

The Hill

While biking on the neighborhood sidewalks that curved to the crest of the landscape, I prepared for the day. The hill I would soon eclipse on my ride to school was no match for the hill that towered overhead. This hill is big enough for a school that teaches that to be a Black is to be the personification of the wrongness. I attend this school. This hill is big enough for a store that makes me put my bag down as soon as I walk in. I continue shopping there. This hill is big enough for a job market that required me to brush a little harder, but allowed the messy bun of my white counterpart. I brush a little harder. This hill is big enough for a community. I try my best to be a member of this community. This hill is big enough for an ego that honors itself as the most important life form. I adopt this ego in efforts to be of the hill. All of sudden, residents of the hill were told not to leave the house, or else the hill would crumble. I stayed home. Mirrored by those around me and without a daily commute, the hill dissipated from my psyche one day at a time. My skin was neither for nor against my humanity. My hair was neither unkempt nor kempt. My speech was neither improper nor proper. The bike I used to mount this hill began to rust and grow a bed of flowers through unlearning what the hill taught me. Soon enough, residents were reminded of their duty to the hill. It had to be that my skin is inhuman, my hair unkempt, and my speech improper. The murder of three residents showed for it. I was sent a new bike from the hill with a note. This hill has a name: Whiteness. Whiteness outlined that the primary task before my own needs and wants, was to change my behavior to ensure comfortability for white people despite the atrophy to my human potential that happened in the process. To every practice room, lesson, classroom, and rehearsal, I carried along with my backpack, the feeling of being

intrinsically secondary. Being told by MSU that students and faculty would be operating from home relieved me of the thought of having to continue on in this manner, the manner of performing instead of living, even if it was only secured for a month of my life, even if I did not have the 'proper' words to describe how I felt. As I watch videos of residents of the hill refusing to wear a mask, and social distance, I became privy to the fact that the unjust social responsibility Black people are given at birth to give society a sense of ease and safety through assimilation, is not met with the just social responsibility all people have to take precaution during the coronavirus pandemic.