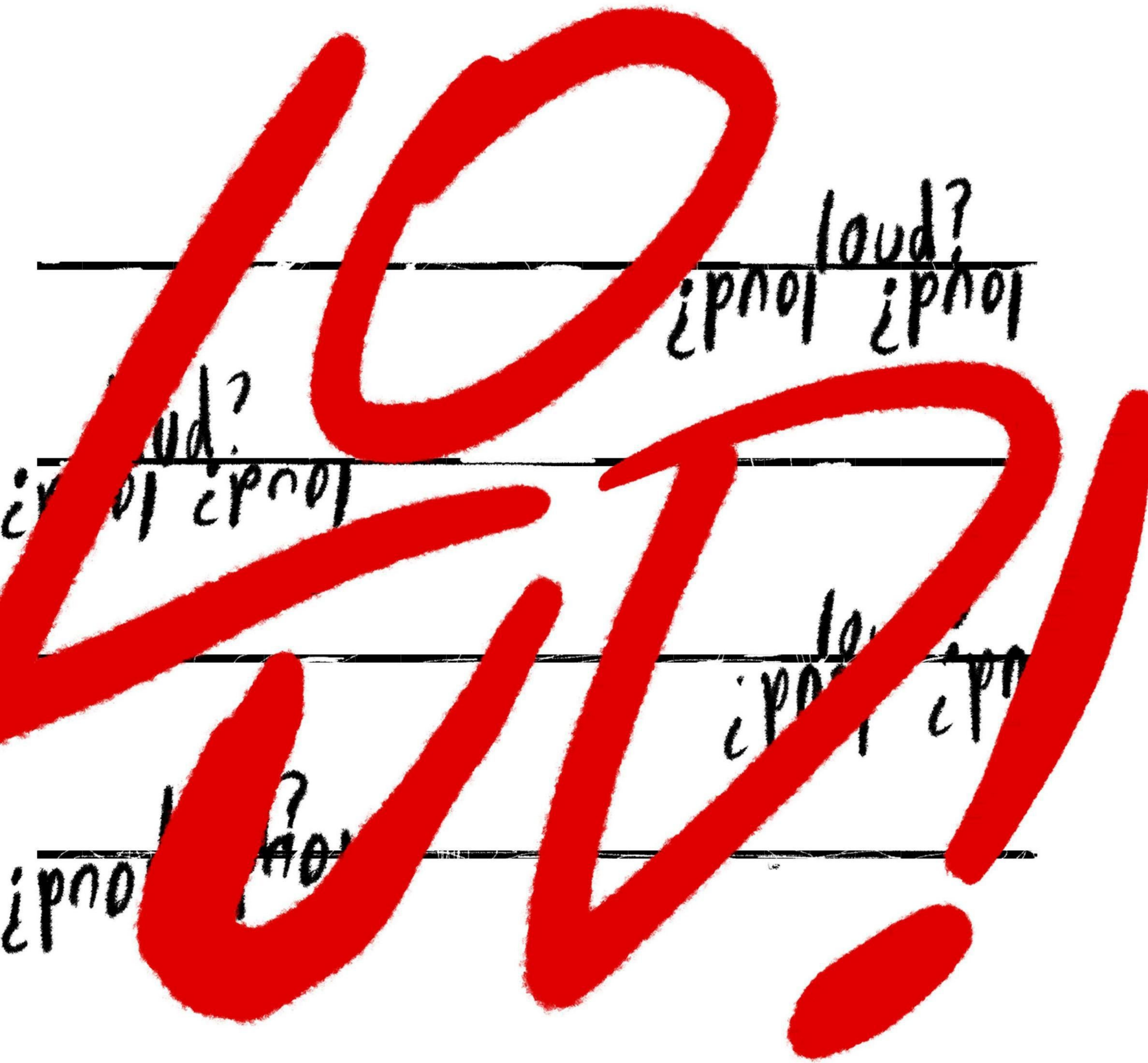


*Say** *it*!



*an expression of Black culture and activism
2022 Issue

As a part of our 2022 Black History Month Series, NYU Gallatin Student Life presents Say It Loud!: A Showcase of the Arts and Black Activism, which features creative work by NYU students and alumni. This event focuses on expressions of Black culture and activism through music, spoken word, poetry, dance, drama, and the visual arts.

Say It Loud! started in 2015 as a way to offer an inclusive platform for Gallatin students of the Black and African diaspora to express themselves through creative practice. As the years have progressed, so too have our artistic contributions from the NYU community, now including work from NYU alumni, faculty, and staff as well as a featured spotlight artist segment. Now in its 7th year, Say It Loud! continues to grow with the introduction of its inaugural digital magazine, offering an additional space to amplify the creative - and often political - voices of our artists.

Say It Loud! has become a staple in the NYU Gallatin Black History Month series, and it would not be possible without the support of many people: Gallatin Dean Susanne Wofford; Associate Dean of Students, Patrick McCreery; Senior Director of Special Events and Programs, Rachel Plutzer, and her team members, Theresa Anderson, Cat Feliciano, and Kyana Zambrana; Jennifer Birge, Traci Clapper, and the staff and crew in the Jerry H. Labowitz Theatre for Performing Arts; Allyson Paty, Cyd Cipolla, Zoe Scourtes (who brilliantly created this magazine for us); Lisa Daily, Bobby Peñaherrera, and of course, Monique Sorel-Dominguez, without whom Say It Loud! would not be what it is today.

