

Definitions | Fall 2017

BLACK STAR MAGAZINE

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Editor's Letter

Blackness, to me, is a homeland. a thing administered by way of passage and experience. We have all arrived at Blackness through one of these. While we each embark on journeys that include global passages, life experiences, and an expanding world-view, we are being challenged to be.
Being has always been an act of doing, a continual process of growth and change. We live in a time where our worth is being challenged with every election, every popularized act of brutality, every natural disaster that culminates to a general feeling of attack. The body is, and has been under attack for some time now. The Black body is, and has always been under attack. I take Blackness as a shelter. In the words of the Last Poets, "black is *free.*" While black is a color, a social construct too often defined by its proximity to whiteness, it is also something that we find comfort in despite our nationality. Black Star* spent Fall 2017 defining our personal and collective Blackness through hair, music, food, fashion, aesthetic, and conversation. To others, Blackness may seem like an American-born child of struggle, but it is altogether lovely, altogether powerful, altogether *magic*. It is strong enough to hold us all. Please enjoy witnessing the voices of Black Emory in this *Definitions** Issue. In response to Margaret Burroughs' poetic and timeless question, I would simply tell them Black *Is*: "Black is you, black is me, black is us, black is free." To my staff, thank you. To our readers, be blessed.

In Light & Love,
Christell Victoria Roach

Diaspora: Subverting the Notion of a Monolithic Identity

by Jessica Isibor

So, you're not actually black, right?, asked a classmate of mine after asking what part of Africa I am from and then feeling the strong inclination to say that, luckily for me, I do not "look *that* African." In another situation, a woman much too old and much too "educated" assumed that my "black girl attitude" (whatever that means) was somehow appropriate to discuss in the middle of class. One might imagine the utter confusion that third-grade me must have felt at the time. And of course, there is the infamous, the timeless "You don't talk black" (the idea that one's speech can capture the essence of an entire people never ceases to amaze me). Anyway, I say all this to say that there seems to be a certain expectation of what it means to be black–how one must look, talk, act, etc. This not only does a disservice to the "definers" of black-ness, but it most evidently does an even larger disservice to those being defined. It forces us into boxes that were not constructed to contain the depth and richness of our diversity. It does not afford us the opportunity to set our own standards and define ourselves.



In efforts to capture the diversity in Emory's black student population, I invited some students to share with me a few details about their individual experiences of black culture, and what being black looks like, sounds like, feels like to them. As a result, I received a wide variety of responses that include definitions, not necessarily set by the mainstream. Rather, these students put Merriam Webster to shame by defining them-selves in ways only they can. While the questions I provided to each student were the same, their responses reflected the variety in the cultural experience of blackness and its many facets; it does away with the idea that we are all the same, and instead pro-vides a more inclusive idea that welcomes difference and true diversity.

How would you describe your racial/ethnic background?

"Black", "African-American", "Afro-Caribbean", "African"

If someone were to ask you where you are from, what would you say? (Define it however you choose, geographically, ethnically, etc.)

"Durham, North Carolina"

"I am from Jamaica, A.K.A. the land of wood and water, where we are all considered one people. No white or black separation (most of us are black anyways). The BEST Caribbean country!"

"Normally, with someone I'm not familiar with I just say that I'm from Boston but I live in Connecticut. However, if I am familiar with the person and if the person is actually African, I'm more likely to tell him that I'm from Ghana."

What are some common misconceptions that people have about your racial/cultural/ethnic background?

"A lot of people don't really know about Africa so the first thing they sometimes assume is that we are backwards or not updated with today's society."
-Jonathan Emmitt Bennett (c / o 2020)

"That we are loud, unreliable, lazy, needy."

"Jamaicans are too loud…"

"Stupid, ghetto, illiterate, dangerous, violent, uneducated"

What is one of your favorite things about your culture?

"It has a linguistic culture that if you aren't born into it, there's not much of a chance you will ever fully understand it. It's something that belongs to black people alone no matter how many people try to copy it."

"The way we act. It is just natural for us to be very expressive. Sometimes, overly expressive but it brings life to a conversation or just laughter. We are also very creative with a lot of raw talent whether in the arts, sports, academia etc."
-Kai-Shanet Blackwood (c / o 2019)

Describe your culture in three words.

"Vibrant, charismatic, diverse"

"Colorful. Superb. Togetherness."

"Powerful, diverse, appropriated"

"Black, Bold, Magical"
-Drew Bullock (c / o 2021)

Through this article I aim to dismantle the idea of monolithic blackness. With the voic-es and experiences of black Emory students, I aim to demystify blackness, to assuage the deepest fears and appease the hunger of curiosity surrounding black identity. Yes, this is a mighty task to undertake in a single article. No, I do not plan on immediately solving centuries-worth of problems deeply woven into our social fabric. However, my ultimate goal will have been achieved if at least one person perusing these lines ac-quires a new sense of the diversity that truly exists within blackness.

"Show a people as **one thing**, as only one thing, over and over again and that is **what they become.**"

– Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

*

African American or *African*-American?

By Adama Kamara

I am African. All of my life I've been immersed in Sierra Leonean culture. My family and I ate cassava leaves and fou fou for dinner. On cleaning days, I could always count on songs like *Borbor Bele* by Emerson or *Premier Gauo* by Magic System blaring from my family's living room. My parents and sister, all born in Sierra Leone, spoke Krio to my brother and I when we were at home. Many of my experiences growing up were reflections of my African heritage. However, I am also American. I was born in New Orleans, Louisiana and call Virginia my home. English is my first language and the language I speak at school, with my friends, and everywhere in between. In Sierra Leone, the fourth of July may just be another day but for me, as an American, it always means burgers, barbecues, and fireworks.



I had never questioned which of these two parts of myself I felt more connected with until other people started placing that doubt in my mind. As a kid, I remember an adult asking me if identified as African American or *African*-American, as in an African who just happened to be born in the United States. The distinction had never struck me before and this idea of having to conform to only one part of myself certainly didn't stop there. From then on I'd hear things like "where are you from...I mean, where are you *really* from" implying that I wasn't really American and "so you're a *real* African-American. You're actually from Africa," implying that being American wasn't good enough. Without these questions about who I was and where I really belonged, I was comfortable just being me. It had never occurred to me that I had to quantify my identity and be one fraction this or one fraction that. The demands to fit into a box or fill in a bubble in order to express who I was began to feel burdensome.

