Reflection on "One Drop, but Many Views On Race" -Kayla Massey
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When I was very young, I always knew that I was black, but looking in hindsight, I wasn't aware of the weight that that title carried. I always find it amazing how when someone describes themselves as "black", a lot of people have such a narrow idea of what that means. But in reality, it is extremely complex.

I have always been a strong believer that art, in any discipline, is for the people--no matter what gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation, you may identify with. Regardless of who you are, your art shouldn't be solely judged on social constructs that have been integrated in society for centuries.

Although I do carry some of these same views to this day, admittedly my perspective on self-identity in art has somewhat shifted. Now that I am older and much more aware of what it means to be a black person in society, I now have a much different and profound perspective on self-identity especially when it comes to art.

I can recall a short time in my life where I had this small inner conflict when it came to my identity. I found myself not so much questioning who I was, but more so who I am before anything else. This internal question simply was "Am I black or a female first?". Although some people may see this as a simple question, it was more difficult to answer than I thought when this question originally formed in my mind. This "simple" question was just the beginning of my understanding of who I was in society and how I would identity myself.

This question still comes up for me from time to time, and the answer to it, depending on what setting you are in physically or mentally, may change.

When it comes to art and how I view and perceive it, I have never wondered the race of an artist initially. I think the reasoning behind this is because of what I mentioned earlier--art is for everybody, no matter who you are. I also believe that when titles like that are highlighted prematurely, it is easy for the people viewing the work to have a change in perception easily. I also believe that it takes away from the actual art. Contrarily, I see the other side of the argument and do believe that artists should take pride in who they are, especially artists of color and black artists, considering the fact that there is so much beautiful work that is produced from such a marginalized group in society.

As for myself, when it comes to my art and being in an artistic environment, I sometimes ask myself a modified version of the same question "Am I an artist first or am I black?". Similar to what I stated before, this answer can change depending on what artistic setting I may be in. Although I may identify myself as an artist, I am a Black woman first, and I take so much pride in that.

Just as complex as it is to define what being "black" is, it is also just as complex to define what being an artist is. Reflecting on my own humanity has proven to be complex and not just a narrow idea. I believe that this is a big part of what being an artist means, and this is the beauty in it.