Kyra Joy _____ _____ *Williams*



from the artist

I am an artist, a storyteller, and a collaborator. I join people, specifically Black people, in the telling of their stories, working with them to record the rich and varied history of living in a diaspora. Growing up as a Black, queer woman in the United States, I have experienced firsthand how members of an African diaspora have made home in the face of systemic tactics of disempowerment and pervasive racism. Along with concepts of home, my art explores safety, community, and perception through visual media and stories. The work serves to humanize and normalize the lived experiences of those who are often objectified. The photographs I make and the stories I record are in contribution to longstanding memory-work traditions that expand potentialities in the present and construct a new future—one in which we all belong.

Black people have traditionally been visible in various forms of American media as commodity, monster, sex, spectacle, threat, and more. These portrayals are evidence—and at times origin—of tradition in a country that was built on the construct of racism. Over time, through long and intricate fights, activists have made strides towards fair recognition of Black people's humanity and thus our right to safety and belonging. Artists have always been a part of those fights, whether on a side portraying Black people as human or as less than. Through my art, I strive to contribute positively to existing visual data of Black people in the U.S. by creating archival materials in collaboration with the very people being represented. I strive to contribute to the record stories of survival, community-building, and joy in a place an ocean away from our ancestors.

This book of portraits and quotes is one I created from my conversations with people living in the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York (the colonized land of the Lenape people). In these conversations, we explore their experiences and notions of home. Sometimes they answer directly what it means to them. More often than not, their thoughts take the form of stories. I want to provide an equitable archive in which people that are generally underrepresented are amplified and have the agency to choose how their record is kept.

Not only is it important to contribute to a record for the future so our experiences cannot be erased, the very process of making art and telling stories can be (and has been) a safe space in which Black people can remember, reimagine, and see and be seen sans veil. My dream is to rise above the lens, gaze, narrative, and art within the social constructs of race to create a space—a home of sorts—in which all people can come to appreciate the truth of Black lives and stories. This is a daunting process, especially when faced with the global sovereignty of white patriarchal influence and interpretation. I have learned that one of many steps in the direction of home is the creation of art and storytelling.

Portraiture is often a very personal act made public. With this in mind, and in the spirit of collaboration, every participant pictured in this book has consented to sharing both their image and words publicly. We spoke about the importance of storytelling and documentation within the Black community. Photography is a vessel through which their stories can be seen. I aim to frame them as truthfully as possible.

As a portraitist, I am a part of the photographic process—my influence is not absent from the image itself. My hope for the viewer as they read strangers' words and look into their faces is that they consider their participation as well. Maybe, they will leave the page as something other than strangers, finding home in the stories as I have.



