

Abstract

Too Much White Space: Diversity in Graphic Design, is a community-based project that focuses on inspiring future black generations to become graphic designers. This project aims to respond to the AIGA article called *Where are the Black designers?*, by Maurice Cherry. In his article, he asks tough questions about the lack of racial diversity in design. He explains why the lack of diversity is a problem and how it hurts the design field. Researching this topic in-depth will help me find ways to get more minorities involved in graphic design. One day in my design career, I would like to expand this project and see if I can make an impact to raise the percentage of minorities in design.

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Influential Facilitation in One Community at a Time

This project aims to influence future black generations to become designers and artists by facilitating a community-based project. The community-driven project is a collaborative mural of my late grandfather, George Blount, on the side of his barbershop building. My grandfather, George Blount, was an influential man in the small town of Farmville, NC. He was well known for his involvement in the black community and serving in World War II. George Blount was a recognizable person in Farmville, and his face would draw attention. The mural would honor his legacy within Farmville. I designed this project around influencing future generations while keeping the community in mind. While researching and planning this facilitation, I studied socially engaged art and read *Education for Socially Engaged Art: a Materials and Techniques Handbook*, by Pablo Helguera. His book discussed how to make socially engaged art and keep the audience in mind. Mainly, for my designed project, I focused on this statement Helguera made, "To get the results they desire, artists must be clear with themselves in articulating the audiences to whom they wish to speak and in understanding the context from which they are addressing them."¹ After reading this book, I knew the mural needed both my interest and goals in mind as a facilitator, but still needed to connect with the audience in Farmville. Portraying my grandfather's figure along with his achievements not only represents determination within the community but signals to young future designers and artists that diversity in graphic design is achievable.

The importance of inspiring future black generations to become designers and artists is important because art and design allow people to have a voice. Rodney Ross discusses in his article called *Diversity in Graphic Design* that finding research about black designers is hard, and a man named Victor Margolin started interviewing black designers to understand their voice and experiences in the field.² Both the art and design fields are forms of communication for black people to express subjects of identity, race, and community. Self-expression is essential in the black community, and the need to be more expressive and critical. Current forms of social self-expression in the black community are hairstyles, clothing, language, and art. There are black designers and artists, but the ratio is in favor of the white population, especially in graphic design. Blacks still get overshadowed by whites because that is the norm in our society. Current mainstream design lacks diversity. With this project, I want to encourage future black generations to break the pattern.

Assistant Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Minnesota Duluth's Department of Art & Design, named Terresa Moses spoke at Columbia College Chicago about diversity in graphic design. Terresa Moses is the Creative Director of Blackbird Revolt, a design studio that uses art and design to create a conscious message.³ Her projects involve black hair, white supremacy, lynching, and diversity in graphic design. Her inspirational talk discussed working with the community because she works to better them while also encouraging artists to explore uncomfortable subjects. The way she speaks about her work gives me hope that I

will be able to make an impact with my honors thesis project. Moses teaches her students, who are majority white, about black designers by doing pastiches of black design work. She explained that socially conscious design work is better than projects that do not exist in the real world. For example, making a fake branding project for an imaginary company can be beneficial for education because they are formal explorations. Still, it does not teach a student enough about crucial engagement in design. Students should be learning about real-world experiences and use their time in school to engage in diverse subject matters socially. The socially conscious design work is more knowledgeable in the long run because it teaches students to be aware of different perspectives. One of Moses' goals is to have graphic design accept blackness and not just some parts, but all of it.

I agree with this because when I joined the graphic design community, I noticed that there were not many blacks. Graphic design does not accept blackness as a whole; only the parts that are beneficial for promotion at the time. For example, designers use hip trends that are generally a part of the black community for promotional purposes, such as hairstyles, clothing, music, and language. They use those examples of black culture, but do not use the powerful movement called Black Lives Matter.

