



Imposed Problems: A Social Portrait

Senior Project

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
The Esther G. Maynor Honors College  
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

By

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Studio Art  
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lemuel Subdias".

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Lemuel Subdias  
Honors College Scholar

12/04/19

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Date

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Antoine Labadie".

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John Antoine Labadie, Ph.D.  
Faculty Mentor

12/04/19

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Date

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua Kalin Busman".

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Joshua Kalin Busman, Ph.D.  
Senior Project Coordinator

12/05/2019

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Date

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to Robert Epps for the assistance during the development of my final project. He was the inspiration for many of the effects that occurred in the videos.

Advice given by Dr. Larry Arnold has been a great help in producing the audio for this project. He was always patient and provided great insight.

I want to thank the following people for accepting my invitation to be the subjects of my artwork and being so willing to be vulnerable and open:

Miguel Antonio Perez

Kianna Paige Smith

Demetrius Ray Venson

A huge thank you to my mentor and advisor Dr. John Antoine Labadie for the guidance and his patience while working with me.

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#### Imposed Problems: A Social Portrait

In *Imposed Problems: A Social Portrait*, Lemuel Subdias created a series of portraits to display how the community and society shapes one's personality. Lemuel has always had a fascination with portraits and the narrative found in visual portraits. In order to create a narrative of people other than himself, he studied and interviewed three subjects to better evaluate and understand the personalities of his subjects. He chose subjects who classify themselves as minorities on a social level in the United States. Prior to making the artwork, he composed an interview with each subject separately. He interrogated each subject with the same 50 questions, while recording both audio and video of the interview. The questions included questions from Carl Jung and Arthur Aron's 36 questions to fall in love that Lemuel had come across after reading a *Washington Post* article, suggesting these questions lead to love. He had asked the questions to a close friend and learned a lot about the friend so he decided to ask the same questions to the subjects. The video and audio of the video is used in creating video portraits of the subjects. The subjects were also asked to submit photos and videos portraying elements they hold a strong connection to.

The final product was a digital video portrait of each subject. The videos show a primary subject as a silhouette with an barrage of distorted images flipping by in the background. There is a balance of still images and moving elements in these videos with a focus of contrast in various forms including color.

The portraits were created based on prior knowledge of the subjects as well as knowledge received through interviews. The media accumulated from the

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subjects were based on their interpretation of “images and videos that show things that mean a lot to you.” With it, the following videos were edited to create the series *Imposed Problems: A Social Portrait*, “Miguel, Kianna,” and “Demetrius.”

All of the subjects have mentioned mental illness as a social problem and stated how it had affected each one of them. When creating each piece, the theme of depression was at center. Each subject stated that depression had impacted their mental health so in order to create a visual representation of a mental illness, inner turmoil was depicted as distortion. Balance between chaos and stability was portrayed using items and symbols that would make each subject at ease.

In “Miguel,” the subject was a minority in ethnicity. The subject was of Hispanic descent, with fair skin and identified as a heterosexual cisgendered male. The subject mentioned the social problems he identified with, which include economic instability, mental illness, and domestic abuse. In this video, three videos were created to separate the subject’s “personalities.” They were titled *TINT*, *GOAT*, and *Miguel*. *TINT* and *GOAT*, both represented an inner turmoil within the subject. *TINT* showed the subject’s appreciation and love for his culture and environment, while it still displayed a coldness and sadness through the color. *GOAT* displayed his favorite animal (the goat) while it also played on the acronym for Greatest Of All Time. After a rough period in his life, the subject had an increased sense of self esteem and is visually portrayed through fire. The distortion of the goat video in the background was representational of the favorite animal and acronym, while it also showed how the subject saw himself.

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In “Kianna,” the subject is a minority in color and gender. The subject was Black and identified as a heterosexual cisgendered woman. The subject also mentioned the impact mental health has on her. Out of the three subjects, this subject was the most discriminated. During the interview, the subject revealed her father passed away when she was young. This had a definite impact on her sense of self. She kept a quilt created out of her late father’s shirts. This was used as an overlay on top of the overall video to display an interesting texture. The subject was diagnosed with anxiety and depression and this was displayed visually through the distortion of videos in the background. Included was also a symbol of the subject’s favorite book, titled “The Song of the Sparrow,” in the form of a literal sparrow, and her emotional support animal, Jaxon.

In “Demetrius,” the subject had also dealt with depression at a young age. He was a heterosexual cis-gendered Black male. He was introverted but showed a lot of energy when engaged in conversation. Family was important to the subject, considering he was raised in a single parent household, whom was also involved in the military. Since the subject had suffered through depression, he found joy in other matters. When asked to submit photos and videos, he submitted landscapes, posters of concert festivals, photos of friends and family, and photos of the subject’s skateboard. The subject had also mentioned his favorite animal was a duck which was incorporated into the video as well. All of these elements were taken to create a video collage.

Below are still frames of each video created, as well as the questions used in the interview.

6 Subdias



Demetrius



Kianna



Miguel

7 Subdias



GOAT



TINT

## 8 Subdias

### Senior Honors College Project Interview Questions

Name:

1. What is your ethnicity?
2. Where are you from?
3. How old are you?
4. How would you define a social problem?
5. What are some examples of social problems?
6. What kind of social problems would you say affected you during your lifetime?
7. Who is your community?
8. How has your community affected the way you think?
9. What is your zodiac sign (sun, moon, and rising)?
10. List five words that your best friends would use to describe you.
11. Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?
12. Would you like to be famous? In what way?
13. Before making a telephone call, do you ever rehearse what you are going to say? Why?
14. What would constitute a "perfect" day for you?
15. When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
16. If you were able to live to the age of 90 and retain either the mind or body of a 30-year-old for the last 60 years of your life, which would you want?
17. Do you have a secret hunch about how you will die?

## 9 Subdias

18. Name three things you and your partner have in common.
19. For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
20. If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
21. Take four minutes and tell your partner your life story in as much detail as possible.
22. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?
23. If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future or anything else, what would you want to know.
24. If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future or anything else, what would you want to know?
25. Is there something that you've dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?
26. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
27. What do you value most in a friendship?
28. What is your most treasured memory?
29. What is your most terrible memory?
30. If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?
31. What does friendship mean to you?
32. What roles do love and affection play in your life?
33. Alternate sharing something you consider a positive characteristic of your partner. Share a total of five items.

## 10 Subdias

34. How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people's?
35. How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?
36. Make three true "we" statements each. For instance, "We are both in this room feeling ... "
37. Complete this sentence: "I wish I had someone with whom I could share ..."
38. If you were going to become a close friend with your partner, please share what would be important for him or her to know.
39. Tell your partner what you like about them; be very honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you've just met.
40. Share with your partner an embarrassing moment in your life.
41. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
42. Tell your partner something that you like about them already.
43. What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
44. If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven't you told them yet?
45. Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be? Why?
46. Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?
47. If you had your own tv show, what would it be about?

## 11 Subdias

48. Share a personal problem and ask your partner's advice on how he or she might handle it. Also, ask your partner to reflect back to you how you seem to be feeling about the problem you have chosen.
49. Use three adjectives to describe your favorite color.
50. Use three adjectives to describe your favorite animal.

## References

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