

just a negro

I guess the real choice comes about
In my ability to choose what type of negro I want to be
An intellectual negro
A hard-working negro
A polite negro
A progressive negro
A well-rounded negro

All of which, I just realized are mostly positive adjectives
This, however, shouldn't discount the fact that
We're are allowed to be mediocre
We're are allowed to be victims, victors, and everything else between
These are attempts on my part
To refrain from embracing the bullshittery of respectability politics
A trap built into convincing us that some of us
Based on society's constructions of race, class, and gender, among other categorizations render
some of us more valuable and worthy of basic human rights -
And sometimes even respect and dignity

There's nothing I can do to not be perceived just as a negro
By most onlookers
Yet still, I can't help but long for more
Shit, if I'm being honest
I still feel the pressure
To represent us in the best light
I still find myself appealing to the white gaze
Policing myself and adjusting my appearance

But to most, I guess I will always just be a negro

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