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Project statement

I think in light of the current racial climate and court cases (ie. Ahmaud Arbery) that have

occured within recent weeks, race/racism has been on my mind recently. I was doing some

casual google searching and became particularly caught by a statement made in an article written

by Simon Lee that read "Researchers refer to the current human genome as a "mosaic" of

segments originating from around the world. Ancestry studies aim to find where these segments

came from." We discussed in class the feasibility of ancestral study becoming a more prevalent

way to understand an individuals background and how, due to the ingrained social and cultural

implications of race within society, it will likely (at least in our lifetime) be foregrounded by race

assumptions. So, my intention with this unessay was to engage with the notions of race that we

discussed over the course of the semester and hopefully complicate them a bit. Inspired by the

"mosaic" visual, I aimed to create a mosaic-like picture of my own.

Centered in the middle of the image is different parts of the faces of 6 women. All

women pictured originate from different "racial" groups and descend from different areas

globally: Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North America, South America, and Asia. By

combining all of their faces into a composite of one full face, I wanted to confuse or muddle the

immediate racialized judgement about the origin of the woman based on her facial features.

Further, I aimed to show how genetic admixture might speak to racial assumptions especially in

modern society I have also placed an underlay of a human skull on the face that is meant to

represent the similarity that could exist between these completely random individuals whose

pictures I pulled off the internet. While I understand the possible similarity between the facial

features of the women is not necessarily indicative of their genetic similarity, I thought it was a

simple way to acknowledge how the skull is not as easily recognizable or judged based on certain features and speak toward a innate equality between each of the races.

I wanted to visually represent the ancestry of each individual and demonstrate the origins of the women. Because much of the understanding of ancestry is rooted in the the lineage of preexisting communities and peoples, which is what is pictured around the women in the middle. I intentionally chose photos that were accurate enough to locate a region similar to the way genealogy instructs. I also wanted to highlight culture and how that is influenced by where we come from.

Self-assessment

1. What did you learn?

I'm not sure if I did much content learning for this project but moreso I was able to do some reflection on reimagining how we can come to understand others as well as yourself. This project was enlightening for me because it highlighted some of the

2. What challenges did you face while completing this assignment?

I learned how difficult it was to think post-racially when we live in a society that totally is not. Attempting to take an individual completely out of the context of race was actually very difficult because it required constant check-ins with my own prejudices. I wanted to be able to feel as though I was taking a different approach to thinking about the ancestry and trying not to fall back into stereotype of race.

3. How did you overcome these challenges?

I'm not entirely sure that I did, honestly, because I still feel like the scope of me backgrounding the womens lives was limited.

4. How successful do you think you were with your final product? '

I think my final product is visually appealing and I appreciate that. I like how I was able to get creative with the assignment and so I had a lot of fun creating it, I would say its pretty successful.

5. What do you think you could have done better?

I think that my project without explanation might be a little one dimensional? I'm not sure if the message I was trying to convey comes through clearly without the description. Not surprisingly, I think starting earlier would have probably been beneficial to fleshing out the intention behind the project.

Article:

https://www.unlockinglifescode.org/genomics-insights/ancestry-vs-race-implications-society

Photos:

All retrieved via Google