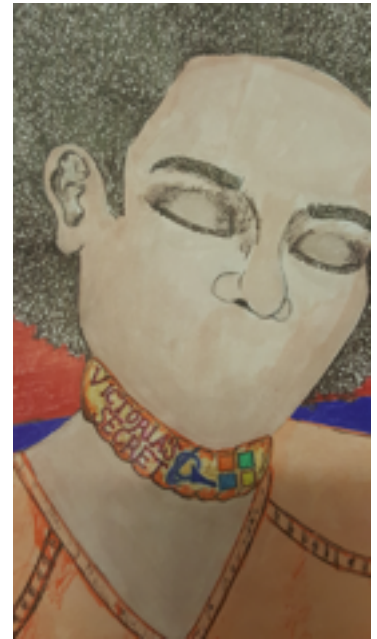


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Professor Branch

English 104: Writing Literacy & Discourse

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The New Slavery

There were a couple of pieces of information presented in the Netflix documentary, 13th, that struck me in particular. One of those things is the fact that the issue of mass incarceration has been legally justified by the law, specifically the constitutional amendment that we continue to celebrate because it supposedly freed black Americans. It actually surprised me that people would blatantly abuse a clause of a law that is supposed to symbolize our freedom that we waited so long for. But one of the things that this document made me realize is that there are not many things that are too evil for the powerful people in this country.

One of the other things that struck me was learning how difficult the system is made for people of color to receive fair treatment in the justice system. The people in the system punish those who even dare to try to prove their innocence as if the constitution does not directly grant them that right. Kalief Browder had the audacity to exercise this right and spent three years in jail as a result. The time he spent in prison and all of its hardships led to mental issues so severe that twenty-two year-old Kalief committed suicide two weeks after he got out of jail. The system is killing people with guns and with criminalization.

The most disturbing thing that 13th brought to light is the fact that the prospect of correcting the issues of this oppressive system from its roots seems completely insurmountable. It seems like everything in our lives is contributing to the problems, including the place where most people buy their groceries: Walmart, and the places where so many Americans shop for clothes: JCPenny and Victoria's Secret. So many of the corporations that the majority of Americans support on a daily basis are contributing to the actions that support the mass incarceration and oppression of communities of color. JCPenny, Victoria's Secret, and a myriad of other companies were saving money by utilizing prison labor. ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council is responsible for many laws that have a hand in reenforcing mass incarceration and it's members, large corporations like Walmart, are financially benefitting from it. For example, the Stand Your Ground Law, the law that allowed Trayvon Martin's killer to walk free, was written by ALEC. Due to the Stand Your Ground law supporting an atmosphere of gun culture, Walmart's gun sales soared.

My drawing depicts a black person in an orange jumpsuit hanging from a noose. On the noose, are some names and logos of companies that contribute to the issue of mass incarceration.

The person in the picture also has no mouth to symbolize that black people are silenced and robbed of their rights by the system. They were born voiceless because they were born black. The corporations shown on the noose include Walmart, JCPenny, Victoria's Secret, Boeing, and Microsoft. All of these companies have received monetary benefits from the wrongful punishment of people of color.