Home is in the Stories: _____



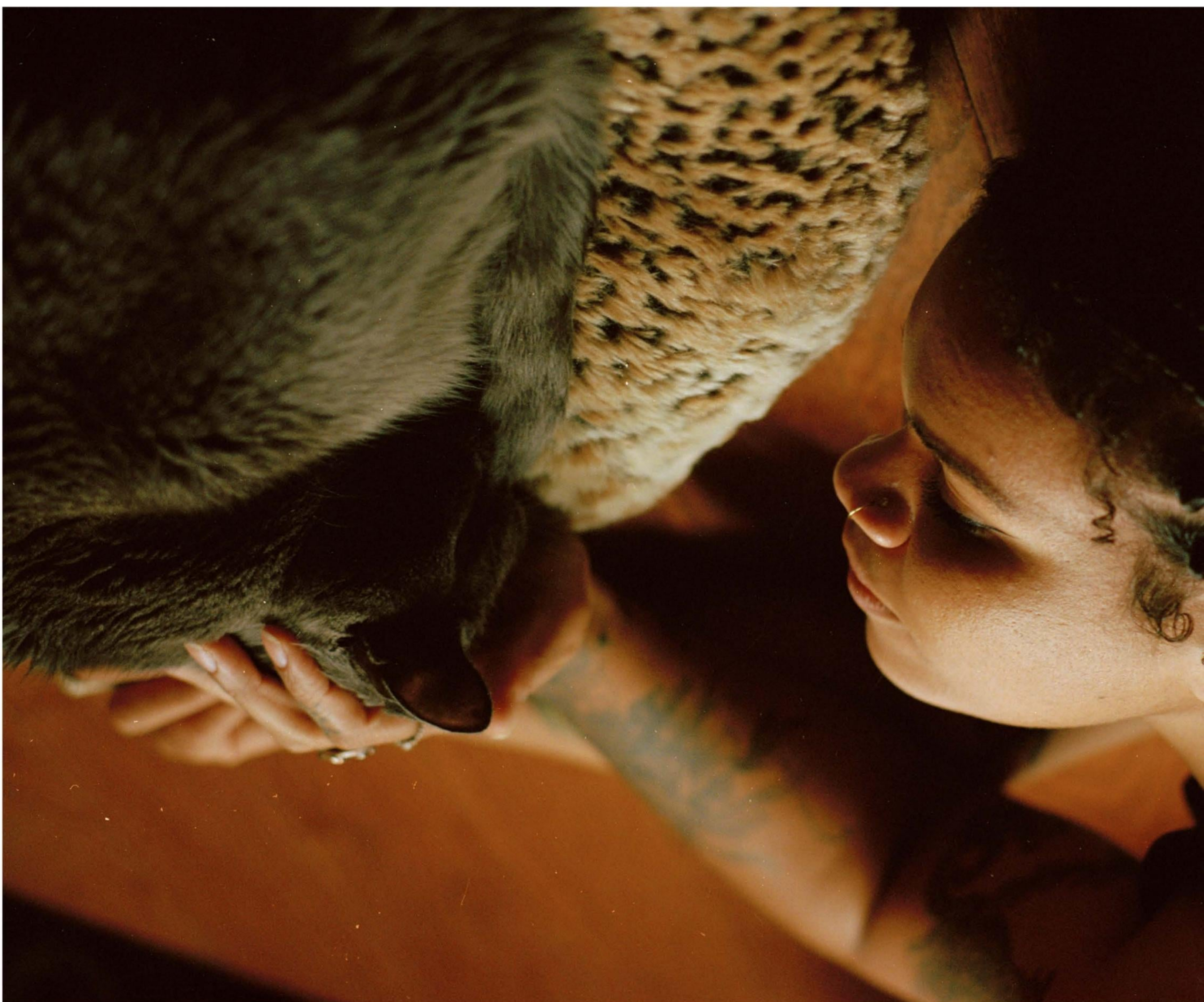
A Visual Memorial to Black Bed Stuy

Curtis



“It was like 1950, that's when I was born, only a few blocks from here. MacDonough and what's called Malcolm X used to be called Reid Avenue. So MacDonough and Reid. My father was born here in Brooklyn. He was born in 1911. To be born in Brooklyn, I think that's rare if you go through our migratory paths which is usually - New York is usually through Virginia and North Carolina. My mother was from North Carolina. My father was born here but he did go back to Virginia after his mother passed. My dad used to work in Farmingdale, Long Island. And he would commute... it's a pretty serious commute, especially, and I was thinking too, if he was a black man in 1950, working making airplane parts for a company called Republic Aviation Corporation in Farmingdale... So I would just imagine how many black workers there must have been then in 1950. Republic Aviation... I always thought that had a nice little rhyme to it - Republic Aviation Corporation. He used to give us pencils when we'd go to school. We had a uniqueness to us cause we were the only ones with those pencils. It was only from my imagination that I could figure what he was dealing with. He didn't talk that much about it.”

Prisca



"The Bronx is where I started crawling for the first time, but I didn't really learn how to walk in the world until I moved to Bed Stuy three years ago. This is where so much of me has truly been born. I've learned how to find a home within myself here because I've been taught unconditional love and warmth by so many creatures (both human, and grey & fuzzy)."



Zinjabail



"I've thought about [what home means to me]...I'm really still trying to think on how to put that into words. I've learned a lot from living in Sudan but a lot of the stuff I learned there, I feel like in general in New York a lot of the people have preconceived notions about people. Where I'm at, I want people to be more open minded. Sudan was one of the places that was close to home for me because I feel like I was always really happy there, I got to do a lot of adventures with my mother and my sister. I feel like my mom definitely made Sudan kind of like a safe haven for me and my sister and other kids. I think I definitely have gotten more in touch with myself since living in Brooklyn. I definitely have been getting close to my spirituality and all of that stuff, trying to get more familiarized with it. I think that Brooklyn is gonna become a place that I can consider home, too."

