

## FITTING IN AND PERFECTION AS YOUNG BLACK AND BROWN WOMEN

Words by

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As young Black and Brown women, *fitting in can be one of the biggest challenges we face*. It's never easy trying to be yourself in a world that already has expectations for you before you even speak! This can sometimes be so much pressure; it can lead to depression or even cause trauma.

As a young Black or Brown woman, you often feel like you must work twice as hard just to be seen, to be respected, or to even feel accepted.

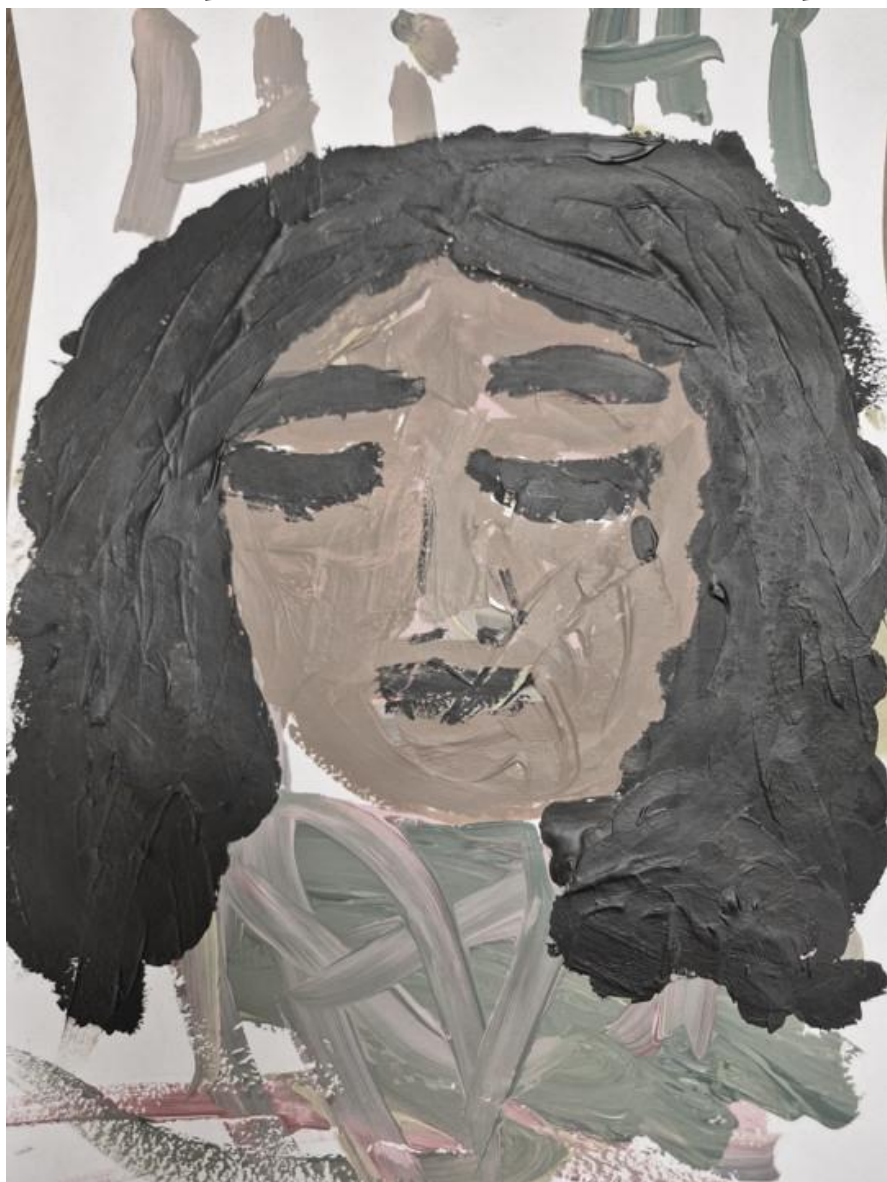


Image by workshop participant at The Zone

Sometimes it's like your worth is already questioned, not because of who are, but because of what people see first. Even the smallest things can become complicated, your voice, your hair, your body, confidence, it's like everything is under a microscope. Society tells you to love yourself but

then shows you a version of beauty that looks nothing like you. So, you start feeling like you need to fix yourself, smooth yourself out, or hide certain parts just to fit in. There's always this pressure to be "perfect", to always look and act "right". As one young woman in our research said: "As a young Black or Brown woman, you are more sensitive to everyone...you almost have to *make sure that you are perfect*...because they are seeing you as a representative of your entire race...I am one of two of the Black girls interning right now and, sometimes I feel, because I am the only one in the room, I am seen as a representative.....as opposed to just being me."

Her testimony shows how perfectionism can come from a place of responsibility, not pride, but pressure. Also, perfectionism in this situation isn't always about wanting to look good or be the best. It is about survival and responsibility.

*Many young women in our research this year, talked about feeling like they must represent their whole community, instead of just being themselves. That can make people more self-critical, more guarded, and more emotionally tired.*

Now, I'm learning that being yourself is the real strength. Your identity, your flaws, your roots, that's where your power is.

*We shouldn't feel we must fit into places where we are meant to shrink.*