From these pressures grew insecurities. I felt too American for Africans and too African for Americans. These feelings were validated by the actions and reactions of the people around me. When I was around my relatives and couldn't understand my mother's native tongue, I would get disapproving looks for what they saw as me trying to reject my African heritage. When I was back in Sierra Leone I always felt a bit out of place. Because of the language barrier I couldn't fully communicate with my grandparents and because of different values and cultural experiences, I always felt a little left out. I realized that this place that my parents considered home could never be home for me in the same way.

Similarly, I didn't always feel completely American when I was back in the states. When I brought jollof rice to school I would receive looks of disgust and loaded questions from people eating their PB&Js in perfectly cut triangles. Even the idea of being African American sometimes felt foreign to me. Technically, being African American means having an ancestral history of slavery in America, something I cannot claim. I would read in textbooks about the history of black people in America knowing that the consequences and outcomes of this history certainly had an effect on me. At the same time, I acknowledged the fact that my grandparents and great-grandparents never went through the Civil Rights era or faced racism or the tribulations of slavery on American soil. I, like many other first-generation blacks in America, found myself in the place of needing to constantly prove what "side" I was on.

I've come to realize that the way we label people can sometimes be a mechanism to control narratives about how we see ourselves and others. But, this urge to label and distinguish between nuances of blackness or any other identities is not always necessary. **Ultimately, we as individuals define ourselves**. No matter how much other people try to define where I fit in, they will never change the fundamental essence of who I am. Every aspect of my identity is important to me and without my African or American backgrounds, I would not be the person that I am today. It's not about me being American enough or African enough or black enough. Living my truth and be-ing authentic *is* enough.





Untitled

By Anonymous

I've never really paid attention to the phrase "You have to take care of yourself before you take care of others." I always thought that was an easy feat. I never made the connection that being strong and invincible is only possible when our overall health, including mental health, is cared for. But, I currently am in a "Mary Jane" stage of my life and my bathroom mirror is covered with sticky notes with quotes like:

"Do what you feel comfortable doing. Existing and thriving as a black woman is a small revolution in itself."
–Amandla Stenberg

"and the more she loved herself, the simpler it became for her. And the more complex it became for everyone else." –JmStorm

My mentality attempts to determine how I define myself. It can have a positive influence; yet those instances are few and far between. It is not a completely unfortunate thing; it's just a reality. A reality that affects the 6.8 million African Americans facing mental health issues as well. So, I am not alone and there is comfort in that fact.

Still, my frustration comes from the tendency for my depression and anxiety to influence my Black Girl Magic. It is hard for that phrase to empower and comfort me when I feel as if I do not possess any because of my deteriorated mental health. It is also hard to remedy it when mental health is stigmatized, ignored and silenced in our community.



My view of the world can be extremely heightened on any given day-depending on the pill I take or forget to take, the people I run into on campus and perceived pressure from my professors, my job, myself. That whirlwind of emotions tries to consume my Blackness, my being. When I feel as if I do not have anyone to turn that looks like me who I can talk to, I am prone to see myself as damaged or crazy.

It is strange to be in a position where I am very proud to be Black yet the pride I find in my identity is sometimes masked by a depreciating mentality. And then in addition to that, I do not feel as if my love for my identity can save me because of how my mental health is defined by misunderstandings in our community. My first thought as I crawl out of bed to my blaring alarm is "Wow the world is already moving so fast." My eyes glance at the Black Power American queen hanging on my wall, an image that is supposed to be empowering but as of late only reminds me of the huge responsibilities on my shoulders. Anxiety seems to steal my voice from me as if I am living in a time period where my body would have been subjected to the demands of someone else. My autonomy is threatened if I allow myself to continue my day with such a depressed aura. As I dress, my conscious struggles with searching for light or staying in a familiar darkness, but I know that walking around unsure of how to handle an unquantifiable pain is not a lifestyle I want.

Choosing the light means as I step out of my dorm, Kirk Franklin is blasting in my earbuds. Sitting in class is a peaceful experience as my heart is not about to burst out of my chest. And, if I want to be extra supportive of my body, then I will grab a meal or two on campus or even better cook a pasta dinner. Sometimes I do start my day with hope and contentment because on the inside I still possess **Black Girl Magic** as an educated, melanin-rich and dynamic individual. On those days I roll out of warm arms to be greeted by slight sunlight. I tiptoe into the bathroom and brush my teeth, meeting the gaze of the Black Power American queen in my mirror-myself. On those bright days I am (words that describe me)

This is my story. I want to say "this was my story" but my mental health is still evolving. While you may not have a similar story to mine (and I hope that you don't), we all at some point will experience something that pulls at our sound mental health or will encounter someone who has. Keep in mind these ways to help yourself or others to beat the thoughts and feelings that try to destroy your inner magical Black girl.

- Affirmation
- Encourage open-mindedness in finding the right treatment plan
- Let her know she matters and is needed
- Remember your physical being in everything
- Her time should be and needs to be for her.
- Black Girl Magic and mental health can coexist

**



Black pages

Weekend plugs

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#blackboyjoy

Linda Akinnawonu and Diyaaldeen Whitaker

Black Boy Joy is definitely a term that has been redefining the image of Black men in America. In the same light, "**Black Girl Magic**"was created to shake black women from the stereotype that we cannot be inspiring, successful, happy or simply great. In this same fashion, black boy joy simply allows Black men to let go of the stereotype that they are meant to be angry and tough at all times. Chance the Rapper embodies *black boy joy* in every aspect of his life. There is just this power in being carefree... *Black boy joy* is for men who are choosing to liberate themselves from the internal and external pressures of a society that creates binaries that perpetuate White male dominance. It is simply being a Black soul that believes he is worthy of all he chooses to be. *Black boy joy* is creating this new narrative around the world by challenging black masculinity and allowing men to be more open about their fragility. *Black boy joy* is essential because it is important that Black men are appreciated and understood in today's society.