The Lack of Representation In Media and School

Maurice Cherry, a black designer, who has a podcast featuring other black designers, featured Sarah Huny Young. She is an award-winning creative director, marketing & communications director, and designer. She worked at BET/Viacom, VIBE Magazine, and UltraStar, Pittsburgh City Paper as a freelance photographer.⁴ A project that she discussed on the podcast is *AMERICAN WOMAN*. It is a portrait and interview series about Black American women in the USA. *AMERICAN WOMAN* featured in The Root, BlackBook, net Magazine, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and Pittsburgh City Paper. Inspiration for *AMERICAN WOMAN* came from Young's childhood and how American girls in the media looked nothing like her. They were all white, blonde, and blue-eyed women. *AMERICAN WOMAN* focuses on black women being able to feel welcomed and go against the media stereotypes. She has other projects that explain that because of the lack of diversity in the field, it causes black designers to have a difficult time entering the workforce. The lack of representation in the field demonstrates how important it is to have more diversity in graphic design. Researching and studying the different articles, shaped my project to investigate and explore ways to engage the black community in graphic design, similar to how Sarah Huny Young and Terresa Moses do in their practice.

Sarah Huny Young's story is similar to mine because of the portrayal in the media. Being a black graphic design major at Appalachian State was hard; there is no other word to describe it. People were not used to my appearance and made

assumptions. I have many examples, but I will discuss two. Early in my educational career, a professor discredited my work because it was not his style. The Typography II class focused on copying the professor's style, and he wanted everyone to follow his style because he believed his style was the best. I experimented with every project he gave, and every time I got a C. He emailed me and said, "you can experiment if you want, but do not assume that you have learned anything from that approach." After reading that, I just knew I was going to fail that class. It got to a point where he got my peers to comment on my work all the time, so I made a poster with Comic Sans and turned it in. Even though he gave me an F on that project, I still passed with a C.

The second example is about a different professor giving me advice and seeing my potential. I was still a young designer, and the assigned project was to make a newspaper. I was partnered with the only other minority classmate in class, who is Asian. We decided to do the paper on race stereotypes, and because of it, our classmates hated it. Their reason for hating the project was not because of the design; they did not like the topic. The topic was too much, and people gave feedback criticizing the message rather than the design. I had to talk to people outside of class, and I made a support group when it came to uncomfortable concepts. I got a lot of hateful messages telling me to do something else and to be weary in the halls. When I fought back, that was when literally everyone started to ignore me, and I had a class with them every day in the same building. The

professor noticed what was going on, and she said something in class. Once she did that, people tried discrediting the project, but I defended myself and the project. After class, the professor told me not to worry about other people's words, and she hung my spread up for that week, looked at me, and smiled. That was the most heartwarming experience I had in the program. The professor was praising me, while thirty of my classmates were forming a mob. At that moment, I was a minority in a space where I was also another minority. I was not just a designer, but a black designer. It was a terrible but great eye-opening experience. I have dealt with discrimination before, but every time it happens, it reminds me that I am black. Going forward with my graphic design career, I will never allow myself to get discredited, and I will back up my designs to the fullest.

An Ultimate Design Community

When I realized what was going on around me, I started to do more research and found his article. In the article, Cherry states, "The topic of racial diversity in the graphic design community has been going on for well over 20 years."⁵ Before reading this article, I thought I was over analyzing my experience, but then I realized that there is a real problem with diversity. There is too much white space in graphic design, and the need for diversity is essential. Cherry also states that big-time companies only report single-digit percentages of black employees. The percentages do not reflect the world we live in today. Graphic design is about communication, and if there is a lack of diversity in a field about communication,

then it cannot correctly represent specific groups of people. In an article called, *“Diversity & Inclusion in Design: Why Do They Matter?”* Antionette Carroll discusses the lack of diversity in graphic design and how it hurts the field. Carroll is the Founder, President, and CEO of Creative Reaction Lab, a nonprofit educating, training, and challenging Black and Latinx youth to become leaders designing healthy communities. Also, Carroll has an award-winning form of creative problem solving called Equity-Centered Community Design.

Her work is heavily involved in diversity, and she explained that diversity is not just a race topic. Antionette states that “race is only part of the picture. Diversity in design means diversity of experience, perspective, and creativity—otherwise known as diversity of thought.”⁶ Diversity can be ethnicity, gender, age, sexual identity, ability/disability, and location. It leads to a lack of role models and public awareness. Design and marketing firms have made mistakes over the years. The lack of diversity within these agencies, studios, and firms caused world-wide debate over specific campaigns. For example, Dove soap put out an ad for their skin wash. The women were changing into each other. The way it was edited made it seem like a black woman was turning into a white woman. People were distraught over this commercial and compared it to an older soap that featured a black child turning white after taking a bath. The former soap was called Pears Soap and was explicitly racist. The soap ad had two children, one black and one white, on the cover. The black child is sitting in the bathtub, and the white child is washing him. The bottom

half of the ad shows the black child out of the bath, and his bottom half is now white. This ad dates back to 1779 and reinforces the stereotype of black skin as undesirable, while white is pure.⁷ If at least one of the designers working on the commercial knew about that history, the commercial would avoid backlash. Many designers and non-designers would not expect a big company like Dove to make such catastrophic errors; this shows precisely how much public awareness is in the graphic design field.