Nā

Asemota

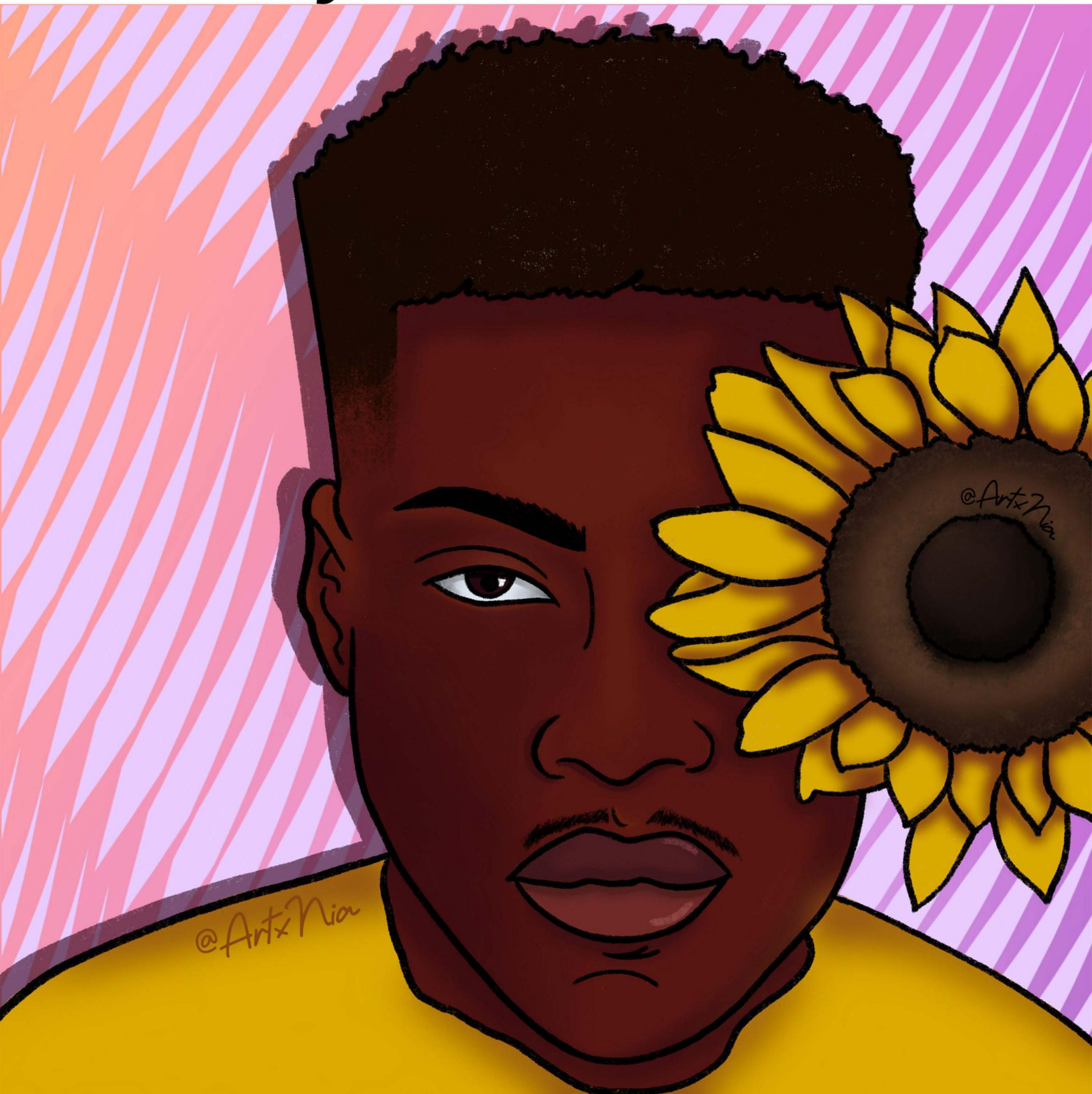


from the artist

Women of color have filled incredible and often understated roles in the advancement of STEM throughout history. Unfortunately, a lot of them don't get the opportunity to see themselves as role models in the tech world. I created the 'Black Girls CODE the Future' Coloring Book to change this narrative and inspire girls and young women of color to pursue STEM.



