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A ZINE

by Lucy Lackman

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of

Exploring key
sociological concepts
through daily life &
popular culture

SOC 100 1600

Fall 2024

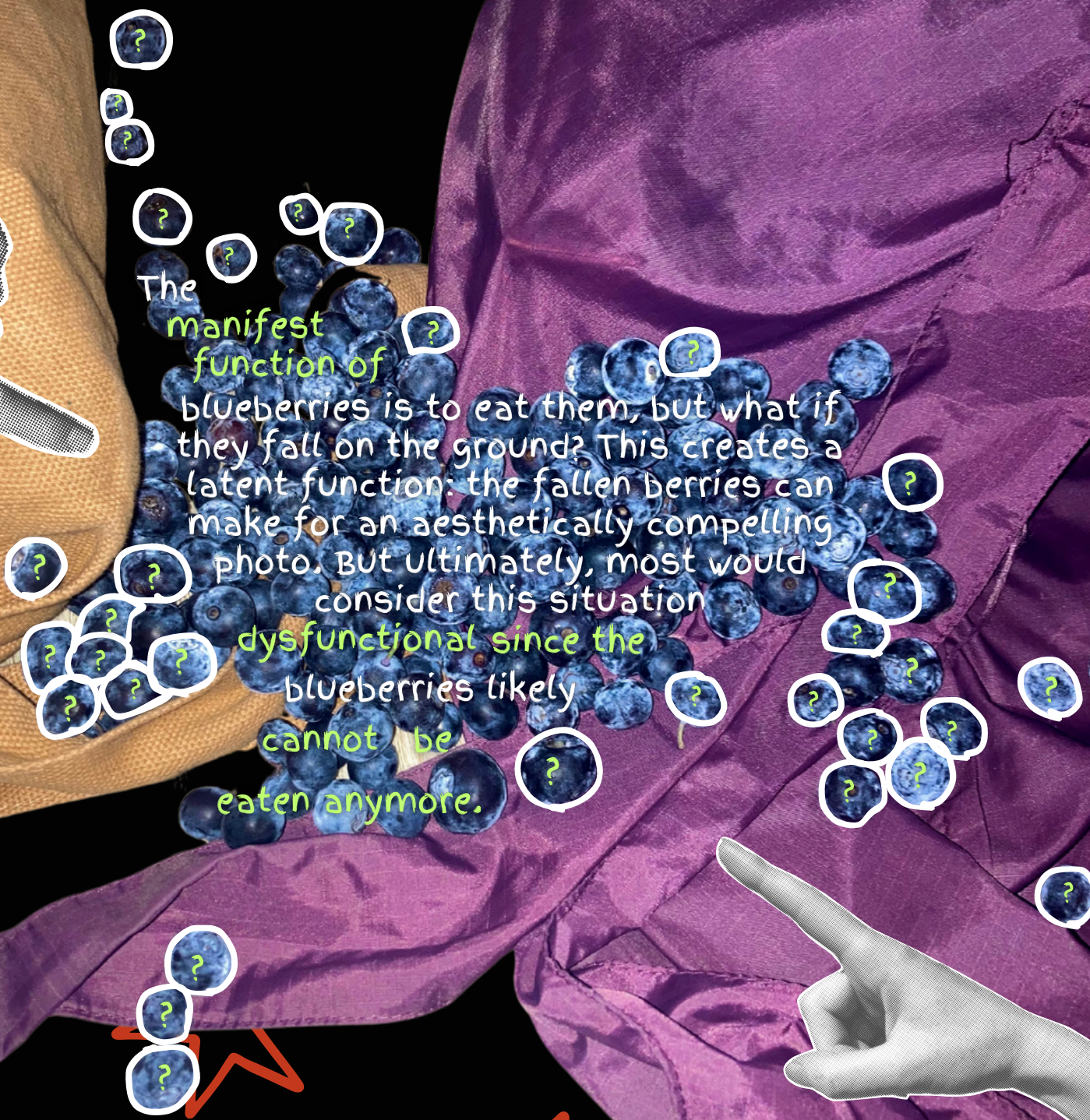
FUNCTIONS:

Manifest: The original purpose

Latent: A side effect

Dysfunction: Failure of the manifest

photo credit: me



The **manifest function** of blueberries is to eat them, but what if they fall on the ground? This creates a **latent function**: the fallen berries can make for an aesthetically compelling photo. But ultimately, most would consider this situation **dysfunctional** since the blueberries likely cannot be eaten anymore.

