

Artist Statement

My Roots Dance Beneath the Soil is an art piece I made last year in a class with Dr. Claudine Taaffe, entitled *Curating Black Lives*, which centered on artistic curation based on the experience of being Black on Vanderbilt's campus. This is a mixed-media art piece that incorporates collage materials and paint markers. A motif throughout the piece is the imagery of tree roots, which holds deep symbolism. The main premise is that tree roots form an intricate, complex system that connects trees underground, effectively providing and sharing nutrients amongst themselves beneath the soil. This is representative of the Black community in understanding the importance of connection, community, growth, exchanging nutrients, and symbiosis. Roots can also represent the importance of self-identity and understanding to the extent that faulty institutions of racism or maltreatment cannot uproot your sense of self. Within this piece, I have used a lot of imagery; the butterfly represents transformation and self-growth, a direct embodiment of this time period in our lives as college students. I deliberately placed the butterfly in the girl's mind, representing a transformation by way of learning in this environment. Here, we have access to a wealth of knowledge, and depending on how we use it, our minds have the potential to flourish and *take flight* into the real world beyond this bubble. I used a fist holding a flower, representing Black empowerment, with the potential to grow and *bloom*. The use of the brain represents the role of higher education and how we are actively practicing intellectual growth.