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Composing Digital Media

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Visual Argument Reflection

For this project, I wanted to call attention to rape culture/victim blaming, focusing on the too-frequently asked question, “What were you wearing?” – suggesting victims posit themselves to be assaulted. I found a BuzzFeedNews article that captured a Twitter thread with answers to this question, and this sparked my inspiration for the Visual Argument. I intended for this project to make the argument that it doesn’t matter what a victim wore, that their assault is not because of their own doing. The argument is intended for either those who empathize with victims, and, more specifically, those who perpetuate rape culture in our society by feeding into victim blaming. This argument falls into a 21st century context of our society gradually shifting out of rape culture, but still needing much guidance in breaking out of it completely.

Considering the technical aspect of this project, I *really* struggled with Gimp. I was very excited for this project, but Gimp was quite different than other design software I have used; however, I think my progress at this point speaks for itself. The following is my initial preview submission beside my final-for-now submission:

A picture containing text, light, vector graphics

Description automatically generatedA picture containing text, newspaper

Description automatically generated

To achieve this final draft, I used quite a few Gimp tools:

* Scaling, reordering, and grouping layers
* Manual text layering (copying and pasting two layers of the same text to create a shadow effect)
* Gray-scaling
* Text (and spending a ridiculous amount of time trying to pick a good font)
* Stroke selection to add borders on individual layers
* And even a few that didn’t wind up making their way into the final draft: color picker, brush drawing, and textures/patterns for layers.

It was important to me to create a not only strong message, but also a visually appealing graphic. In my final draft, I wanted to make use of the background and foreground space, creating dimension within the layers to make certain ones stand out: for example, making the background image feel blurred and distant, while using white text and blocked images to draw the attention to these foreground pieces of the design. I wanted both the words and images to be the point of focus, but in a way that they were not obviously front and center. By placing the text in the center but off to the side, and blocking the images into groups, I wanted to create the effect that they are important, but that the background also deserves recognition. Also, within individual Tweet layers, I specifically scaled some larger than others to create an asymmetric effect and give certain ones stronger focus than others: for example, “pink princess pajamas.”

With the way I struggled throughout this creation and drafting period, I’m very happy with how my final draft came out: I find it visually pleasing, and powerful in a way that forces the viewer to take in each of the little pieces at hand and really consider them.