(five second rule, anyone?)

CULTURAL PRODUCTS

Any creation that is the result of a cultural industry can be defined as a cultural product.

E.g., a movie, poem, song, or news article. Zines count, too!

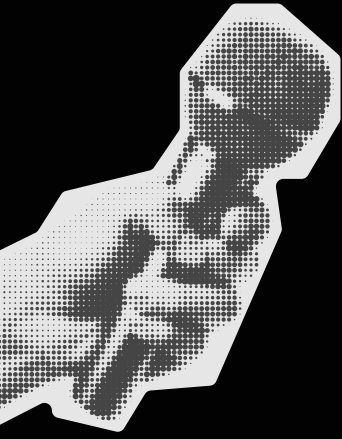
WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF CAPITALISM,

SZA's made it big. But she has spoken openly about the toll that success has taken on her.

In an interview with Essence Magazine, SZA said, "This is the most psychosis-inducing industry that I can think of. ... There's so much validation of self, 'what is the reason you're doing this', and even if you find your reason, it's hard to hold onto it."

Later in the interview, she added, "It definitely creates this weird bubble of unrealistic expectations, and kind of feeling dehumanized, and "maybe I'm a product."

Her frustration is palpable in terms of how the music world, and by extension, capitalism, has been the main cause of her feelings of exhaustion. Karl Marx might say she is experiencing alienation. This also prompts the question: Are her songs the cultural product, or is she?



A major pillar of Donald Trump's platform is immigration. Or for him, ideally, the lack thereof.

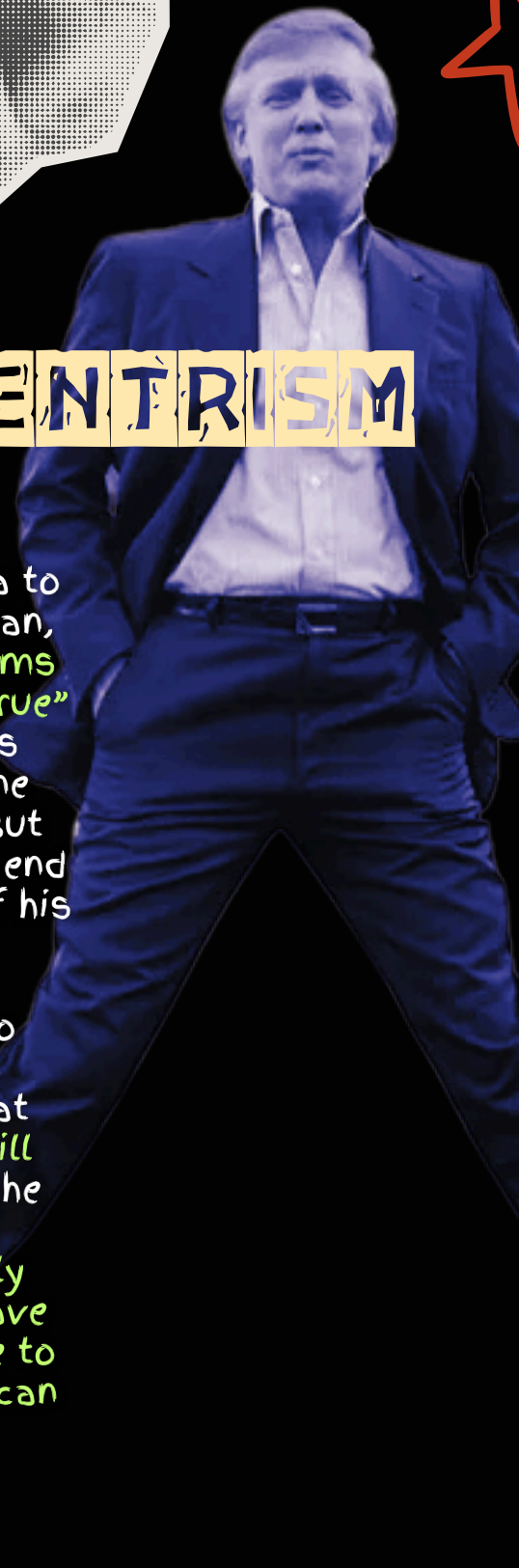
And he has a slew of policies in mind to achieve this, from resuming construction of the border wall to mass deportation programs. He himself does not use this word, but it's not hard to miss: Trump is ethnocentrist.