What does "Black Boy Joy" mean to you?



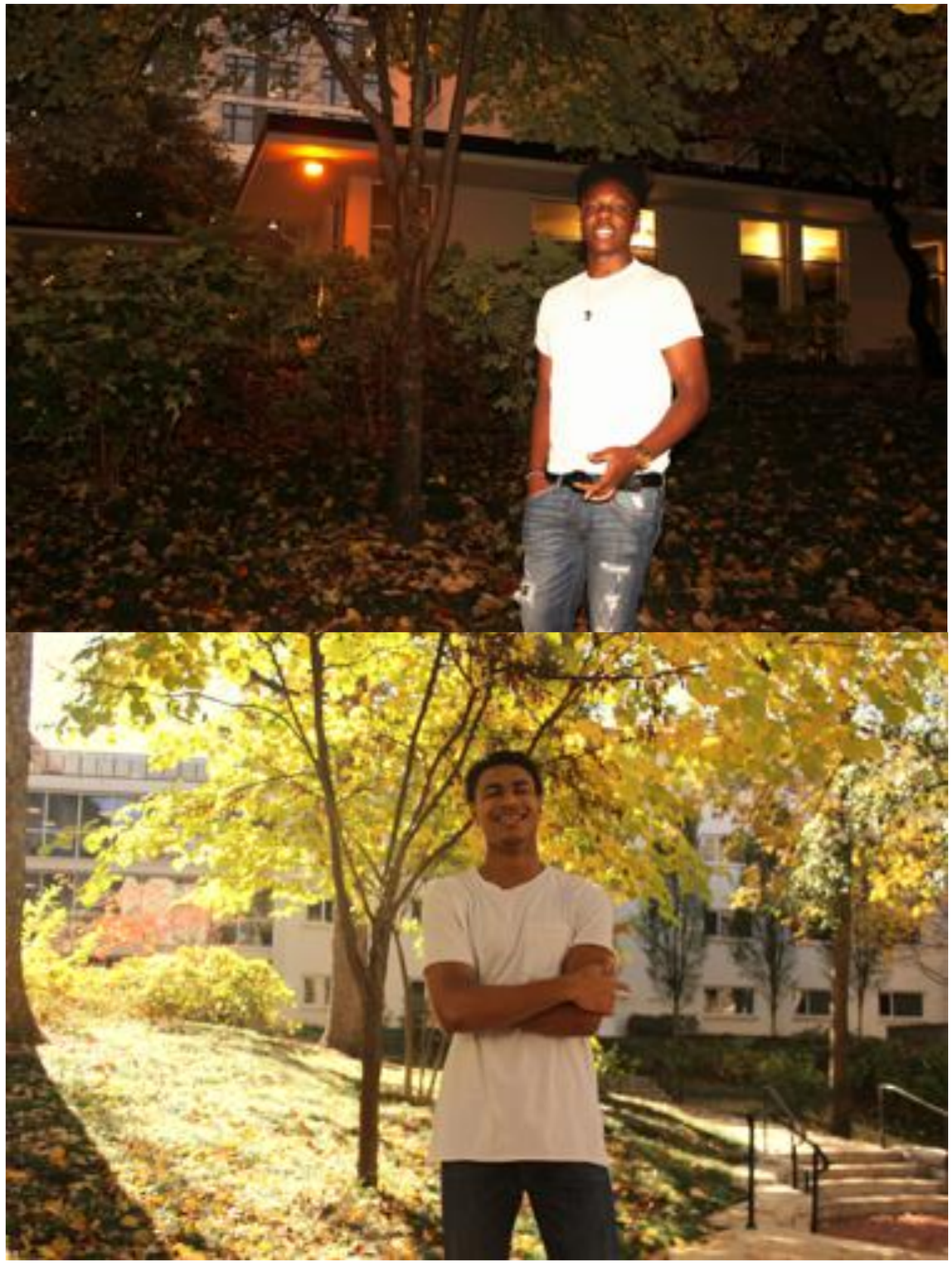
"Freedom"
Tochi Ohubunwa, Emory University '20

"Playing 2k with my brother"
Nana Prempeh, Emory University '21

"Curving White Women"
Gebereal Bailey, Emory University '19

"Eating a home cooked meal!"
Adam Ingram, Emory University '21

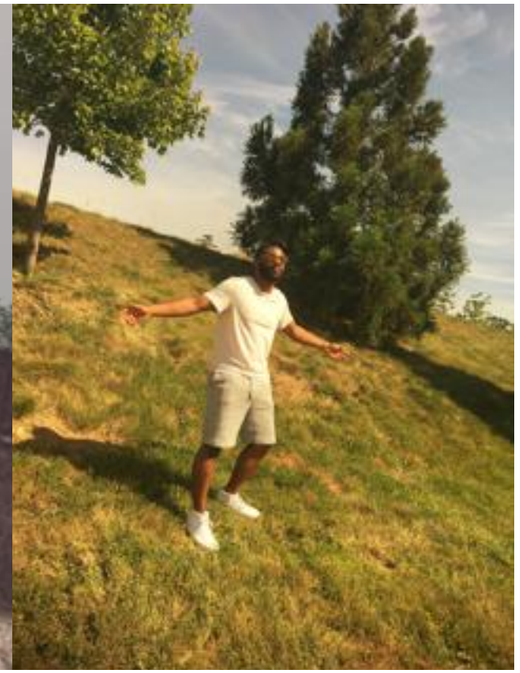
"5 piece wings and fries drenched in Mumbo sauce"
John Walker-Turner, Emory University '20







"Innovation"
Kwame Wireko, Emory University '19



"Taking off my durag and seeing my 360 waves with my skin glistening in some shea butter"
Diyaaldeen Whitaker, Emory University '20

As you can see at Emory, "Black Boy Joy" comes in various distinct forms that serve as a collection of our aesthetics and identities that many people laud as a form as activism. "Black Boy Joy" is everything because it has been adopted to express even simplistic moments of happiness that are crucial in a climate that is clouded with constant threats to Black male life. ***So keep spreading the good energy kings, because there is no such thing as being too Black!***

***



definitions:







Black*ness

by Kira Tucker

Designating a member of any dark-skinned group of peoples, esp. a person of sub-Saharan African origin or descent. Also (esp. Austral.): designating a person of Australian Aboriginal origin or descent.
—Oxford English Dictionary

What do we mean when we say *Black*? Many people consider any member of the African diaspora to be Black, whether they identify as African, African-American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, and so on. However, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the use of the term black to refer to darker-skinned peoples came along at least three centuries after the word first originated from Germanic languages, such as Old English, around 900 c.e. Besides its obvious use as a color name, how was black used originally, before it described people of African descent?