FlowerBoy



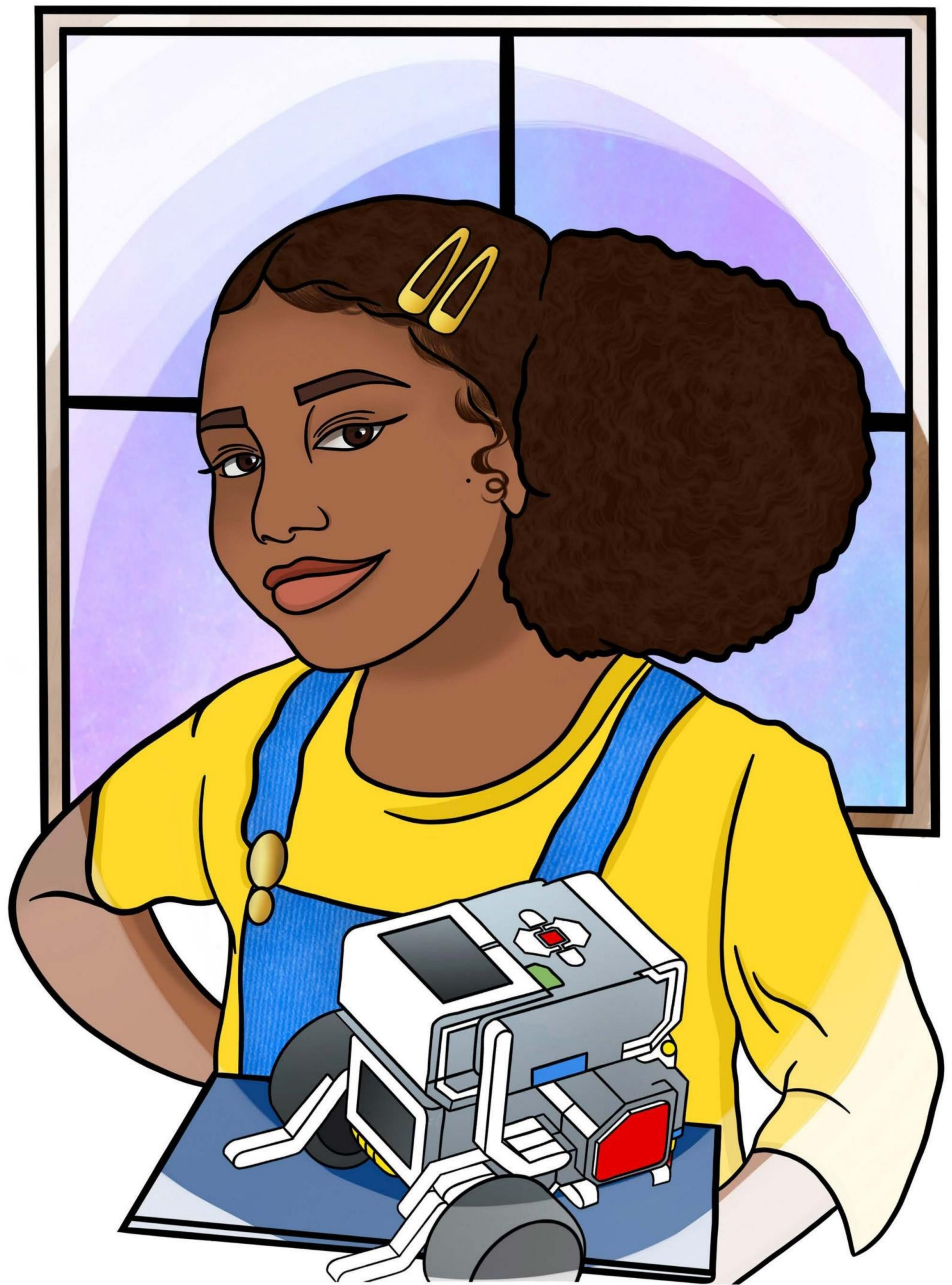




BlackBoyJoy

Love Girl





Black Girls CODE the Future Coloring Book



Building the Future

Big

Toe



from the artist

In the journey that is life, we find peace in passion. All of my life I have never really had a passion for anything. I was wading through life untethered, like a ship barreling through the sea, a pilot onboard with no map, devoid of any want or inclination to go in a specific direction. When one has no true passions, they are unequipped with the necessary means to release the plethora of unwanted emotions, one unfortunately procures while they endure the process of life. I regrettably am one of these persons who must tolerate this. Time and time again succumbing to the hardships of life, until one day I found myself at peace. A foreign feeling accompanied by a view of words haphazardly strung across a sheet of paper. Though the quality of the content is questionable, the serenity that encased me grew in abundance with every stroke of my pen. Who knew that a pen could lift the weight I had been trying my whole life to dispose of. Not drugs, not alcohol, but a pen. In the journey that is life, we find peace in passion, and I found my peace in writing.

A Shitty Letter

Before last week I hadn't cried in years
But it only took four shots of patron to bring forth those tears
Anxiety over the thought of seeing my mother
Wanted to stop at three but I had to take another

I was having fun until I had a realization
That I was her most miserable creation
Out of all things, I should find peace in this relation
But the thought of seeing her had me stuck in my station

It's not really her that had me scared
Up on East 82nd is what I truly feared
Her pride and joy, the prodigal son
Up against him, what could I have done

Go to school? Get a job? Play a sport?
I'll have you know that was my first resort
Oh I know, act perfect. Take some notes from my sister
Haven't seen her in months, I swear to God I really miss her

But talking to her brings some pain in my heart
Because her and my mom aren't that far apart
I see them cracking jokes, talking about guys
I should be happy but I feel tears in my eyes

Why do I feel this way? I have no right to be jealous
It's a twisted thought, my minds getting reckless
Perhaps I should talk to someone, maybe a peer?
These feelings inside me, begging someone to hear

But how do I talk about something I can't understand?
The words I need to say are stuck in the air, unwilling to land.
Maybe I should change, but I'm stuck in my ways
And while she's stuck in hers, I only pray for better days

How do I resolve this? Make it easier?
If I wasn't me what would that mean to her?
As I am now, in her eyes,
Complicite,
Illicit,
Explicite,
For her love should I break those ties?

But I thought it was supposed to be unconditional?
Whoever said that was talking fictionals
Closer to her but farther from myself
Bottle my feelings and put them on a shelf

Should I become someone who's not me?
Then maybe she'll like what's she sees

I sound like I'm whining, I hate to complain
I look down at these words with disgust and disdain
Through all these words, you must think I hate my mother
Quite the opposite actually, I really truly love her

Beautiful black woman, fearless and hardworking
Gave us everything, working jobs that were back-breaking
She came to this country to give us a better life
So how could I cause her all this pain and strife?

At 16 I looked at my wrists and picked up a knife
But I knew I couldn't say hello to the afterlife
Because though my pain was immense, it really didn't matter
My love for her was too great to make her heart shatter

What could I do to clear the confusion?
In my cloudy state, I made a decision
To love my blood was way too hard
I needed a new subject for this love to bombard

I searched in friends the love I sought from my mother
Putting my heart in the hands of one after another
Dropped and kicked, my love was tossed around
Searching for something I had not yet found

Used and abused
Battered and bruised
My face I should hide
Had I no pride?

I gave them my all, they gave me their some,
How could I have been so dumb?
"Are they more important than family?" she'd ask
Oh mother in your love I'd gladly bask

But the pain it caused would be too great

Besides it might just be too late
I'm in the city now, the place I said I'd never live
but, oh Lord, New York had so much love to give

I found a love different than what I'd been searching for
And then I even found so much more
In a city so full I can't believe I found them
The wonderful people to help solve my problem

To love painlessly was my hearts dream
I'm not sure my friends truly know what I mean
When I say, "I love you,"
Do they know how much that's true?