Ethnocentrism is not inherently bad. In some cases, it is valid to hold one's own culture above others. The glaring flaw with Trump's approach is, not only does he fail to grasp when ethnocentrism is appropriate, but he fundamentally misunderstands American culture.

ETHNOCENTRISM

Trump seems to want America to be exclusively white, Republican, Christian, and wealthy. He claims he is only trying to preserve "true" American culture through his extreme intolerance of anyone outside that narrow profile. But really—if he wins—what he will end up "preserving" is a figment of his imagination.

If Donald Trump manages to reenter the Oval Office this January, there's no doubt that levels of hate and division will rise. But no matter how hard he tries, Trump's brand of ethnocentrism will never truly erase all of the people who have and will continue to contribute to our rich, heterogeneous American culture.

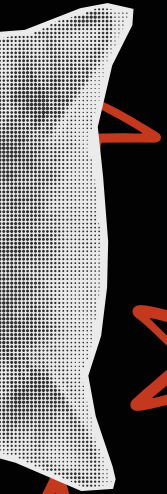
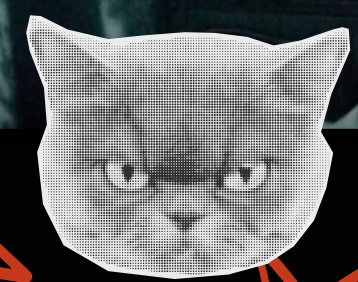
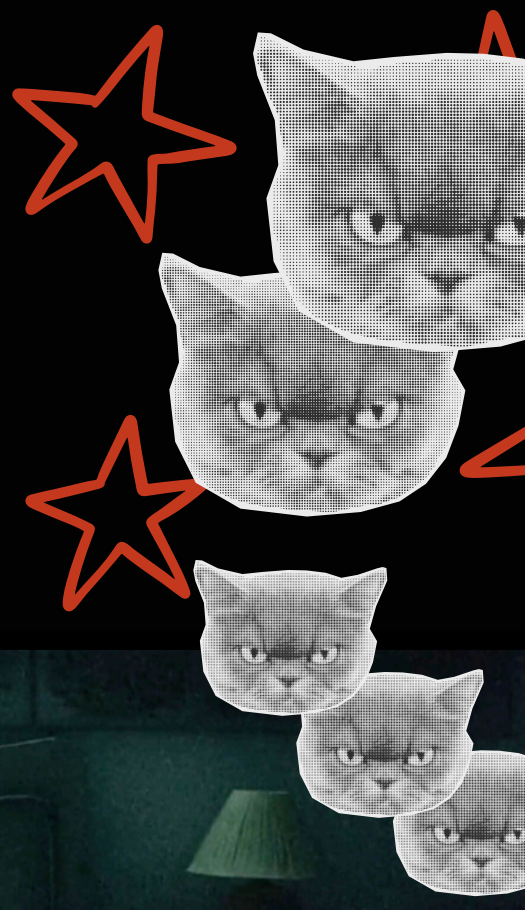


AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION

Exposure to agents of socialization is how we learn to navigate social norms and behavior.

The seven agents of socialization are widely-accepted as:

- Family
- Peers
- School
- Workplace
- Religion
- Media and Technology
- State or government