Historically, the term has carried negative connotations, with words such as "soiled," "evil," "dismal," "threatening," and "grotesque" coming up in a simple dictionary search. Black is currently used in a variety of everyday phrases—from blackmail to black market, and so on. Even in 2017, these negative associations are still built into the definition of blackness. Considering all this, I wondered, **how can we still be "Black and proud" of the way we identify?**

First, I turned to politics, art, and pop culture to seek answers to this question. Black became popular as the term "Negro" died out following the Civil Rights era of the 1950's and 60's. Claiming this identity inspired entire movements, including Black Power, Black is Beautiful, Black Pride, and Black Lives Matter. Everything from dashikis and afro picks to songs like James Brown's "Say it Loud — I'm Black and I'm Proud" and Solange Knowles's "F.U.B.U. (For Us by Us)" are celebrated as many works of **black culture created to uplift, empower, and encourage us to take pride in our heritage.**



However, works such as Dr. Margaret Burroughs's poem, ***What Shall I Tell My Children Who are Black*** spotlight the "dark" side surrounding the use of the term black:

What shall I tell my children who are black
Of what it means to be a captive in this dark skin?
What shall I tell my dear one, fruit of my womb,
of how beautiful they are when everywhere they turn
they are faced with abhorrence of everything that is black.
The night is black and so is the boogyman.
Villains are black with black hearts.
A black cow gives no milk. A black hen lays no eggs.
Storm clouds, black, black is evil
and evil is black and devil's food is black

What shall I tell my dear ones raised in a white world
A place where white has been made to represent
all that is good and pure and fine and decent,
where clouds are white and dolls, and heaven
surely is a white, white place with angels
robed in white, and cotton candy and ice cream
and milk and ruffled Sunday dresses
and dream houses and long sleek Cadillacs and
Angel's food is white… all, all… white.
…

I must find the truth of heritage for myself and pass it on to them.
In years to come, I believe because I have armed them with the truth,
my children and their children's children will venerate me.
For it is the truth that will make us free!



At the start of the poem, Dr. Burroughs questions the ways society views blackness. She examines all of the negativity associated with the word black—the "boogyman," "villains,' and "evil,"—in contrast with everything positive associated with whiteness, "heaven," "angels," and "purity." For Burroughs, **this is what being labeled black in a white world looks like.** In addition to racial stereotypes, media misrepresentation, and so many of the issues we face as Black citizens of a white society, everything down to the words we've been taught to call ourselves since birth, carry the weight of prejudice. Burroughs concludes that she will fight back with the tools of truth, teaching her children the about their African heritage, black culture, and, most importantly, their worthiness of self-love. For her, we are liberated when we realize we are so much more than what society's dictionary (i.e. history books) tells us *black* is.

In my own life and creative work, I explore the themes of how language shapes society and influences our worldview. In one of my spoken word poems, entitled "Afraid of the Dark," I spotlight the problematic nature in which the colonialist, white supremacist influenced West views blackness in the context of the English language. By the end of my poem, the speaker decides that black people's resilience, strength, and defiance in the midst of white society's oppression is what makes us who we are. She resolves to celebrate all of the bittersweet complexities that come with embracing her black-ness, rather than to remain "afraid of the dark."

I've learned that, if we don't define our identities for ourselves, we risk falling into the traps of negativity set for us centuries ago. We have an endless list of reasons why not to entrust the definition of blackness to non-black hands, where it has been mistreated, misrepresented, and maligned. I had to ask myself, if we don't work to celebrate and venerate our blackness, then who will? This question is exactly why I turned to students who identify as Black for their definitions of blackness.

For Black Emory, what do *we* mean when we say *Black*?

"Black to me means containing a certain amount of melanin and nappiness and **being a part of a super lit culture**." —Naomi Tesema

"Black people in different places are **unified through shared cultural experiences**. It speaks volumes that Black people from the hood, the suburbs, or wherever of vary tones and family dynamics are still able to relate to each other." —Nakiyah Flowers

"My definition of black is **having a rich culture full of immense struggles and successes**. To be Black is to embrace your heritage which will shape how you conduct yourself. Being Black means I am representing myself and generations before and after mine." —Jocelyn Stanfield

"Being Black transcends color and skin and phenotypic features. **Being Black is beauty, grace, joy, vulnerability, complexity and everything in between**. Being Black can sometimes be difficult but it's an experience that I wouldn't trade for the world." —Adama Kamara

"Being Black is special to me because I'm a part of a **rich and extensive history of unity and breakthroughs** that continues to break down walls and fight injustices." —Joel Varner

"I have the honor of being part of a Black community that helps me feel proud to be a Black woman, proud to be a part of it and proud to find the good in all the bad that has brought us to this point. Being Black means **having hair that is not naturally straight and a soul that never dies and a community that will always be your family**." —Hayat Geresu

Adesola Thomas shared that, "my entire family is Nigerian and I am one of two members of my family to be born in America. So when I first think of blackness, I think of that in between space of being Nigerian in America and what it means to be a Black American." She added that the Nigerian and American struggle are "similar but not the same... **There is an in-betweennessto my blackness** that at this point in my life I am working on articulating for myself and understanding for myself."