I know that they are probably unaware
To the extent of which I care
As bright as the sun above
I finally bask in the light of unconditional love

To be taken as I am, instead of who I should be
Was a day I never thought I'd see
Not constantly being asked to change
A lovely feeling not having the real me estranged

But though my heart is full
The old pain begins to pool
The feelings once held at bay
Are the sad price I must pay

Was it a leak in the dam, or the shots?
My once clear road now lined with pots
Why must these feelings arise?
Will my desire for maternal love be my demise?

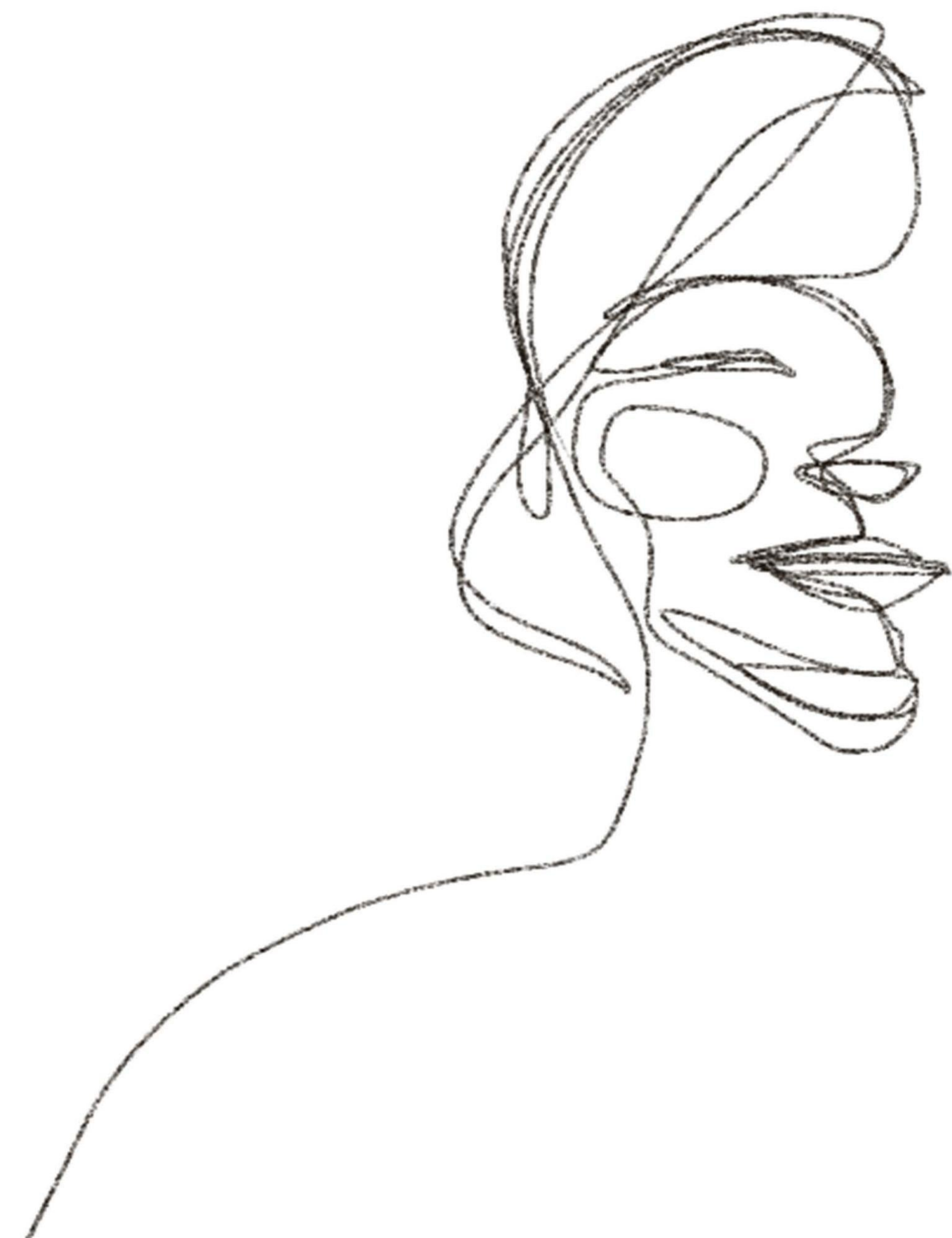
For those who know me
They know strength is what i like to see
I swear my hearts not cool
But I used to call the weak man a fool

But who am I to call
When I am the weakest of them all
So with this I've made a choice
To keep these feeling from my voice

So I sit here to write this shitty letter
With the hopes it makes me feel better
Honestly, who knows if it worked and the feelings are gone?
To truly know I may need to grab the Patron

Jokes aside, while my feelings are conflicted
I thank those who love me unconstricted
In my battle with the demons I face
I thank my friends for being my saving grace

Adriana —
— *Adesye*



from the artist

This piece is a collage of various images that depict a sense of luxury and beauty among the black community.



IT'S NOT THE
VIOLENCE OF

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—MARTIN
LUTHER KING JR.

