

#004-M



Painting # 1.

I am justice and equality. I am cooperation and the ability to coexist.



Painting # 2.

I am freedom and strength. I will not be used. I am a symbol of freedom and not oppression.



Painting # 3.

I am adventurous. I am willing to venture out and face the obstacles on my road. I am courage.



Painting # 4.

I am the master of my destiny. I am temptation. I am willpower.



Painting # 5.

I am turbulence. I am fear and courage. I am brave and steadfast

Painting # 1

Painting this particular piece, I was not sure what to expect from this class, or from my ability to attach emotion and concern through art. I have always been able to convey emotions through the written word, yet, the visual arts, was a medium I have not tackled since middle school. I was eager to see what I would be able to accomplish in this class. Under Dr. Bello's tutelage, emotions that have been suppressed were able to emerge and project themselves rather easily onto an accepting canvas. An example of this was my first painting in many years which was the embodiment of collaboration and social justice.

My goal when composing this piece was to express my desire to have humanity end their rationale of mistreatment and disenfranchisement based on color or race. The use of the four elements of life: earth, water, air, fire, is to reinforce the collaboration that exists in nature between these very elements. The air does not hate nor envy the water; they simply coexist and support each other. Everything that happens in nature is designed to play a specific role. The elements do not fight amongst each other for power or dominion, they just exist independent and dependent on one another.

The human figure in the middle is dissected through the elements and assumes both the white and black colors of the spectrum. This imagery is once again designed to give the impression that there is no racism or discrimination in nature. Mankind is the only species on the planet that exhibits this behavior. We are supposed to be the "dominant" species; however, we exhibit some of the most self-destructive behavior that manifests itself throughout the earth. I chose to emblazon many of my paintings with words so that the message becomes clear. The message that I want to put forth at least. I welcome any other interpretations that viewers may have; as art is in the eye of the beholder.

Passion about the internal meaning to me is why there are words on several of the paintings in my series. The desire for mankind to find a way to coexist peacefully with ourselves and the environment is very important to me and I will continue searching for ways to get my feelings known. These paintings may hang in my future classroom. This painting holds a special place for me because it was my first and gave me the confidence to dive in wholeheartedly into the rest of the semester's works.

Painting # 2

This next painting in my series began as just a light blue background. I wanted to try to see what colors I could make by mixing and adding and came up with this blue, that I felt connected to, and I decided to paint the whole canvas in this blue. As I stood back and looked at the blue canvas, it reminded me of water and the vision of the Statue of Liberty came into my head. I thought of all the people that came to this country, as they sought a better life, passing by the Lighted Lady that stood and continues to stand for freedom. The ideal of justice, freedom, and equality appear in almost every aspect of my life and dictate how I carry myself. I wanted to show Lady Liberty in a frustrated and sad state as to how her ideal has been tarnished.

The painting continued from the blue background and Liberty's arm was added with a strong red torch to symbolize her strength. Red drops were added to her eyes and crown to show that although she was constructed to symbolize freedom from oppression and the promise of a better day; there is a stigma attached to the idea of an influx of a new generation of immigrants as the United States seeks to close its borders. My frustration cannot be contained as I try to convey the sadness that Liberty would feel if she were to suddenly come to life.

I did not want to portray her as helpless and submitting to defeat; this is one of the reasons why her green arm is shown to be much larger in scale to

the rest of her. This purposeful distortion of size is designed to give her strength and restore that strength to her which she has lost. Even though there is great debate today about immigration and the desire to keep the American ideal, this painting shows me that for those willing to face the obstacles and hardships placed before them. Liberty will still be waiting to greet them with an outstretch arm of security and protection. The use of words once again is to express my feelings that people should not be asked to shed blood to protect an ideal and then not be afforded the freedoms and rights that they fight and die to protect. Overcoming obstacles seems to be the most frequent theme of my series.

Painting # 3

This painting began as just a tree that left me unsure where I was wanting this piece to go. As I stared at the tree, I began to get the idea that even the biggest tree had to be just a seed at one point. From there, the grass and road was added followed by the starry sky, which to me means the beauty of starting out on a journey without knowing the ending or the destination. I felt uncertain when painting this which is ironic because this painting to me symbolizes uncertainty. The uncertainty I felt about wanting to quit smoking or not; the internal debate about quitting some other time because quitting is hard. The uncertainty I felt as a thirty year old freshman at Nassau Community College embarking on a desire to becoming an educator, and trying to acquire the necessary skills and degrees to make that dream a reality. The uncertainty of this very class and how I would be able to deal with a syllabus and agenda

that demanded an openness to new ideas and a willingness to express emotions; neither of these two items were high on my past lists.

This is one of the only paintings in my series that does not contain words on the canvas. I wanted to have viewers be able to assign their own feelings and emotions to this particular piece. I was approaching a crossroads in my life during this time that would affect this as well as my next two paintings. I have been a smoker for over fifteen years and I was coming to the decision to quit. The symbolism of the footprints at the bottom of the painting on the road is there to convey the message to myself that the longest and most arduous journey begins with a single step. There is another meaning I attach to this painting as I was in limbo a few years ago with my path in life and what I wanted to pursue as a career. I knew it would not be easy to return to college and seek to further my education at thirty years old, but as this painting symbolizes to me, it only takes one step.

This painting is very special to me and although it symbolizes uncertainty and fear, it also conveys a sense of peace whenever I look at. It may be because I have achieved everything I have set out to do that I was once fearful of. I may not have quit smoking for such a long time but I have made it through five years of college in just three years. When I look at this painting, it lets me know that no matter how hard a road may be, you can accomplish anything you set your mind to if you're willing to work for it and take that first step.