"Defining black as someone of African descent is way too broad. **It has taken me time to not only accept but love my blackness**. Especially because my mother is Black while my father is Nigerian, I've often felt the term black didn't completely cover the complexities of my identity." —Keiyitho Omonuwa



"I think being Black is about how you interact with your skin and your heritage, and also about how you operate in the world. Because **there is no one right way to be Black**, I think being Black is about being true to the type of person you want to be, while upholding the values you and your community have." —Marshall Crayton

"I identify blackness as a **polymorphous experience that refuses definition**. It is not static; because, once you seek definition, it changes shape for someone else." —Chad Tucker

Hearing each of these authentic, individual perspectives on the word black reveals how truly multifaceted the term is. Though the lived experience of blackness is too vast to fit a single definition, **we are taking our identities into our own hands as we define blackness for ourselves** as best we can.

The ability to share a common identity unites those separated by thousands of diasporic miles across the globe. Being Black means something different depending on where you are in the world, yet similarities connect us nonetheless. I experienced this firsthand traveling throughout Eastern Europe, upon encountering a conference of West African businesspeople who so warmly embraced the Black students traveling among our group as their "African brothers and sisters," after unexpectedly meeting us on the street just moments earlier. Though we knew nothing particular about each other, our common features of shared ancestry united us.

Despite negative connotations of otherness in so many contexts—whether I am a *negrita* in one language, *noire* in another—blackness in its many forms remains intertwined with the thread of African heritage in so many parts of the world.

As we define blackness for ourselves, we demonstrate that being *Black* is whatever we make of it. This feat of defiance is especially powerful in the context of a society that has historically worked to define our identities for us. We have fashioned our own terms because **there is an inimitable essence of our existence that no one else can truly embody**. The exact elements that distinguish black people not only set us apart from the Western norm but allow us to transcend it, especially through our refusal to conform to a single definition. With each unique expression of blackness I encounter, I find it amazing to witness such beautiful acts of revolution.









Twerk!

By Chad Tucker

Dim lights. Entangled silhouettes. Loud music. Sweating bodies. You have surely seen this scene before in either the Black Student Alliance House or the parties you frequent. You have seen pairs glued to the walls in furtive motions. You have seen the seas part, like Moses, to the spectacular sight on the dance floor—twerking—a display of power over the body. You have seen a man come up behind a presumably consenting was not always the case. You stand there, sometimes, too nervous to leap into the fray; you stand there, too, sometimes in the middle of the stage or at least imagining you were.

I stumbled upon twerking in high school as a dance phenomenon that spontaneously rose in cultural power because of Vine (may it rest in peace). Everyone wanted to twerk, even men for its comedic effect, and the issue even became polarizing for parents who gave judgmental scowls and shame fingers to children who they discovered engaged in such heinous acts. People twerked at dances, and people twerked on walls. It became as obsessive as a cult, where young children could not tear their eyes away from its hypnotic pull. As I grew in maturity, its seriousness grew alongside me, until its mysticism faded, where it became a tool strictly by women to secure skulking men at parties.





As I fell deeper into the adult world, even deciding to attend a college, I found at Emory quite a contrasting party scene: parties on fraternity rows across Atlanta, and much blacker parties that arose out of more transient spaces, like a derelict house in the hood, a room with no windows in an ex-fraternity house, an exclusive Clairmont apartment, or a random club advertising to eager, young college students. Perching on a wall showed me more than participating ever could, so I watched, in jealous satisfaction, people with enough confidence to enter the limelight of the dance-floor, basking in their drunken fifteen minutes of fame, only to retreat briefly after to a position on the wall. I heard, too, the melodic sounds of Caribbean and African music that evoked the same sensuality of the hips located in African-American twerking songs; that even after oceans partitioned us, at least we still had the music to bring us together. That was the experience of transient spaces that always sadly ended earlier than everyone would want. The fraternity parties, however, differed in their joy as bros moved to fist-pumps and rap music that always seemed overlaid by the same electronic dance mu-sic beat ("duhhh-duhh dunn dunnn duhhh dunnhn dunnn duhn"). Those bros and girls did not move the same; no one had their fifteen minutes of fame amidst a dance floor saturated by an unusual relationship toward the beat.

Gay bars are where I both shined and declined. Shined because I had found a space to twerk and wine in peace, one of my few talents in life; declining because dancing lost its luster as I grew. I found it strange to go to a party and never dance before I realized that was exactly what I did in heterosexual spaces (admittedly only some of the time). But I thought, "This space is for us, so why can't we celebrate here, peacefully?" My question never got an answer as the dance floor lined up in concentric rings from dancers, always twerkers, to masculine figures looming in the back, as if they were watching a bad show in which they would never participate.

Twerking, now, after my many marvelous years on Earth, **is tantamount to exercising ownership of the body despite external interpretations of what it meant**. It is an individual act that means as much or as little as you desire for comedic effect, finding a man (or woman or other), or a Saturday night catharsis. You—yes, you—do it because it feels good, and if this short story had any moral it would be this: dance at parties even if you feel dumb because it is your one shot at fifteen minutes of fame.



Diary of a Black First-Year

By Aaron Campbell

These entries will recount opinions, thoughts, and realizations I had throughout my first semester here at Emory.

August 2017

As a Black first-year, I did not know what to expect once at Emory. I was not naive enough to believe the picture perfect images on Emory's websites, Instagram pages, and newsletters. Yet, I also was not knowledgeable enough to assume what life would be like on campus. Upon arrival, I was overly excited to begin my four years. The campus architecture was beautiful, the faculty were leading in their fields, the people were welcoming, and the city was rife with culture. But what I appreciated most was the Black community. They exhibited a culture of love and camaraderie, strength and re-silience, intellect and emotion. They displayed the thriving black environment I always envisioned in my college experience. The images I grew up with did not paint Black students the way we truly are and I felt like I had to fight for a narrative to validate our magic. But here—here at Emory University—Blackness, in all its shapes and shades, blossoms and dwells freely and vibrantly with in each and everyone of us. I'm beginning to like this place.