Complicated Commonality

There is a commonality in my research, and it is the lack of diversity in art and design. All of the articles show that diversity is vital, and without it, there is a lot of room for error. An article called, *The Diversity Problem In Design Is A Lot More Complicated Than You Think*, by Nikhil discusses how there is a lack of cultural and racial diversity in all aspects of graphic design. Nikhil studied at SUNY Purchase in New York and describes himself as a shipbuilder and human being. They consider all factors that contribute to the lack of diversity. For example, western ideas and movements are the main subjects taught in education. Upcoming designers have to explore other design concepts on their own to learn about different cultures.

Nikhil states that “to truly create innovative and beautiful designs for the future, I think design education must reshape itself and expose students to designs outside of Western design.”⁸ I can agree with this statement because there is a lack

of exposure to other design ideas. Education in the field should branch out to different cultures to innovate current design styles. Doing that is inviting and shows future generations that the field can be accepting of every background, whether it is cultural or racial. Learning about different backgrounds and being able to make designs for all walks of life can help with the lack of diversity in design. I would love to see design exposure from Africa, South America, and Asia implemented in education. I do not know anything about their design practices, and I think learning about them could amplify anyone's design knowledge.

Raj Ravenell, a classmate of mine, is interested in the topic of learning about different backgrounds and mentioned the Junaluska community in Boone, NC. They wanted to contribute to the community and do an art piece for them. I have been in Boone for three years now, and this is my first time hearing about them. After researching, I realized that there is a lot of rich history in the community, and there is also a lot of lost history. Then I found a project based on unearthing Boone's black history in the community. The project is supposed to help maintain and find factual accounts of their history.⁹

Even though I have just discovered this, I feel many different emotions towards unearthing Boone's black history project. I feel happy and worried. I am delighted because this community has been able to prosper in hard times and are now able to have a project dedicated to them. I worry because I would not want just

anyone coming into their community just for gain or fame. People like taking advantage of opportunities like this, and I would not want this project to fall into the wrong hands. The drawing seems so delicate, and people in charge of the project should look at all aspects with care. Now that I am looking into it more, I see many people wanting to do something for themselves and thinking about the community and experience last. I do not want my project to turn into a negative experience or hurt anyone long term. I want it to inform people about the need for diversity in art and design.

Lack of Diversity in Everyday Life

While working on my honors thesis, I have started to apply the research into my own life. During my last semester, I put together a critique support group for minorities. It was very casual, and we did not all know each other, but we understood that there was a lack of diversity and cultural understanding going on in our classes. The idea came from one of my professors, who noticed that minority students were not getting the kind of critique they needed for their projects. She was receiving a lot of complaints from minority students about their other classes and how the professors were teaching their classes. I related to this with this honors thesis and talked to other minority students in Wey Hall about having our critiques together. After having our first meeting, I realized that this is a problem that affects our artwork, esteem, and education. Speaking with others and having them relate to me was eye-opening, and I want to continue to discuss diversity in my educational

career. I would have never thought that this support group would be the link to help me relate this thesis project to my own life. At first, I was focusing on diversity for future generations, but I can help the present as well and take graphic design past its current commercial status of normative design.

The Future of Too Much White Space

The outbreak of the Coronavirus has unexpectedly halted the finalizing of the mural project due to social distancing restrictions. To keep the project on track, I decided to have a quick 48-hour workshop with the volunteers. I spoke to the volunteers who are going to help with the mural after COVID-19 subsides. I had volunteers from the Farmville community to help me with the mural, but because of COVID-19, plans are at a halt. I know with the stay-at-home order, people are going through unprecedented times, so I decided to have a quick workshop with the volunteers who are between ages fourteen and eighteen. From the workshop, I received sketches, inspiration, and ideas from the volunteers and future young designers.