KID
NATION

DEA

PROTECT
THE FUN™

LANCÔME
PARIS

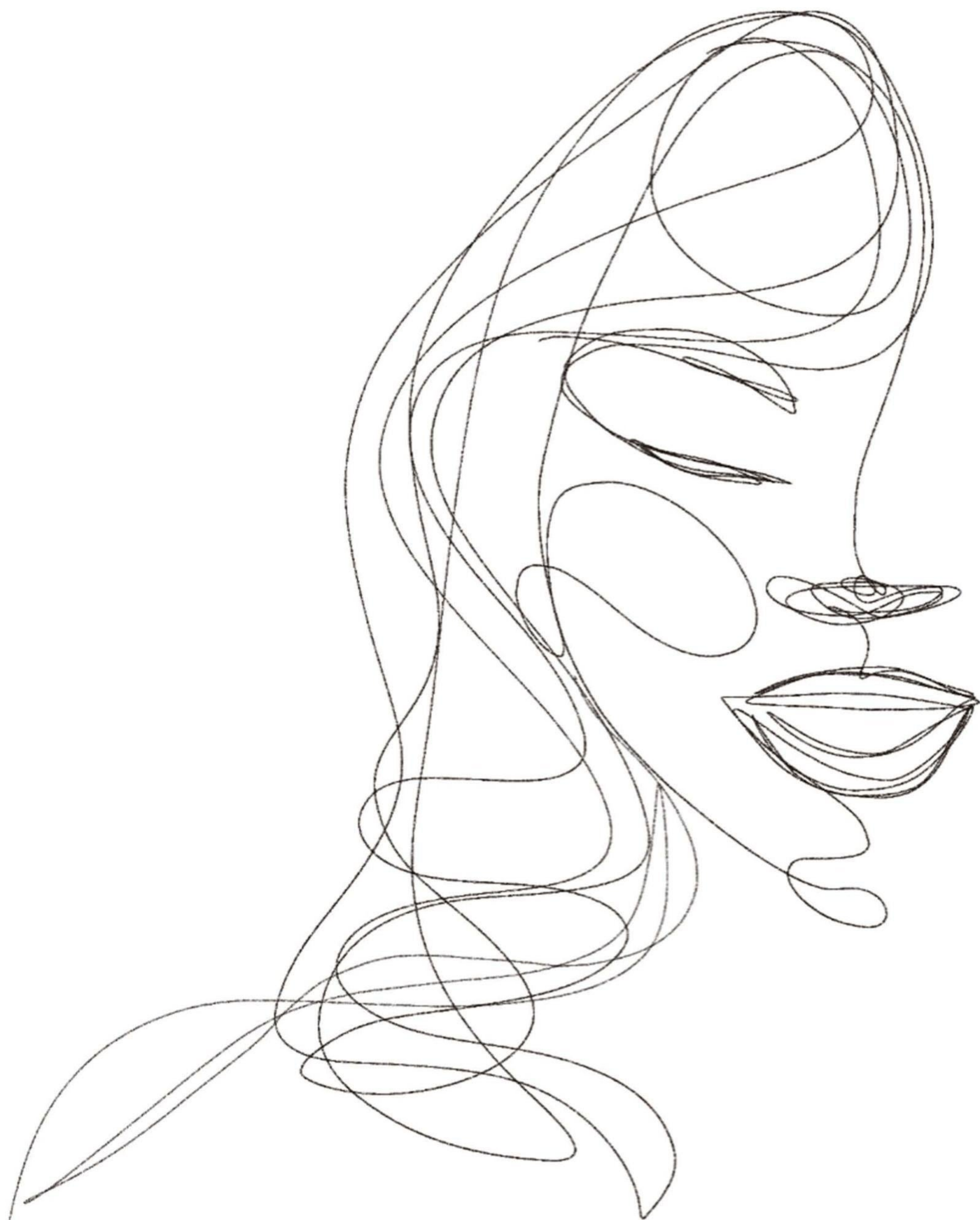
fly

OPEN YOUR EYES



Paeton

Selby



from the artist

In my brief 19-years, I have been committed to the pursuit of complete and revolutionary societal change. However, being raised in an era saturated with nebulous concepts of resistance, justice, and suffering, it can be challenging to recognize where one's efforts will be useful. I have worked for political campaigns, non-profit organizations, legal firms, print media outlets and have flushed tear gas from my eyes each day of the harsh summer of 2020. I have wrestled between a career in politics, journalism, academia and community organizing in search of a field that could revive the perpetually broken society that is the American Empire. And yet, in my view, the best mode of progress remains unclear.

In hopes of discerning a clearer pathway to progress, I have academically dedicated myself to identifying and understanding the nature of the viruses that plague our society. My essay, *The Obscurity of Commemoration*, explores the failures of canonical responses to the condition of the oppressed and outlines a more effective scheme of justice in a white America. For the purposes of this analysis and the general pursuit of restorative justice, slavery is understood not as a mere historical event, but as an ongoing strategy of white domination. If read mindfully, this academic exploration ought expand one's knowledge of historical impact and lay the groundwork for solution-based discourse and action amid an advancing civil rights movement.

The Obscurity of Commemoration

Commemoration's purport and aspire to honor the dead, yet in the context of the Black Atlantic, its effects perpetually obscure crucial substance in the narrative of slavery. Nuance in historical accounts of slavery is imperative to honor the black experience; it is the difference between regarding Juneteenth as a true mark of emancipation while 250,000 slaves remained enslaved, or truly confronting how the afterlives of slavery prevail in the American consciousness and poison political action.

