

Lauren Seei
#BlackLivesMatter
Dr. Lanehart
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For this project, I chose to do two paintings inspired by what I learned about race through this course. Coincidentally both ideas came to me while watching Beyoncé's visual album to Lemonade. The first painting is something I was inspired by through the song 'Freedom', but also through the visual album as a whole. One of the things that stuck out to me the most was how Beyoncé goes from urban to rural through her healing process. What was most interesting to me was that it was a sort of antebellum type rural. This specifically made me think of an afropessimistic idea that was brought up during one of our lectures – the idea that black lives are stuck in the past, present, and future. This concept is kind of wrapped in the idea that the African American population is stagnant, while everything is else growing around them. The song 'Freedom' has a line in the chorus that stuck with me the most – "Freedom, where are you?" This made me think back to Afropessimism in that the constitution promises freedom, but #BlackLivesMatter activists are asking, "Where is it?"

This painting is specifically abstract and simply painted at the same time. The main subject of the painting is the African American woman standing in the road. She has no distinct aspects, no arms, hair, or facial features. This is to symbolize how hard it is for women of color to make a name for themselves in society. In Lemonade, Beyoncé has a snip of Malcolm X's speech that says the most "disrespected/unprotected/neglected person in America is the black woman" and I really wanted to showcase that by the absence of a personality in her shape. She is to symbol how the government and a large amount of society sees her, just someone taking up space.

The road is split between the city and the cotton fields of the country. This was to symbolize the afropessimistic idea that the African American community is stuck in the past while living in the present. Our society makes it extremely hard for them to move on from the past through systematic restrictions and structural racism. On the side with the cotton fields, I tried to put a lot of texture into the paint, to create a sense of grit, but also a sense of life. In contrast, the opposite side is very flat, boxy, and lacking of life. I thought this might make the cotton fields and dirt road have a 'lived in' look. This was to symbolize how every time someone or an institution does something racist, they are placing the African American race backwards. #BlackLivesMatter wants equality of the races, but it's impossible to achieve when society doesn't really allow them to live with them in the present, but keeps them in the past.

The lemon painting I found important to showcase for a different reason. There has been a lot of hype in the media for Lemonade since its release. There is no doubt about the fact that social media blew up over who Becky with the Good Hair was. But where was the media explosion over how Beyoncé showcased the ideas of #BlackLivesMatter? Beyoncé inspired this painting because while she uses her visual

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art to showcase black lives matter ideals, her scandal covered by the music kind of stifles the political message behind her visual album.

Beyoncé used a lot of visual aspects to clearly state her political view of support of #BlackLivesMatter. Anyone who watched it was presented with the power and beauty of black women in an undoubtable manner. However, the aftermath of the album was not necessarily focused on the political aspects of her videos. Most of my personal social media feed was covered in meme's, news stories, and personal ideas on Jay-Z's infidelity. In order to read anything about the meanings behind her visual choices, I had to dig pretty deep into the internet. To me this said something about our priorities and the media we feed into.

This painting is mixed media, to reflect how the #BlackLivesMatter activists use multiple mediums to present their views. First, the lemon in the middle is the brightest yellow paint I could find, while the words around it are in much darker colors. This is to symbolize how quickly we choose to focus on things that are bright and entertaining, all the while pushing the darker ideas or struggles to the back of our mind. Undoubtedly your mind focused on the lemon before you read the words on the canvas. This is also to show how the mainstream media chooses to focus on scandals and smaller, more insignificant stories in order to distract the viewers from the more distressing stories. It wasn't until riots were breaking out in Ferguson and Baltimore that the media truly focused on the stories and what happened beforehand. The media is focused on sensationalism, and we as a society tend to grab on to it in order to pretend these more serious stories do not exist, or are not as serious as they really are.

As a political science major this entire course was extremely rewarding for me in a sense that it gave me hope that I could work to create a change in our society. It was very enlightening for me because, while I knew that some of these things were happening, I didn't really understand the true scope of the matter. The idea that stuck with me the most through the semester was Afropessimism. Just the fact that a concept like that could exist in this present day means that there is something wrong in our society that we need to change. For me, my perception of race was changed drastically from "I don't see color" to "I see color, and I appreciate our differences". While I have always been able to appreciate the different stories everyone has, I never knew that saying you didn't see color could really do so much damage. Since the beginning of this course, I've been able to go home and teach a lot of the people who taught me not to see color, why it is okay to do so. I really believe that change starts in the class room, and this course helped achieve a lot of change in my perspective as well as others.