insecure cause she don't have the genes
 Of all the white women in the magazines
 They try and drown my niggas, but we submarines
 The system was designed so that we don't succeed
 They messing with the water out in Michigan
 Keep my niggas in the hood
 Where they up to no good
 Keep my niggas dumb
 So they stuck up in the slums

Teach em how to be slaves in the school systems
We the new slaves same old traditions
If you don't learn nothing melanin rhymes

My skin is a crime
My skin is a crime

I just want my freedom
I just want the chains broken
They don't know 'bout freedom
They just let the chains choke them
2x

My skin is a crime
2x

Write a two-page description of your aesthetic that speaks to the inspiration behind your creation **and** reflect upon the potential problems and benefits for readers or audiences.