Race and Racism in the U.S OL2

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Identity Essay 2

In my prior essay, I wrote a lot about not feeling as though I truly identified as my labels. Majorly, it was through the conflict between what I felt I should be and what I actually am. I stated that "growing up with both privilege and disabilities has shown me how identity is constructed through multiple, often conflicting layers of experience that don't align with how others perceive me...and...has allowed me to recognize that similar dissonance exists in others" and while this still holds true after taking the class, I definitely experienced some differences in my thinking pertaining to my identity. The most impactful of these shifts by far is that this class has prompted me to reflect on how I fit into the systems surrounding me, and the ways I can improve them using my skills.

While I had mentioned the systems surrounding me in my prior essay, upon critically rereading my essay I realized that I speak as though they are set structures that are defined by things outside of my control. This is certainly true to some extent, but it was rather pessimistic. Aside from that, I feel as though my essay holds up rather well.

Intersectionality is something which I went over in depth in my prior essay, though I didn't know the term for it at that point. After learning the terminology, it gives a singular definition to a really broad and personal experience, though I'm not sure if that affects my understanding of my own identity in any way, and if it does I have no idea how. At the risk of reiterating things from my first essay, the definite place where I can see the most intersectionality

is the juxtaposition in privilege experienced by my more privileged side, as a straight white man, and my less privileged side, being chronic illness. ,

The book "Between the World and I" by Ta-Nehisi Coates gave me the most to reflect on. Aside from the very powerful motif of a "body", which went beyond just merely a physical body and instead became a larger motif in the text; the large portion which was focused on Howard University and creating such a clearly vital space to Coates urged me to reflect on UVM as a space for identities to flourish as well. I think that we do a rather good job. It's difficult for me to pick out individual things, though if I had to pick one it'd be to be more lenient with their elevator access in dorm buildings.

It's difficult for me to imagine who I'll be in 5-10 years, including the things I'll do and the ways my identity will change. I don't have a lot of interest in trying to predict it, because if I live my life in a positive way, these things should emerge naturally and without being forced. I don't have to pay more attention to my disabilities simply because I have them, I'm allowed to just experience my identity without having to 'use' or 'adapt' to it. That doesn't mean that I won't use the knowledge I learned in this class to ensure I'm respectful towards other peoples experiences, and that I'll acknowledge and use my privilege to help others. In my past, I think I've been rather good about this and live mindful of my privilege. One place I definitely fall short just in day to day life is listening actively in conversations, some of which conversations pertain to identity. It's easy to offload the burden of this shortcoming on ADHD or some other diagnosis, but I'm sure there are skills and strategies I'm not yet using to work on this. If I had to pick out one thing to improve with myself and work towards, it would be that.

The only real change I would make to the world as a whole, if I were to be God for a day, would be working towards improving education in lower-income areas as a whole, and using the

internet in a smarter way.. There's no downside or unforeseen consequences of applying this to the world as a whole, and especially with the internet and access to information that we have today, not just in the United States but globally, there must be things that we could be doing that we aren't. We could be putting students from Michigan in class with students from somewhere halfway across the world in an instant through video software, yet there's still so little outreach, the internet almost isolates the youth more than prior years. We have access to an almost infinite amount of experiences and yet the algorithms we've designed function to contain the ones we're exposed to to ones that align with ourselves (as that's what keeps us sucked in).

Using my Computer Science experience and whatnot I'd be interested to see if there are any ways I can help to improve this. I recently made a content filter for AI Content on Google for the UVM CS Fair, and I wonder if it'd be worthwhile reaching out to teachers and seeing if they have any interest in using it for students in any way? I will definitely actively think about ways I can use that platform to help make the World more kind and equitable.. As well as use any of my other platforms, such as some Spotify software I made, to also work towards this. Maybe rework Spotify's suggestions to include music from regions typically not included for users in other regions?

Lastly, I should consider in my journey into English how I'm conveying my identity, particularly in my own writings, and the impact that might have on people who read it. I'm still very early on in my journey having only switched to the major this semester, and my creative writing is still rather weak, but it'd be interesting to take ideas from this class and try to be creative conveying through fiction.

Overall, the intersectionality of my identity is something I've considered greatly, not knowing that I was considering the 'intersectionality', but it holds regardless. I am not simply the

labels applied to me, nor is anyone else, but I can actively listen and learn about the people's around experiences, and actively consider them in my day to day.