The Unsung Founders Memorial, located on the University of North Carolina campus, claims to honor "the unsung founders – the people of color bond and free – who helped build the Carolina that we cherish today" (Alexia 2018). The sculpture, created by artist Do-Ho Suh, depicts 300-bronze men holding up a stone table. The art was donated to the university in 2005 by the class of 2002; both students and the artist requested the piece be displayed in a prominent location on campus. However, the university opted to use this artistic commemoration in a scheme to justify their continued veneration of white slave owners. In hopes of "quell[ing] controversy" surrounding their refusal to get rid of a confederate statue on campus, Silent Sam, the university placed the table in the same area as a monument to white violence (Alexia 2018). Furthermore, when students stood in defense of the black experience and called for the de-commemoration of Silent Sam, the university proposed donating the piece to a white nationalist organization, not a museum. Years later, in 2019, UNC would feel the ramifications of their refusal to confront white racial bias on campus when white students defaced the Unsung Founders memorial with racial slurs and urine. In an attempt to glorify both white domination and black contributions synchronously, UNC missed a pivotal opportunity to educate its students and instead embraced "the contorted logic that it is possible to separate the Confederacy from the institution of slavery, that it's a whites-only story and slavery is blacks-only, and that treason is the same as patriotism" (Richardson 2017). Ultimately, the university appropriated the statue as a contrivance to excuse itself for its connections to the Confederacy. UNC's endeavor to esteem white violence and black life simultaneously reflects a begrudged refusal to rid themselves of an obstinate brand of southern pride, "not an ignorant but a defiant one. It is a pride that says, our history is rich, our causes are justified, our ancestors lie beyond reproach. It is pining for greatness, if you will, a

wish again for a certain kind of American memory. A monument-worthy memory" (Williams 2020). Author Judith Carney in *Woman's Work: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in The Americas* explains the strength of the Carolina's slave economy can be primarily accredited to the knowledge systems passed down by women from West African tradition; yet the memorial only depicts men. This is but a minute example of the scale to which the reduction of slave narratives to plaques and statues suppresses necessary aspects of history. The inanimate cannot restore living to the dead.

The history of the American rise to hegemony reflects one core principle: white freedom has invariably meant black oppression. Juneteenth is celebrated as Emancipation Day, reflecting the precise sort of contradiction on which the American consciousness is forged. On the same day as this delusive proclamation, thousands remained in slavery, others remained captive in indentured servitude, and slavery would prove to be reinvented ad nauseam in American institutions centuries later. America is content to engage in this commemoration whilst profiting from and securing the afterlives of slavery. In Fredrick Douglass's address to the nation on the Fourth of July, he proclaims, "America is false to the past, false to the present and solemnly blinds herself to be false to the future" (Douglass 1852). Americans regard liberty as a foundational principle from which they could never deviate rather than acknowledging their relentless historical strategy of oppression. Hoisted up by corroded foundations of justice, The United States government acts as a global dictator of morality whilst muzzling the cries for freedom in their streets and beneath their soil. By internally cultivating division and dooming the oppressed to desperately cling to the strap of a boot whose sole lies on their back, America sustains a veil of justice in the frame of the cracked and bloodstained mirror of history. Commemoration acts with an eye to the past; however, Douglass cautions, "trust no future, however pleasant, let the dead past bury its dead; act, act in the living present, heart within, and God overhead" (Douglass 1852). When we mark a false holiday, we allow whites to celebrate the perseverance of American ideals over the "poisonous" practices of the south and legitimize their claim that justice has triumphed over racism. Professor of African American studies Shane-Bolles Walsh explains, "if you want to commemorate something, you literally have to buy land to commemorate it on," representing a "potent example of the long-lasting

reality of white supremacy" (Young 2021). When we erect statues on stolen land, we engage in an economic system built on black suffering and ask it to alter an outcome it has been mechanically engineered to produce. Commemoration refutes the idea that slavery lives on; it allows white people to preemptively move up the finish line in the race for justice while simultaneously pushing that line further away from the bleeding feet of the black body. To act in the living present, we must regard the fickle future not as a period of predetermined progression due to the false narrative trajectory of white history, but as an objective attainable through the revolutionary action of the living.

Commemorate- to call to remembrance

When we attempt to honor Black Life through inanimate statues and holidays celebrated by a government that since its genesis has produced and re-produced the oppression of black bodies, we further obscure the realities of slavery and its afterlives. We must regard racism as fundamentally intertwined with property and capitalism. In his essay "American Capitalism is Brutal," Matthew Desmond informs us "we cannot simply regard slavery or its afterlives as symptoms of "dumb racism," nullified by a mere "celebration" of black contributions; "the violence was neither arbitrary nor gracious. It was rational, capitalistic, all part of the plantation's design" (Desmond 2019). UNC attempted to separate ideology from practice by venerating Silent Sam and extending a polite nod to the black people who built this nation. This is not a fluke in the American value system; it is in this contradiction where racial violence has always flourished. In "The Case for Reparations" Ta-Nehisi Coates argues, "to celebrate freedom and democracy while forgetting America's origins in a slavery economy is patriotism à la carte" (Coates 2014). To account for this level of entrenchment, we must require more of white people than a mere "remembrance" of a history they have already forgotten. We must demand they acknowledge the afterlives of slavery and seek to rectify these lasting instances of oppression, regardless of the threat it poses to white comfort.



**by ZoeScourtes*