Also, I had a conversation with one of the volunteers, named Queen, about graphic design. She wanted to discuss what graphic design is before she started the workshop. The conversation led to her talking me through her thoughts about what the mural could be. She suggested that the mural could be similar to a poster and, in a way, be a promotion to younger generations in the community.

After receiving different ideas for the mural, I had to rethink its concept and make sure that every component had meaning behind it. I realized that it is not just a project for me but a potential movement, especially for Farmville, NC, and regionally in North Carolina. I decided to make a website to display information about the project, my progress, and references for people who want to get involved. Also, I am making a book to document work, my process, and growth while doing this project.

As of right now, I am still actively working on the mural's composition to properly fit the community's environment and my message about diversity. After COVID-19 and the stay-at-home order, I plan on facilitating the mural design with the volunteers. If people want to follow this project, they can visit the website URL <http://angelicafields.net/whitespace.html>. I will promote this website on my social media, through word of mouth, and on my website.

For the future of *Too Much White Space*, I am going to continue this project in my design career. I will go into different communities to spread information about the lack of diversity in design. This subject matter is important to me, and if I can increase the diversity in design by just one percentage, then I will feel accomplished.

Notes

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Too

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Space

Diversity in Graphic Design

Angelica Fields

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By: Angelica Fields

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Preface

Too Much White Space: Diversity in Graphic Design, is a community-based project that focuses on inspiring future black generations to become graphic designers.

This project aims to respond to the AIGA article called *Where are the Black designers?*, by Maurice Cherry. In his article, he asks tough questions about the lack of racial diversity in design. He explains why the lack of diversity is a problem and how it hurts the design field. Researching this topic in-depth will help me find ways to get more minorities involved in graphic design. One day in my design career, I would like to expand this project and see if I can make an impact to raise the percentage of minorities in design.

Influential

Facilitation

in One

Community

at a Time



Mural Inspiration and Research
Various murals from locations around the United States depicting strong layouts and figures

This project aims to influence future black generations to become designers and artists by facilitating a community-based project. The community-driven project is a collaborative mural of my late grandfather, George Blount, on the side of his barbershop building. My grandfather, George Blount, was an influential man in the small town of Farmville, NC. He was well known for his involvement in the black community and serving in World War II. George Blount was a recognizable person in Farmville, and his face would draw attention. The mural would honor his legacy within Farmville. I designed this project around influencing future generations while keeping the community in mind.

While researching and planning this facilitation, I studied socially engaged art and read *Education for Socially Engaged Art: a Materials and Techniques Handbook*, by Pablo Helguera. His book discussed how to make socially engaged art and keep the audience in mind.

Mainly, for my designed project, I focused on this statement Helguera made, *“To get the results they desire, artists must be clear with themselves in articulating the audiences to whom they wish to speak and in understanding the context from which they are addressing them.”*¹ After reading this book, I knew the mural needed both my interest and goals in mind as a facilitator, but still needed to connect with the audience in Farmville. Portraying my grandfather’s figure along with his achievements not only represents determination within the community but signals to young future designers and artists that diversity in graphic design is achievable.

The importance of inspiring future black generations to become designers and artists is important because art and design allow people to have a voice. Rodney Ross discusses in his article called *Diversity in Graphic Design* that finding research about black designers is hard, and a man named Victor Margolin started interviewing black designers to understand their voice and experiences in the field.²

Both the art and design fields are forms of communication for black people to express subjects of identity, race, and community. Self-expression is essential in the black community, and the need to be more expressive and critical. Current forms of social self-expression in the black community are hairstyles, clothing, language, and art. There are black designers and artists, but the ratio is in favor of the white population, especially in graphic design. Blacks still get overshadowed by whites because that is the norm in our society. Current mainstream design lacks diversity. With this project, I want to encourage future black generations to break the pattern.

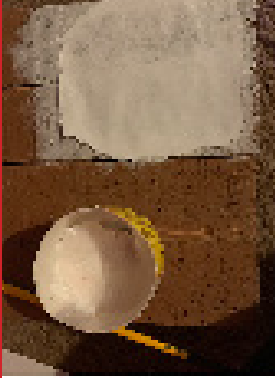
Assistant Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Minnesota Duluth's Department of Art & Design, named Terresa Moses spoke at Columbia College Chicago about diversity in graphic design. Terresa Moses is the Creative Director of Blackbird Revolt, a design studio that uses art and design to create a conscious message.³ Her projects involve black hair, white supremacy, lynching, and diversity in graphic design.

