

Tabiya Conyers

UNLV Calvert Award; Artist Statement

*Strength. Courage. Happiness.*

I don't know what that means as a woman of color in America. I want to believe that I'm an untouchable force of nature, but when I see how the people around me are treated, I feel defeated. My black mother is seen as a threat to white America. My brother is a suspect when walking into a store and me...

I am only half black, but I struggle all the same. My hair kinks in the morning and I dress it up as a white fantasy when I try to look pretty. *Why?* Well, society tells me, "I'm not pretty," when I wear my hair in its natural state. I'm not professional.

Look at **me**, *look at them*. Do they look weak? No. They are strong, they are fearless, they are happy, they are America. These pictures are in black in white because you cannot handle the bold beauty that is the melanin in their skin.

They wear their hair as a badge.

They are the future.

They shine when you won't let them.

Chantal and I's exhibition exemplify a mixed person's view on the CROWN Act. The act is protecting all walks of life through hair. Hair is identity, hair is everything, and it is being jeopardized because ignorant white folk aren't comfortable. The same people call our culture's gross, ugly, ghetto. It takes hours to make our hair into art, they may not get that now, but they will.

We are strong, we are courageous, we are happy.

We are worthy.