September 2017

As I began living here, I could not ignore the pattern I saw in almost every space I encountered on campus. It is not the beautiful marbled buildings, or the numerous hills, or even the squirrels (though they are in abundance). What I realized is that an overwhelming number of workers here are Black—and by workers I don't mean the professors, the program directors, or the doctors, but the workers of menial labor: cleaning the bathrooms, serving food, fixing broken items, washing dirty dishes; they are all held by people who looked, breathed, acted, talked, loved, lived, and existed like me. It made me uncomfortable, upset. I saw how students would waste food on the floor and expect "them" to clean it up, how "please and thank yous" were not proper responses because it's "their" job anyway or how "they" were mere bodies in the way and did not deserve the decency of an "excuse me." I guess these are the struggles of going to a PWI. Maybe I should've gone to an HBCU...

October 2017

When I came to Emory, I assumed that the Black students here were accomplished, passionate, and resilient—this is a given at any prestigious university, but what really moved me and what I think is fairly unique to Emory's PWI experience is the representation of the African Diaspora. There are not a lot of African, Caribbean, or Afro-Latinx people in my community back home, so I did not have the chance to interact with Black people who were culturally different from me. And in many respects this limited how I understood the Black experience. I saw Blackness through this narrow, American lens which has completely shattered since coming to Emory. It is liberating to enter a space and feel welcomed and validated, and learn about and meet your brothers and sisters from all over the world. I saw a community that did not police each other, but one that uplifted and supported each other. I have garnered a love for Emory's Black community. The diversity, the vibrancy, and the love rich within black spaces here are unlike anything back at home. I love it.



November 2017

Everything seemed great—and I guess it always does in the first couple of months. As the semester progressed, my view of Black Emory changed. I have realized a rather surprising feat of our Black community. We have a clique problem. And by cliques, I do not mean something as simple as your friend group. It's okay to have friends. A clique is a group of people who restricts the group's membership and isolates them-selves from the greater community. Not all Black students participate in this, of course, but enough do to where it's obvious that this community is segmented. However, when first-years arrive on campus, it seems people feel inclined to put forth an image of unity and solidarity. But as time passes, this facade fades and the realistic practices of Black Emory become present. The internal conflict, the petty drama, the microaggressive comments, the indifference to community discussion, the dissociation, the ex-clusion. It is unfortunate. In a community this small, there should be no loose ends. We need each other, especially after the recent institutional attacks against our communi-ty. But, I do think we can overcome this. It will require conversation, compassion, dis-comfort, and education. We have to do the work. After all, this is an error on our part and it is our responsibility to build a community in which our unity is not temporary or insubstantial but where our unity is brazen and bold and unapologetically Black.

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Finding Your Black Identity: Stylistic Expression

By Krystal Eimunjeze

Think about how long it takes for you to get ready in the morning; do you throw on the first thing you see or do you plan your outfit down to the socks on your feet? In a world of homogeneity, most of us strive to find a sense of individual expression. From things as minute as the color of our nails to things as complex as our hair, our outward appearance is an expression of our identity. If you Google 'identity' the first definition is "the fact of being who or what a person or thing is." Your identity is you, every single thing about you. Whether you prefer acrylic nails or gel polish, a clean shave or a full-fledged beard, all these tiny details help to shape your identity. However, mainstream societal values aim to take that away from us.

The constraints of Eurocentric beauty ideals make it difficult for many people of color to accept their appearance. Many of us have been forced to water down our blackness so that we can conform to a society that considers our natural state unprofessional, hyper-sexual, or intimidating. For some, our blackness is a hard pill to swallow, that which can only be washed down if we dilute it to fit the oppressor's fancy. It is very dif-ficult for us to suppress our very beings just to be taken seriously, causing a negative effect on our mental state.

As complex beings, we are constantly trying to express ourselves through any means possible so that others may have the privilege to see into the amazing specimen that is us. There are multiple mediums we utilize to express ourselves which include the following: art, music, fashion, makeup, poetry, dance, speech, and so much more. But what is the use of all these forms of expression when no matter what form of expression you prefer, society would much rather categorize you based on your outward appearance, cramming you into this tiny pre-constructed box. Society loves boxes: boxes keep things organized, boxes keep things simple, boxes keep people confined. The society I speak of is the majority of the population that has agreed on a set or norms and values that oppose individuality and promote uniformity and conformity. These norms and values are detrimental to the evolution of the mentality of its mem-bers, nurturing institutional racism.

In such a monotonous world individuality comes at a cost, especially for people of color. Something as simple as a hairstyle can result in perceptions that have drastically different consequences for people of different races. Why are people of color judged on a completely different scale for doing the same thing as others? Beauty is whatever you decide you want it to be. Beauty does not have one definition, it is a social construct and that is why we need to construct our definitions of beauty on our own. Because I communicate through my stylistic expression, I have always struggled with the misconstrued belief that you can categorize a person by their outward appearance. I can't fathom that the entirety of my persona can be based off of the color of my shirt. What ever happened to not judging a book by its cover?

This is **Danielle McKee**, a first year at Emory. When I spoke to Danielle she said she identified as a "black, female, blob of humanity." She defined herself as "curious, funny, and scrumdillyumptious." She was serious. Danielle said she "feels like her outfits are based on her mood," which I think we can all agree with. We all have those days where we have no classes with anyone we know and decide to dress in sweatpants and a hoodie. When I asked her what her favorite form of expression was she said makeup: "I love makeup, I really just have a appreciation for beauty so I feel like makeup is a great way to convey different types of beauty on my own canvas." She replied my final question with: "I think they can try to categorize me but they would probably never be able to do it correctly, you can't just categorize individuals based on what they look like. I am a nuanced human being, come on boo, do better."





Here we have **Abdullah Muzayen**, another first year at Emory. In speaking with him, he identified himself as a "black, American, male" and defined himself as an "African, male immigrant." While he likes to express himself through the medium of style, he does not believe that others can define him off of his outer appearance. This experience is quite common to us all, as clothing is a nuanced mode of expression, but it is difficult to interpret the meaning of this based off of a singular look. As we navigate the waves of moments, moods, and trends in our stylistic world, it is important to maintain your sense of self despite what people may think.