Her inspirational talk discussed working with the community because she works to better them while also encouraging artists to explore uncomfortable subjects. The way she speaks about her work gives me hope that I will be able to make an impact with my honors thesis project.

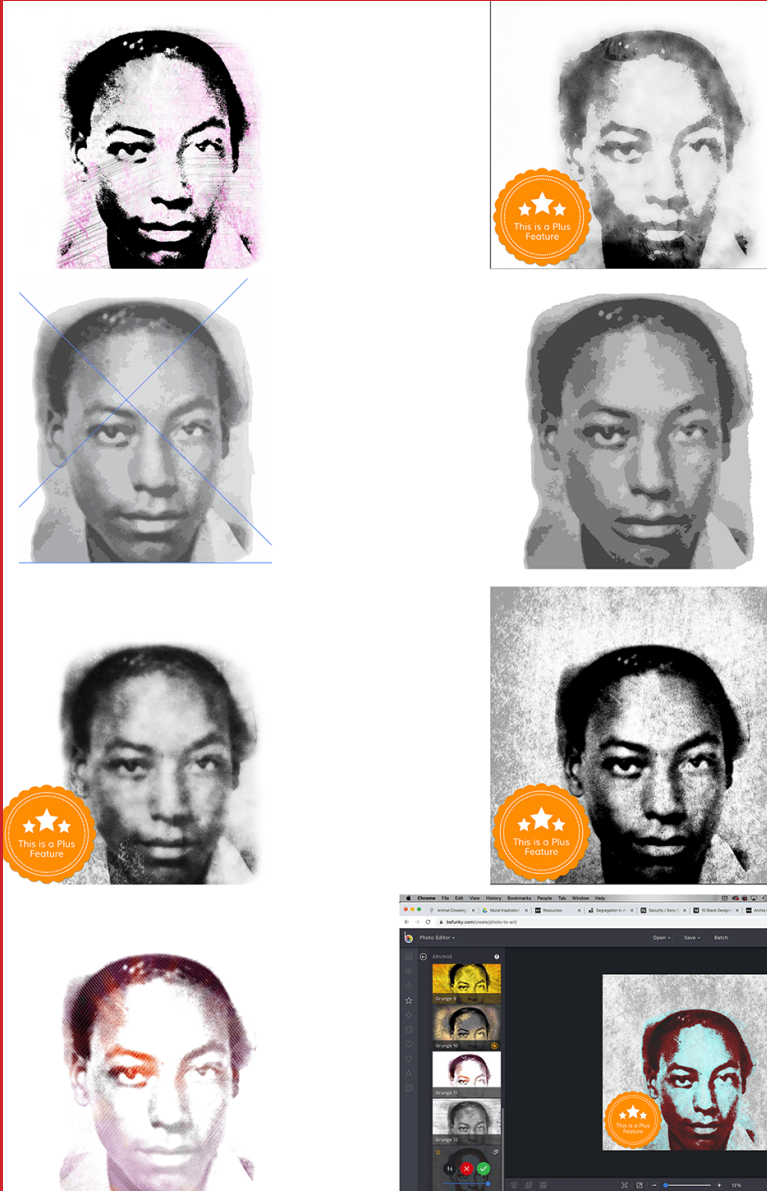
Moses teaches her students, who are majority white, about black designers by doing pastiches of black design work. She explained that socially conscious design work is better than projects that do not exist in the real world. For example, making a fake branding project for an imaginary company can be beneficial for education because they are formal explorations. Still, it does not teach a student enough about crucial engagement in design.

Students should be learning about real-world experiences and use their time in school to engage in diverse subject matters socially. The socially conscious design work is more knowledgeable in the long run because it teaches students to be aware of different perspectives.

One of Moses' goals is to have graphic design accept blackness and not just some parts, but all of it. I agree with this because when I joined the graphic design community, I noticed that there were not many blacks. Graphic design does not accept blackness as a whole; only the parts that are beneficial for promotion at the time. For example, designers use hip trends that are generally a part of the black community for promotional purposes, such as hairstyles, clothing, music, and language. They use those examples of black culture, but do not use the powerful movement called Black Lives Matter.



