Hair and Self



12x16, acrylic on canvas

This painting represents the plight that many Black women feel regarding our hair. For years, coils and braids have been deemed unprofessional. A vast majority of Black women have received micro-aggressive comments, even from within the Black community, about whether or not our hair was “done” or styled. I am no stranger to experiencing my white peers poke and prod at the perceived oddity that is my hair. In addition, often, the first person to straighten our hair is often our own mother. It is impossible to exist with ourselves, to shine to our brightest ability, when we as a people are weighed down by a negative perception of our hair. How we view our hair is delicately intertwined with how we view ourselves. In order for our community to thrive, we must free ourselves from the notion that our hair is a force that must be tamed, a creature to be stifled. Many Black people feel as though they need to “help” their hair by straightening, relaxing, or hiding it. I ask our community, in an effort to combat this negative perception of hair and self, to reframe this idea. Ask ourselves, not about the ways we can help our hair, but about the way our hair helps us. It fosters a community, and bolsters a sense of self that is so unique to our people. It sets us apart, and embodies the resilience and consistency that is used to light up our lives.