Ways to Decompress During These Trying Times

By Lauren Weems

The current political climate in the United States has only heated up since the current "president" was inaugurated this January. Tensions are increasingly higher and the continued efforts to dismantle the various systems of oppression we face every day become more and more tiring. Sometimes, we have to buck up and push through, while at other times, it is best to take a step back and decompress from the added stress young Black people face on average. With that being said, here are a few ways to decompress and take a seat from all things mentally and emotionally taxing.

1. Go for a run/workout

Running and working out can be a great way to clear your mind at least temporarily as well as improve your mood. It can also help to reduce anxiety!

2. Listen to smooth jazz or calming instrumentals

Music without words can not only be soothing, but can omit any potential triggers that may pop up in songs with lyrics. This kind of music is created to help people step away from stressors and truly ease their minds.

3. Meditate

It might sound cliché, but meditating is actually a great way to decompress as well as to realign your mental and spiritual health.

4. Journal

Sometimes, writing down our thoughts on paper helps us to clear our heads and process hard concepts in a more fluid manner. Journaling can help to declutter our thoughts in a calming way.

5. Take A Nap

In all honesty, politics are very tiring and can often affect how we operate during the day, often resulting in more stress. That being said, sometimes you just have to tune everything out and take a power nap in order to rejuvenate.

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Harlem to Hongdae: Hip Hop Culture in South Korea

By Minyon Jenkins

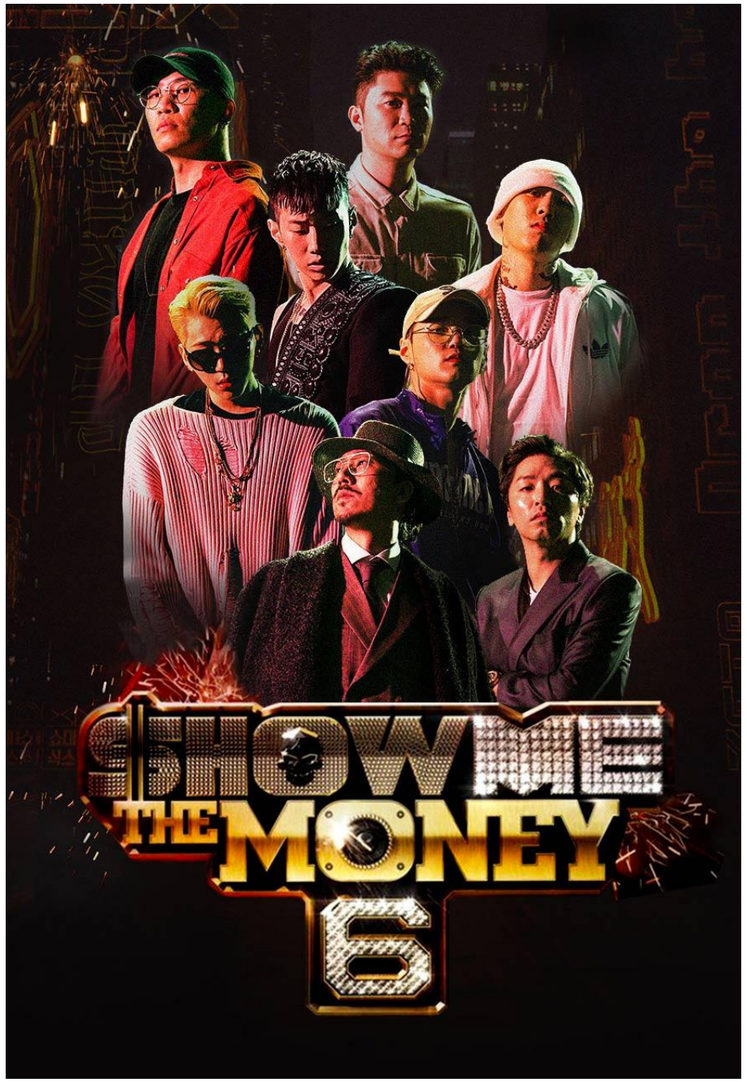
Blackness. A loaded word in an already overloaded society. Black Emory knows that Blackness isn't characterized by one single style of music or way of dress—but do others know that? Today's society loves aestheticizing complex phenomena into palatable, consumable bits. This makes it easy to get an idea across to a wide group of people, and sometimes this works out great! For example, BlackLivesMatter memorabilia and social media blasts get the point across short and sweet, but the issue of police brutality is far deeper. But when Blackness, specifically Blackness in America, is aestheticized, how do those without prior knowledge internalize that?

Let's take a trip across the world, over 7,000 miles away in South Korea. In the city of **Hongdae** (pictured below), people come out to take a dip into urban culture and music. Huge Artists like Jay Park (then newest signee to Jay Z's Roc Nation music label), and Dok2 have their own labels based there, hip hop clubs like NB2, and clothing stores representative of Black hip hop culture can all be found in Hongdae. In a coun-try where less than .1% of the population is Black, it leaves one to wonder what sparks this interest.



@Austin in the East

Julie Park, 21C, gave her experience with hip hop culture in South Korea. Julie grew up in South Korea for 10 months before moving to Canada and Chicago before coming to Emory, yet still speaks the language and still engages in the culture at home. I pointed out the saturation of hip hop in South Korean youth, Park said, "I agree, a lot of things in South Korea are starting to reflect what we would call 'Western culture." For example, rap songs with bits of English as well as more edgy clothing styles seen in music videos. I also find that this style tends to be more ap-pealing to people outside of South Korea, and this might be to broaden the audience worldwide."



In the last seven years, a hit TV show called **Show Me the Money** has spearheaded the widening interest in urban culture, rap, and trap music. Contestants compete to win a record deal with AOMG, or Illionaire Records (two successful rap labels). Along with an interest in rapping from many young South Korean men, South Korean women also have opportunities for hip hop dancing and rapping themselves. South Korea is known for its booming beauty industry, so companies have marketed the Black "urban" aesthetic to make even more money. Styles like dreadlocks and box braids have been borrowed by a number of artists to draw in younger, rebellious youth. For some context, KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) doesn't allow tattoos on the air, so the allure of tattoos, sneakers, saggy pants, and other characteristics of hip hop culture is an outlet for youth to feel "free."