Mural Testing
Testing image transfer on brick



Digital Mockups
Mocking up different mural designs



Mural Painting

Testing out different styles



Mural Painting



Mural Compositions

Figuring out different compositions for the mural

The
Lack of
Representation
In Media and
School

**"...I INSIST ON
THE RIGHT TO
CRITICIZE [AMERICA]
PERPETUALLY."**

—JAMES BALDWIN

Quote from Sarah Huny Young's website, AMERICAN WOMAN

Maurice Cherry, a black designer, who has a podcast featuring other black designers, featured Sarah Huny Young. She is an award-winning creative director, marketing & communications director, and designer. She worked at BET/Viacom, VIBE Magazine, and UltraStar, Pittsburgh City Paper as a freelance photographer.⁴

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She has other projects that explain that because of the lack of diversity in the field, it causes black designers to have a difficult time entering the workforce. The lack of representation in the field demonstrates how important it is to have more diversity in graphic design. Researching and studying the different articles, shaped my project to investigate and explore ways to engage the black community in graphic design, similar to how Sarah Huny Young and Terresa Moses do in their practice. Sarah Huny Young's story is similar to mine because of the portrayal in the media. Being a black graphic design major at Appalachian State was hard; there is no other word to describe it. People were not used to my appearance and made assumptions. I have many examples, but I will discuss two.

Early in my educational career, a professor discredited my work because it was not his style. The Typography II class focused on copying the professor's style, and he wanted everyone to follow his style because he believed his style was the best. I experimented with every project he gave, and every time I got a C.

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An Ultimate

Design

Community

#WATBD

Where Are The Black Designers?

Hashtag

When I realized what was going on around me, I started to do more research and found his article. In the article, he states, "*The topic of racial diversity in the graphic design community has been going on for well over 20 years.*"⁵

Before reading this article, I thought I was over analyzing my experience, but then I realized that there is a real problem with diversity. There is too much white space in graphic design, and the need for diversity is essential. Cherry also states that big-time companies only report single-digit percentages of black employees. The percentages do not reflect the world we live in today. Graphic design is about communication, and if there is a lack of diversity in a field about communication, then it cannot correctly represent specific groups of people.

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Also, Carroll has an award-winning form of creative problem solving called Equity-Centered Community Design. Her work is heavily involved in diversity, and she explained that diversity is not just a race topic. Antionette states that *“race is only part of the picture. Diversity in design means diversity of experience, perspective, and creativity—otherwise known as diversity of thought.”*⁶

Diversity can be ethnicity, gender, age, sexual identity, ability/disability, and location. It leads to a lack of role models and public awareness. Design and marketing firms have made mistakes over the years. The lack of diversity within these agencies, studios, and firms caused world-wide debate over specific campaigns. For example, Dove soap put out an ad for their skin wash. The women were changing into each other.

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Complicated

Commonality

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Nikhil states that *“to truly create innovative and beautiful designs for the future, I think design education must reshape itself and expose students to designs outside of Western design.”*⁸

I can agree with this statement because there is a lack of exposure to other design ideas. Education in the field should branch out to different cultures to innovate current design styles. Doing that is inviting and

shows future generations that the field can be accepting of every background, whether it is cultural or racial. Learning about different backgrounds and being able to make designs for all walks of life can help with the lack of diversity in design. I would love to see design exposure from Africa, South America, and Asia implemented in education. I do not know anything about their design practices, and I think learning about them could amplify anyone's design knowledge.

Raj Ravenell, a classmate of mine, is interested in the topic of learning about different backgrounds and mentioned the Junaluska community in Boone, NC. They wanted to contribute to the community and do an art piece for them. I have been in Boone for three years now, and this is my first time hearing about them. After researching, I realized that there is a lot of rich history in the community, and there is also a lot of lost history. Then I found a project based on unearthing Boone's black history in the community. The project is supposed to help maintain and find factual accounts of their history.⁹

Even though I have just discovered this, I feel many different emotions towards unearthing Boone's black history project. I feel happy and worried. I am delighted because this community has been able to prosper in hard times and are now able to have a project dedicated to them. I worry because I would not want just anyone coming into their community just for gain or fame. People like taking advantage of opportunities like this, and I would not want this project to fall into the wrong hands. The drawing seems so delicate, and people in charge of the project should look at all aspects with care. Now that I am looking into it more, I see many people wanting to do something for themselves and thinking about the community and experience last. I do not want my project to turn into a negative experience or hurt anyone long term. I want it to inform people about the need for diversity in art and design.