Painting # 4

This is my most personal and important painting in the series. My paintings have all been leading me towards seizing control and introspection. The first three paintings were my feelings about social issues and ideals. This class, without me knowing it, was guiding me towards self-reflection and analysis of my inner feelings and emotions which I never really allow to surface. My personal struggle with addiction came to life right in front of my eyes on the canvas of this piece of work. For over fifteen years I allowed nicotine and

cigarettes to dictate my direction in life; to define me and decide when and where I would be allowed to go. The previous paintings allowed me to confront my feelings of social injustice and taking the first steps towards my goals. It was shocking to me that my inner demons were screaming to be confronted and represented.

The line that divides the painting between control and freedom is pronounced to show that there is a fine and definite line that separates those two desires. The use of colors is also intentional throughout the painting. There is a strong use of black on the bottom of the painting to symbolize the darkness of addiction and the loss of control. The blue used in the upper part of the painting is reminiscent of the freedom blue used in the Liberty piece earlier in the series. This is another piece where I felt it was vital to include words on the painting to reinforce the desired message that if you suffer from a controlling addiction, it is possible to pull yourself out of the darkness and into the light of freedom and a new day.

I made a decision during this semester that I was not going to allow my addiction to control me anymore and that I would take back control of my life. It would be an ongoing struggle as I will address in the last painting of my series. I am not sure if I would have had the courage to address my fears over my addiction and a desire to move my life into a new direction without this class opening my eyes to hidden issues; it makes your feelings intensely real when they are staring back at you from a painting. It is amazing how a painting of a road winding up to the heavens can have the kind of impact my paintings had on me. This painting marks a turning point in my life that I can relive whenever I need inspiration or if I ever feel like I wanted to smoke again, I can view this and realize that I am now in the light and don't want to get pulled back down into the dark despair of addiction.

Painting # 5

My paintings throughout the semester express feelings I have had about many topics, but by far the two paintings that focus on the battle to defeat my cigarette addiction are the most personal and poignant to me. This piece was designed after a slip up I had the night before. I was providing the music at a party and after a few drinks I reasoned with myself that I can have just one cigarette and I deserve it since my quit was going so well. I have never been able to smoke just one cigarette and of course this cigarette turned into me buying a pack. I decided the next day that I would not let the slip up disconnect me from my desire to become a non-smoker.

The fact that the next day was spontaneous painting was going to test my resolve to once again pick up my desire to quit and run with it; due to the length of the class it was always a battle to not smoke or at least think about smoking during the class. Instead of dreading the length of the class, I decided to put my fears and emotions into another painting. The painting started with the large sun and calm waters in the top part of the painting along with the upright ship enjoying the smooth sailing in perfect conditions. This symbolized where I wanted to eventually get to but first I would have to go through rough waters. I was not certain how to convey rough, turbulent seas and the trouble a ship would have trying to sail through it. That was one of the best parts of the class in that, I didn't have to paint anything perfect. I messed around with different brush strokes until I found the effect that I felt comfortably expressed my desire to "weather the storm" to get to the smooth sailing ahead.

There is an obvious internal meaning this painting has for me and by including the words on the painting once again, viewers may be able to assign their own emotions and feelings to the painting. I have all of my paintings hanging up in my house and this and the previous painting offer me inspiration on a daily basis. I truly want to remain a non-smoker and if I want to seize control back from the addiction, I must weather the storm and persevere through the rough patches in order to reach the open and smooth waters of peace and freedom. This painting took me the shortest amount of time to

compose because the minute I woke up that morning after the slip up, I knew exactly what I had to paint to get my feelings of guilt, disappointment and drive out onto the canvas so that I could put a visual representation to my emotions. This class became a great outlet for me to express concerns and desires and give them a voice.

Conclusion:

After viewing my entire series of paintings I noticed that in the beginning of the series it was my desire for social justice that came to the forefront; as the semester progressed I then turned my attention inward to analyze what it was that I really wanted. I seem to use the color black in almost all my paintings and I think that is because black symbolizes strength and throughout my series my inner strength is what came to light on almost every painting. This class allowed me to build upon my inner strength to analyze society's shortcomings as well as my own. It was also very beneficial to view my classmates' works so that I was able to see what was important to others as well.

I am embarking on a journey towards becoming a social studies teacher and the vision of social injustices burns through my very consciousness as I want to be one of the teachers that presents students with new ideas and new ways to understand that equality and justice for all is more than just a phrase, it can become a reality with a new generation of educated citizens that refuse to abide by the prejudice and judgmental practices of other generations. I want to convey the message of justice and equal rights for everyone to my students which I think comes through in my first two paintings. The long road picture marks the turning point in my series where my attention shifts from outward to inward.

This painting and the ones that follow are some of the most introspective expressions of my fears and emotions that have ever been visually manifested. It is ok to have fear and to have doubt, it is not ok to let these feelings prohibit you from chasing a dream or achieving a goal that you have set for yourself.

The ultimate meaning of the series to me is that no matter what stands in your way, no matter what obstacles you have to overcome, if you truly believe in something and you honestly want to make a difference, you can; if you are willing to put in the work necessary to change a behavior or to educate the uneducated then people can truly accomplish great things. The biggest takeaway I bring with me from this class and this collection of work is that I will not let fear of the unknown control where I am willing to go. I will take the fear and transform it into good and positive energy and a sense of adventure, and tackle any problem or situation that comes my way with the very core of my being; to treat everyone fairly, justly, and equally.