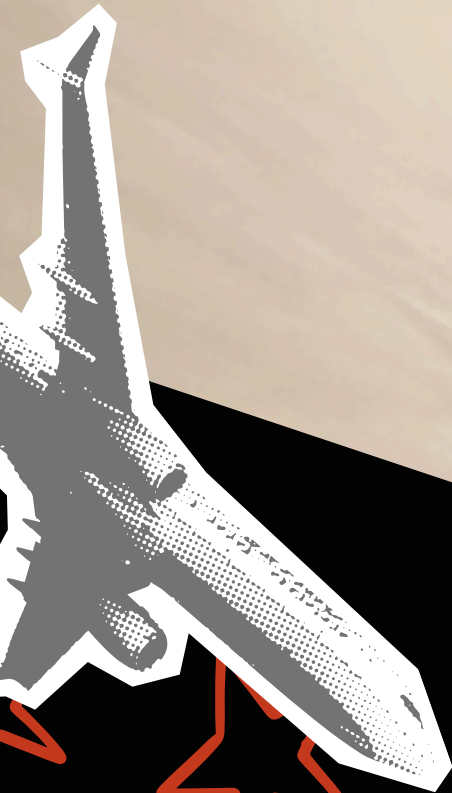
This frame from the Greek film "Dogtooth" shows a son climbing into bed with his parents in the middle of the night. This brief scene was one of the film's tamer subversions of social norms (other themes included incest and a debilitating fear of cats), but still an interesting one to observe.

If the son had the mirror of society to receive feedback from, he would realize the connotations of this decision. Generally, once kids reach puberty, they thirst for independence from their parents, and to discover their own identity and values.

Society also makes it taboo for adolescents to show physical affection or closeness, especially in the father-son dynamic. But since the son's sole access to an agent of socialization is through his family, he lives in complete oblivion of all this.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility is the process of moving upwards or downwards in your social class. It also often goes hand-in-hand with economic mobility.



Today, gymnast **Simone Biles sits high on America's social pyramid**, celebrated and wealthy. But she started out life as the neglected child of a single mother struggling with addiction. **It was a long, slow ascent up the ranks that could have been derailed at any moment**, for example with an ill-timed injury. It's an ascent that few with her beginnings manage to complete.

photo credit: me

MERITOCRACY

Meritocracy is a social system that rewards people based on their merit or ability, instead of status or class.

Although it has its benefits, meritocracy is a deeply flawed system. For one, it takes for granted that all individuals are starting from equal ground. And while those who complete the "American Dream" are given full credit for it, those living in poverty are given full blame.



In his equally soulful and catchy 2010 song "I Need A Dollar", singer-songwriter Aloe Blacc tells us the story of a struggling young man who loses his job, and subsequently descends into poverty, and potentially alcoholism.

With lyrics like, "If God has plans for me, I hope it ain't written in stone Because I've been working, working myself down to the bone,"

Blacc shares the not far-fetched story of someone who would like to believe in meritocracy, but is increasingly fed up with it, now that his hard work isn't paying off like it has in the past.

Out of luck, the man tries to appeal to others' generosity.

Here's part of the chorus:

"I need a dollar, dollar, dollar, that's what I need And if I share with you my story, will you share your dollar with me?"

SOCIAL CONTROL

This June, I went to the **Queer Liberation March** with some friends. The aim of this annual march is to preserve the **spirit of pride's revolutionary beginnings** by taking the form of a protest, rather than a celebration. Unlike the main pride parade, the **QLM does not take on corporate sponsors**. And they attempt to reject police involvement too, but as we can see here, that effort has not transferred to reality. These officers might say they're there to maintain "order", but **order in whose eyes?**



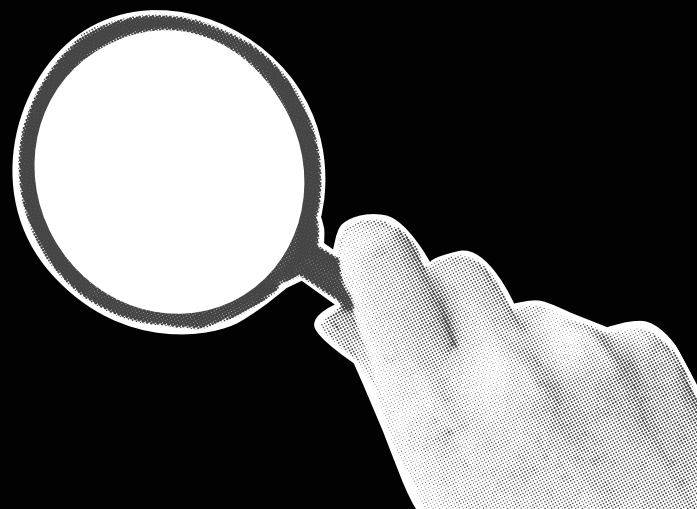
photo credit: me



MEME.



