Haitian American painters struggle to impose and preserve their identity in New York.

Haiti is recognized for its rich culture, distinctive art, and delicious food for centuries. Haitian who migrated to the United States for insecurity and economic reason are grounded as they struggle to preserve their identities which is the soul of their existence. New York is known for the second largest Haitian community in the United States, where Haitian immigrants fleeing Francois Duvalier’s dictatorship from the 1960s to recent past years, had difficulties imposing their arts into the market which is controlled by white male painters for years. Haitian American painters who live in New York for decades are one of the samples.

When I was in residency in Harlem, they wanted to put a text next to my arts and I asked why, and they told me no one will understand my painting without a text explaining it because it reflected Haitian painting. But I fought for it, and I said if they put for me, they should put for other artists, it hasn’t happened to only me, other artists in the same generation as me, fought for it too. And we kept everything as it should be, but it took time for people to accept it. Says Vladimir Cybil Charlier who is painting for 27 years.

I have started to take a series of portraits and interviews over the past months to know how Haitian American struggle to preserve their identity while they adapt to a new culture.