



Critical Teacher Project: ✨
Solidarity

By: B. A.



“As more people of color raise our consciousness and refuse to be pitted against one another, the forces of neo-colonial white supremacist domination must work harder to divide and conquer.”

— bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*



Being a visible minority, when it came to deciding what I wanted to do for this Critical Teacher Project for the Teacher Candidates of Color, there was no doubt in my mind that I wanted to create a painting - of what though, would take me a lot longer to figure out. I contemplated speaking about how I am regularly “randomly” selected for security checks at airports to the point that in the off chance I’m not chosen, I almost want to ask the security personnel if they forgot. Or as a teacher candidate, if I should talk about being caught off guard the first time (and many times since) I’ve been asked “Why do you wear that?” pointing to my head with equal parts indignation and curiosity in the student’s tone. Or even still, if I should talk about the times people read my phonetically-spelled-two-syllable name wrong. Or should I talk about being mistaken as an Arab because it couldn’t possibly be that my roots lie elsewhere; it’s apparently too complicated in a world that identifies people by the color of their skin and how they choose to dress.



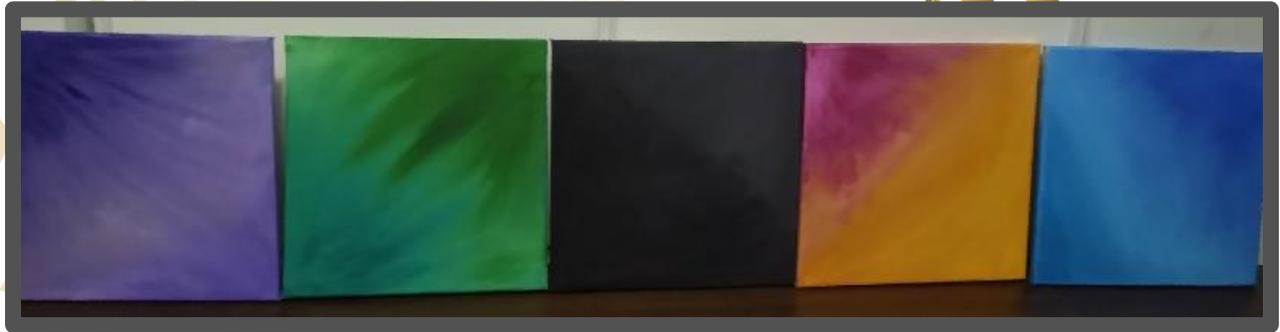
In the end though, I decided to paint for and about my friends who have played an integral role in keeping me motivated as a teacher candidate. To be honest, I have felt cocooned with kindness and assurance: our lived experiences while different bond us together because of our ‘otherness’ and brilliance. Hence, to cherish this solidarity of friendship, and to honour the unconditional support and relentless encouragement I have received from these individuals, I decided to paint quaking aspen tree trunks.



As per my limited research, read: Googling for a couple of hours, these trees are native to North America and are extremely resilient. They are named quaking aspen because of the rustling sound their leaves make. They reproduce vegetatively through a root system and have barks that contain chrophyll to sustain them through harsh conditions adding to their longevity. Bottomline is that because of their root system

you can't get rid of them for hundreds of years: not with storms or harsh weather, not through fires, and certainly not by uprooting them. The only way to get rid of them is a lack of sunlight that can be caused by other species of trees hogging it. Hence, I chose to paint these tree trunks as an ode to my friends to metaphorically represent their resilient attitudes as people of color - a force to be reckoned with - making a difference in Canada for a long time to come. Our collective bond is akin to the quaking aspen's root system in that it keeps helping each of us stand tall come what may and keep 'quaking'.





The different background colors in these paintings represent my friends' favourite colors and honor the long-lasting friendship bonds I have created with these dynamic individuals who inspire me to keep pushing myself and be better everyday despite any adversity.



References:

Info. about quaking aspens:

<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/beauty/aspen/grow.shtml>

Background graphics credit:

https://pngtree.com/freebackground/frame-of-geometric-pattern-background-with-the-theme-of-islam-and-gold-in-arabic--with-a-number-of-damage-side-looks_1131019.html