[insert a silly photo of either a cartoon character, Black person, pet, or child with a short, ultra-relatable caption attached]



MINORITIES

A minority is defined by its status as a non-dominant group, plus the discrimination it faces as a result. For example, billionaires are not the majority, but they would not qualify as a minority. Additionally, women are not technically a minority population, but they still experience injustice.



I lived in Portugal from summer 2019 to January 2024. My family moved there by choice (to have a change from the U.S., in short).

Me in early 2020



Living in a foreign country, I was a minority of sorts. I faced different treatment for sticking out, some of which I could have avoided by trying harder to assimilate—from the start, I really didn't want to live there.

So, was I a minority in Portugal? I was discriminated against in a sense, but it was not extreme and I was partly to blame.



STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes are general assumptions we have about certain groups. E.g., New Yorkers are rude, women are difficult, or Black people are violent.

Stereotypes do not always have a negative connotation, but they tend to be oversimplifications of reality.

In the 2020 single, *Peng Black Girls Remix*, British artists ENNY and Jorja Smith explore these nuances, and take back the narrative—specifically from the perspective of Black women. (Peng is UK slang for attractive/hot.)

From the first lyrics, we get a sense for its central theme:

“There’s peng black girls in my area code
Dark skin, light skin, medium tone
Permed tings, braids, got mini afros
Big nose contour, some of us won’t”

And later on:

“Raise my voice, you gonna say
that I’m angry
Kiss my teeth and now you say
that I’m hood
Kid at 16 you say it’s my destiny
Drive a Range you think I’m up to
no good”

The song highlights the prejudicial stereotypes that Black women are subject to, plus how heterogeneous the demographic really is.

They may share some common struggles and realities, but there is no one “typical” or correct way to be a Black woman. Blackness and womanness shouldn’t be fetishized or erased, but given space in all its forms.



MISOGYNY & REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS



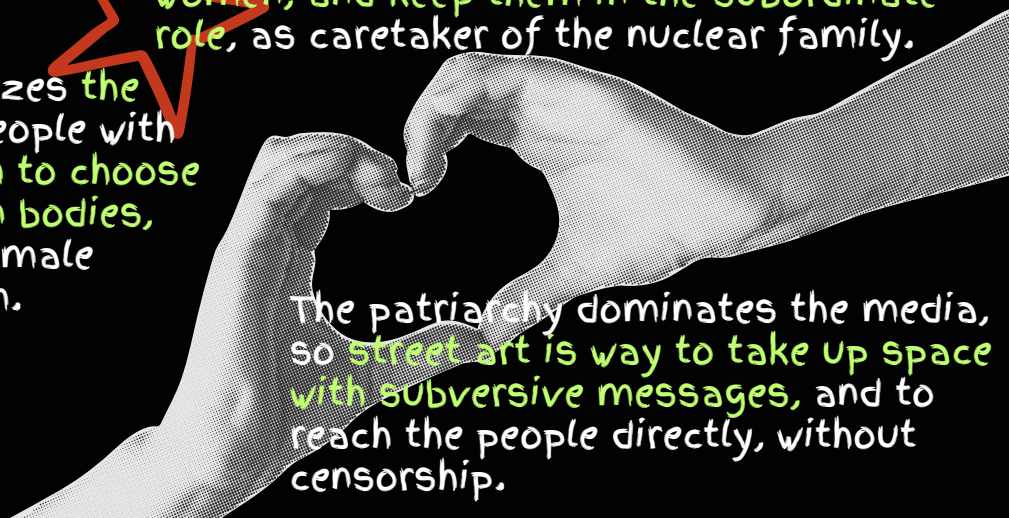
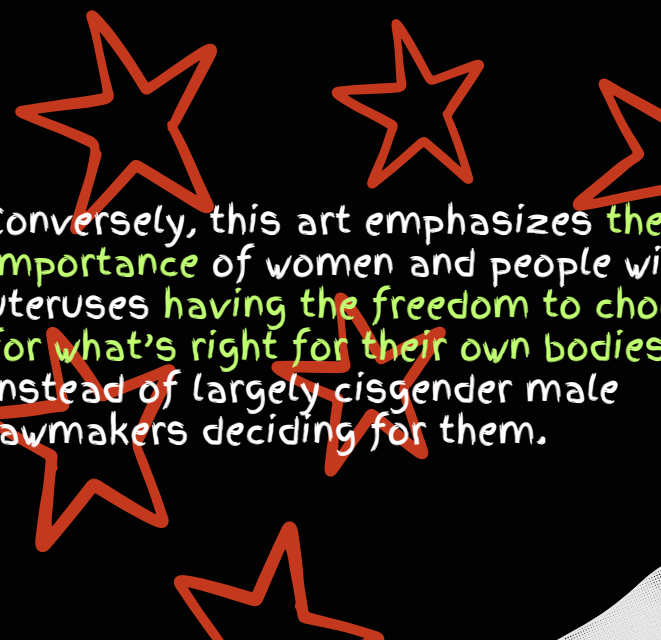
photo credit: me