Lack of Diversity in Everyday Life

While working on my honors thesis, I have started to apply the research into my own life. During my last semester, I put together a critique support group for minorities. It was very casual, and we did not all know each other, but we understood that there was a lack of diversity and cultural understanding going on in our classes. The idea came from one of my professors, who noticed that minority students were not getting the kind of critique they needed for their projects. She was receiving a lot of complaints from minority students about their other classes and how the professors were teaching their classes. I related to this with this honors thesis and talked to other minority students in Wey Hall about having our critiques together.

After having our first meeting, I realized that this is a problem that affects our artwork, esteem, and education. Speaking with others and having them relate to me was eye-opening, and I want to continue to discuss diversity in my educational career. I would have never thought that this support group would be the link to help me relate this thesis project to my own life. At first, I was focusing on diversity for

future generations, but I can help the present as well and take graphic design past its current commercial status of normative design.

The Future

of Too

Much White

Space

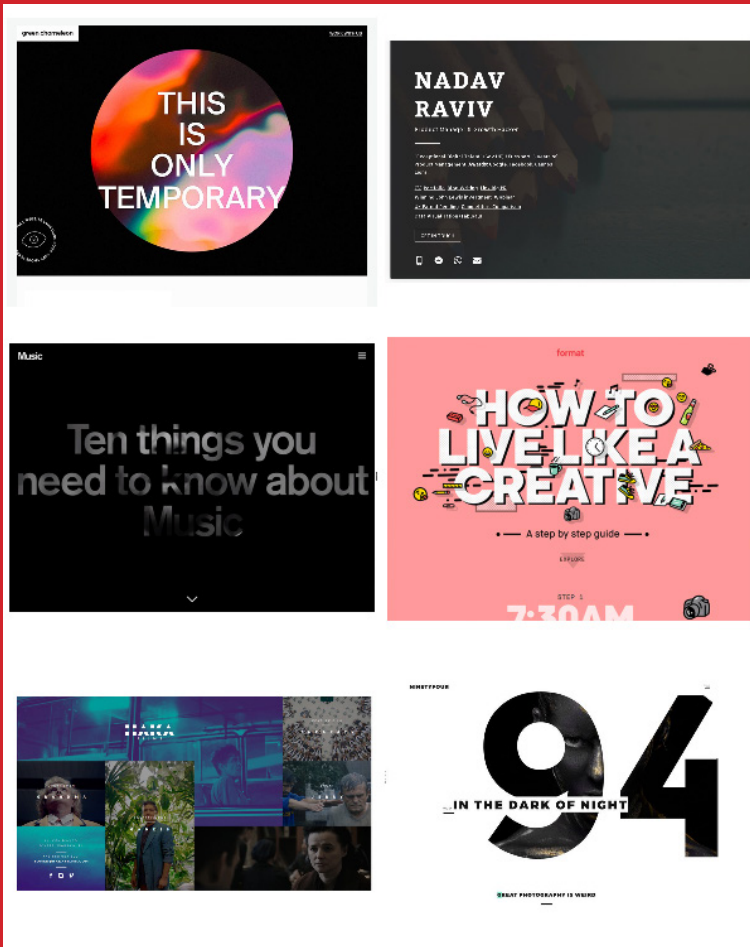
The outbreak of the Coronavirus has unexpectedly halted the finalizing of the mural project due to social distancing restrictions. To keep the project on track, I decided to have a quick 48-hour workshop with the volunteers. I spoke to the volunteers who are going to help with the mural after COVID-19 subsides. I had volunteers from the Farmville community to help me with the mural, but because of COVID-19, plans are at a halt. I know with the stay-at-home order, people are going through unprecedented times, so I decided to have a quick workshop with the volunteers who are between ages fourteen and eighteen. From the workshop, I received sketches, inspiration, and ideas from the volunteers and future young designers.