In a homogeneous population like South Korea, cultural appropriation isn't nearly as relevant as it is in America. **In the melting pot of America, where ethnic minorities have been oppressed and institutionally marginalized for their differences, there is a need to protect and preserve our cultures**. Hip hop itself continues the tradition of Black folk utilizing lyric as a means for social, political, and spiritual freedom. With its origins beginning as early as slavery, hip hop is one of the few, mainstream representations of Blackness in society. In the commercialization of music and industry, it's very easy to forget the depth of hip hop's meaning and influence. For a student with no historical context, from an entirely different country, the thought of cultural appropriation is the last thing on their minds.

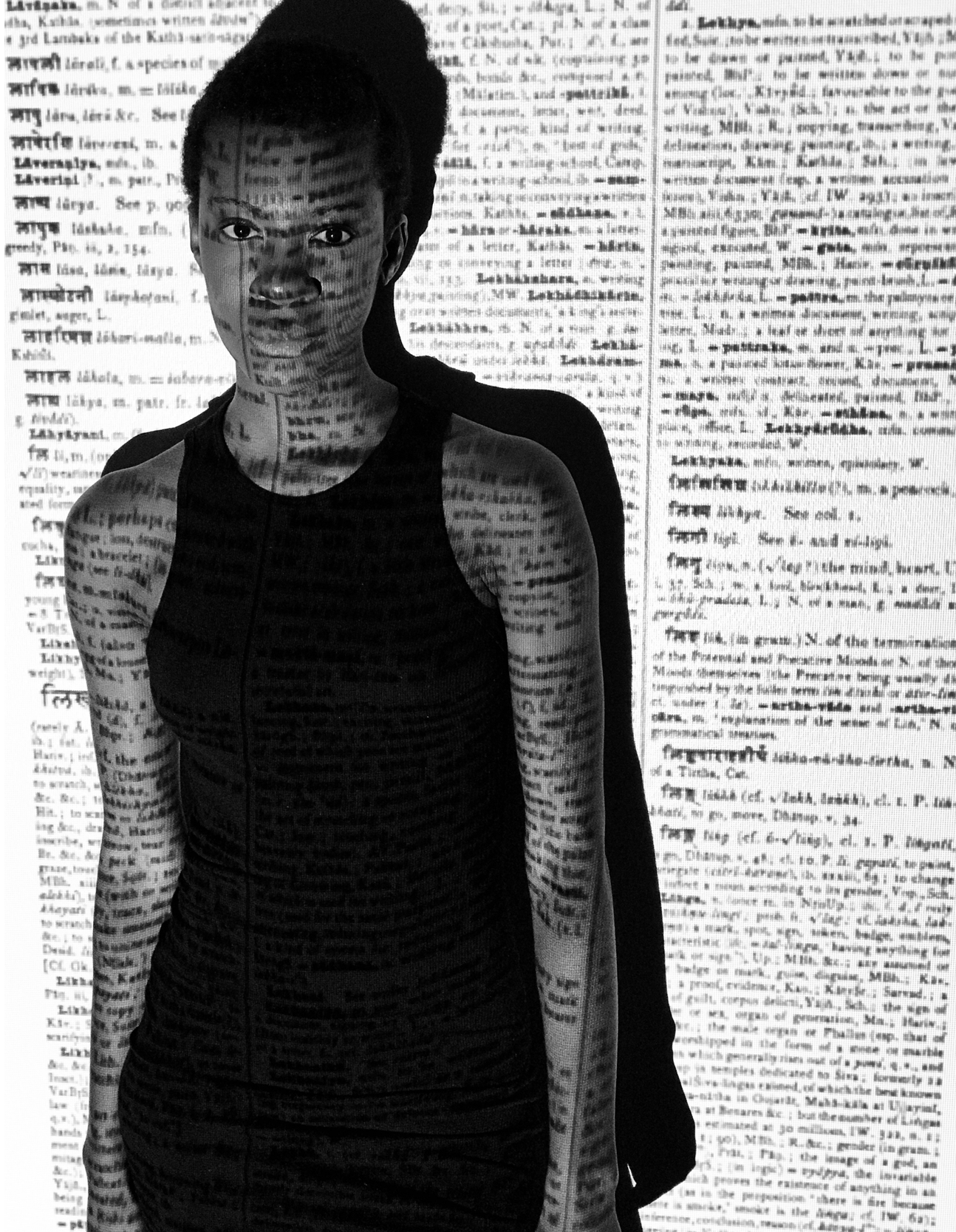
While this cross of cultures in South Korea is interesting, I wondered how this transferred to Emory's campus. I've personally seen South Korean students with dreadlocks, listening to hip hop, and embodying Black American hip hop culture, but have yet to see these same students interact with Black students on campus.

When I questioned the absence of dialogue between South Korean and Black students, Park explained many international students' fear of ostracization. "So many people who come here feel, speaking from my own relative's experience, that they don't know if others will want to be friends with them and they're afraid of seeming rude. They're coming from a country that's completely different. [South Korea] is very traditional and pretty conservative. [They] grow up in an environment where the majority is South Korean or at least Asian. You can get so accustomed to that bubble; it's overwhelming."

Having a westernized aesthetic and medium like hip hop culture is a convenient way for many international students to begin assimilating in American culture.

While Blackness is not limited to a style of dress, music, or hairstyles, we cannot deny the influence and depth of meaning it has in the Black community. For another culture to embody many different elements is a segue into defining Blackness, and alternatively, **we should take a step back and think about how we define it as Black people**. Solidarity among minorities on Emory's campus is essential to our success as underrepresented students. The spread of customs, history, and culture proves the power and potency of our Blackness.

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Black*ness

black is you, black is me, black is us,
black is free. **black is you, black is me,**
black is us, black is free black is you
black is me black is us black is *free*
black is you black is me black is us
black is free *black is you* black is me
black is us black is free black is

—a***fter the Last Poets***