This feminist street art by Portuguese artist Filho Bastardo depicts a female figure with a uterus, which looking closely, seems to be covering up a previously-drawn phallic symbol.

No matter the country, restrictions on abortion and reproductive health are yet another way for the patriarchy to control women, and keep them in the subordinate role, as caretaker of the nuclear family.

Conversely, this art emphasizes the importance of women and people with uteruses having the freedom to choose for what's right for their own bodies, instead of largely cisgender male lawmakers deciding for them.

The patriarchy dominates the media, so street art is way to take up space with subversive messages, and to reach the people directly, without censorship.



FIRST-WAVE FEMINISM

In Western feminist history, there are four main "waves". Lasting from roughly 1848-1920, the first wave focused largely on securing women's right to vote.

The fight for voting rights was revolutionary, and took extraordinary determination to achieve. It's a vital period in American history that should be taught and celebrated widely.

However, it should also be considered that most prominent suffragettes were white, and blatantly racist and exclusionary in their advocacy, often choosing "white" as their master status over "activist".

while I don't have nearly enough space to get into all the nuances here, here is a quote from well-known suffragette Elizabeth Cady Stanton:

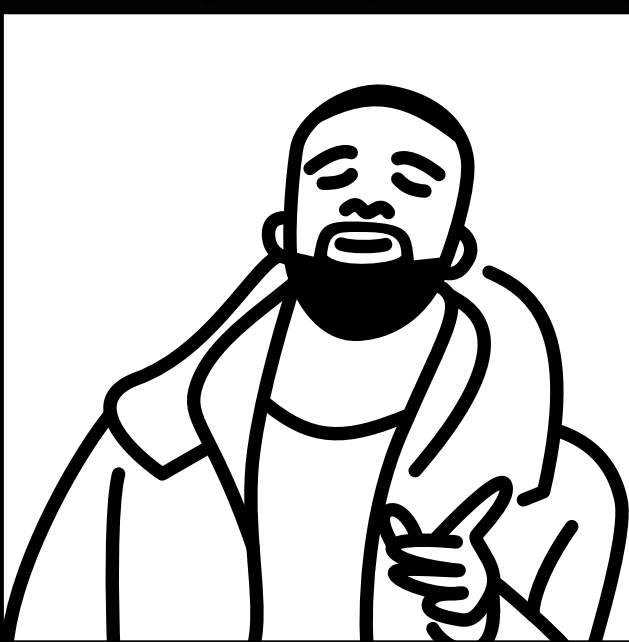
"When [Black abolitionist] Mr. Downing puts the question to me: are you willing to have the colored man enfranchised before the women, I say no."

I'm reading a non-fiction graphic novel right now called *Suffrage Song*, which beautifully chronicles the events and important figures of the suffrage movement in much more detail and depth. I encourage everyone to educate themselves on feminist history, whether it's through a book or other media. It's so important to know our roots, not only to inspire us, but remind us we can do better.

(end-paper of *Suffrage Song*)



MEME.



"Born this way"

"There's no 'gay gene'. Also, sexuality is a spectrum, fluid, and attraction doesn't have to define identity."



Thanks
for
reading

SNIPPETS

of

SOCIOLOGY