Also, I had a conversation with one of the volunteers, named Queen, about graphic design. She wanted to discuss what graphic design is before she started the workshop. The conversation led to her talking me through her thoughts about what the mural could be. She suggested that the mural could be similar to a poster and, in a way, be a promotion to younger generations in the community.

After receiving different ideas for the mural, I had to rethink its concept and make sure that every component had meaning behind it. I realized that it is not just a project for me but a potential movement, especially for Farmville, NC, and regionally in North Carolina. I decided to make a website to display information about the project, my progress, and references for people who want to get involved. Also, I am making a book to document work, my process, and growth while doing this project.

As of right now, I am still actively working on the mural's composition to properly fit the community's environment and my message about diversity. After COVID-19 and the stay-at-home order, I plan on facilitating the mural design with the volunteers. If people want to follow this project, they can visit the website URL <http://angelicafields.net/whitespace.html>. I will promote this website on my social media, through word of mouth, and on my website.

For the future of Too Much White Space, I am going to continue this project in my design career. I will go into different communities to spread information about the lack of diversity in design. This subject matter is important to me, and if I can increase the diversity in design by just one percentage, then I will feel accomplished.



Website Inspiration and Research
 Various websites from different designers depicting dynamic compositions

Response

ONLY



10%

OF GRAPHIC DESIGNERS ARE BLACK

Community

Get Involved

Too Much White Space

Website Process
My process on the website for Too Much White Space

Interviews

Interviewing IlaSahai Prouty

Prouty has an MFA from the California College of Art, Bay Area, CA. She was Resident Artist at the Penland School of Crafts in Penland, NC, and is currently a Professor at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC.

<https://ilasahaiprouty.net/>

Ila's Fish Taco Story

While she was going to graduate school she would stop at a black Muslim food truck/storefront place to get tacos. One day the person behind the counter looked up and past her. When she noticed this she turned around and looked at a sign above her that said, Remember The White Man is a Killer and a Devil, Don't Forget.

Ila is half black and white, she has never noticed that she appears to be white to other people. After that she didn't want to go back, not because she was hurt by their response, but it was because she felt like she brought bad energy to the store. She did not want to make them feel uncomfortable or have her skin color bring them harm.

Interviewing Raj Ravenell

Raj Ravenell is a student at Appalachian State University, who is fascinated by the Junaluska community. They plan on making socially engaged art about the Junaluska community in the future.

Angelica: How Long have you been in Boone?

Raj: I've lived in Boone for about three years now.

A: How did you hear about the Junaluska Community?

R: I heard about the Junaluska community through word of mouth. I started looking into them and realized that there was no history in the western sense about who they were or what they are about.

A: What inspired you to make socially engaged art for this community?

Raj: I was reading this book, [Sula](#), by Toni Morrison, and it described precisely a situation that had happened to a black community located higher up than the white community in how they lost their businesses and way of life and pushed into a corner. The book covered other issues as well, but it was just very synchronous to see.

A: What is one detail about Junaluska that stands out to you the most?

Raj: The one detail that stands out to me about them is that their history is mostly oral. If you want to know more about them you cannot go through conventional means of gaining information; you have to talk to the descendants if you wish to get anything with substance.

A: Lastly, what advice would you give someone who is going to make socially engaged art for a community?

R: *Advice for moving forward:* Just because someone is a minority does not give them any hierarchical rights. I would say decentering yourself is the first step in making art for a community.

Interviewing Queen

Queen is a high school student and volunteer who lives in the Farmville community. She participated in the 48hr workshop and planned on helping with the mural painting after COVID-19.

Angelica: How is the 48hr workshop going?

Queen: I'm having a little trouble, can you explain what graphic design is?

A: Ok, graphic design is like communication, but as an art form.

Q: I think that makes sense, kind of.

A: Well, think like posters, books, forms, and anything that communicates an idea. Those are designed items!

Q: Oh, ok. Maybe the mural should be a huge poster.

A: That's a good idea.

Q: Why is it a mural?

A: I think it would be more engaging for a community than a poster.

Q: Maybe the design could be like a poster and still be painted on the wall.

A: You know what, that is a cool idea. I am going to try that out. Thank you, Queen!

Q: You're welcome. I can't wait to see the final design. Will I still be able to help put it on the wall?

A: Yes, I am hopeful that COVID-19 ends soon, and it'll be safe to go outside.

Notes

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