

Smiling Faces...

Renaissance Bernard | Drawing and Painting
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Artist Statement

My work provokes conversations around race, social injustice, and police brutality. I explore the ethical corruption inherent in U.S. institutions and systems of power. My artistic strategies make use of recognizable images pulled from journalism, news publications, and advertising, as well as my own recurring characters. I use metaphor and references to real world events to call attention to this pervasive and persistent systemic oppression. I use palette, mark, and composition to express the internal reality of the anxiety and fear of living within this system. In using images spanning decades of American history, my work suggests a timeline that reveals the unrelenting nature of American's corruption.

In paintings such as "*He's Good and Dead Now...*", 2021, I insert characters of my own creation. These characters are known as the KKKRUPTs (for corruption). The KKKRUPTs wear a version of the smiley face as a mask that functions to cover up their real motivations in the way a sticker/band aid would. Like a band aid, these masks only provide a quick and ineffective solution to a systemic problem; they only address the symptom and not the cause; an aesthetic overlay, that hides rather than treats the infected wound.

Artist Statement Continued

In my painting, *WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING (There's no way like the Amerikkkan Way)*, 2020, I work from the iconic photograph, *At the Time of the Louisville Flood* (1937), by Margaret Bourke-White. Her photo brings home the disparity between privileged white Americans and the circumstances of working-class African Americans in 1937. In my painting, I remove the images of working-class African Americans. The white, “all American” family in the image now wears the smiley face masks. In this way, I refocus attention on the racial inequity of the American system which continues to brutalize whole classes of people, particularly Black people.

In drawings on stretched paper using a combination of ink wash and graphite the work becomes a meditation on the internal experience of living in this system. In my drawing, “*Smile If You Know What's Good For You...*”, 2021, the drawing is punched through, revealing the support. These tears become a disruption in the negative white space. This is a metaphor of Black struggle revealing the foundational support on which that struggle takes place. Whiteness or paper is false reality, pristine and clean is ideal, while the support, the underpinning of it all, is hidden.

My work functions as a vehicle to spark uncomfortable conversations. This work challenges the viewer to question are they on the side of the oppressor or the oppressed?









1.



*WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD
OF LIVING (There's no way like the
Amerikkkan Way)*

20" x 30"

Acrylic on panel.

2020

2.

WORLD'S HIGHEST WAGES

*There's no way
like the
American Way*



WORLD'S HIGHEST WAGES

*(There's no way like the
Amerikkkan Way)*

20" x 30"

Acrylic on panel.

2020

3.

WORLD'S SHORTEST WORKING HOURS



*There's no way
like the
American Way*

*WORLD'S SHORTEST
WORKING HOURS (There's
no way like the Amerikkkan
Way)*

20" x 30"

Acrylic on panel.

2021

4.



“He’s Good and Dead Now...”

45” x 55”

Acrylic on canvas.

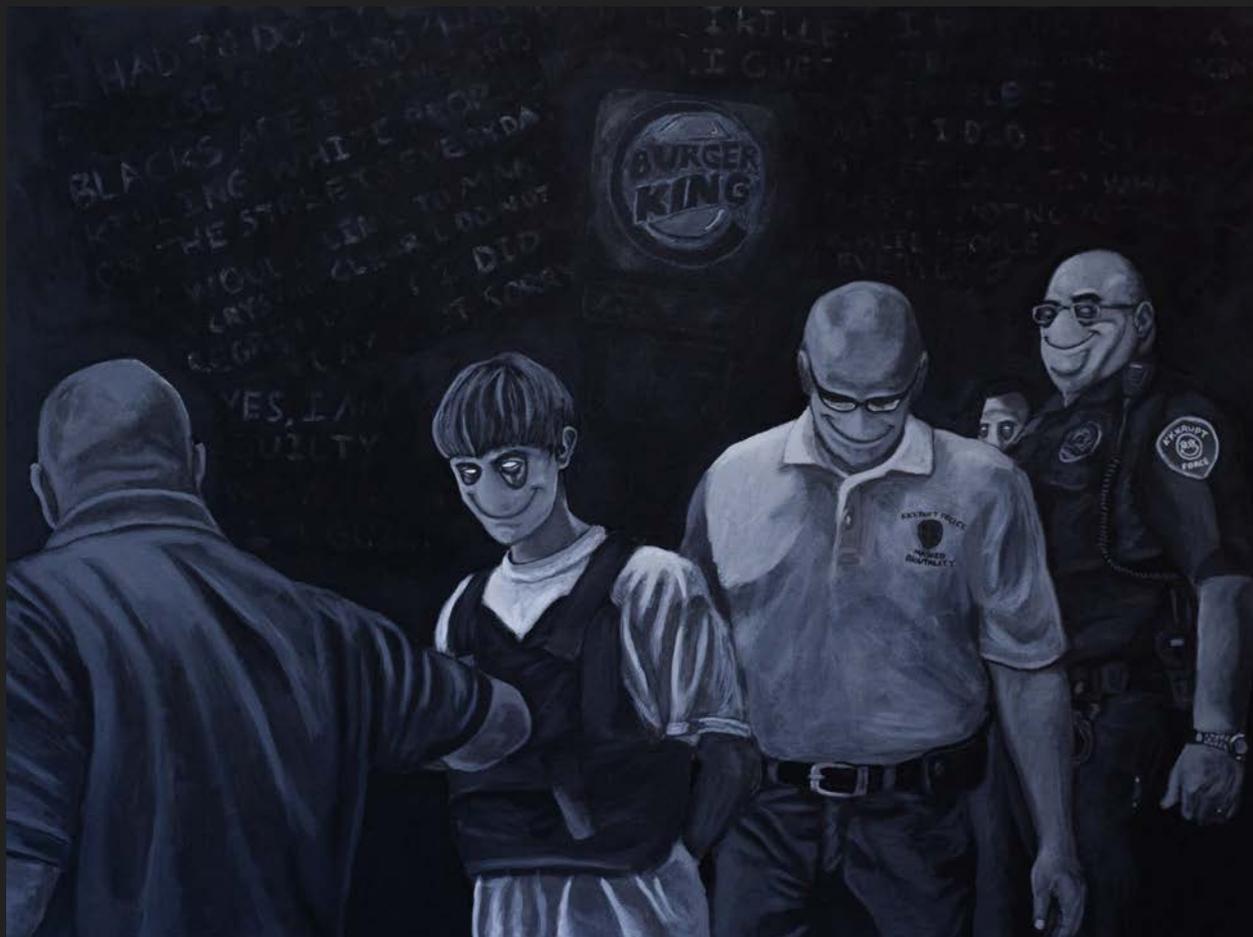
2021

5.



suicide...
40" x 30"
Acrylic on canvas.
2020

6.



*Escorted to Burger King in a
Bulletproof Vest (Have It Your Way)*

40" x 30"

Acrylic on canvas.

2021

7.



*Taking a Knee for Unlawful
Protocol*

30" x 20"

Acrylic on canvas.

2021

8.



Over My Shoulder...

30" x 20"

Ink wash and graphite on
stretched paper.

2021

9.



By My Side...

40" x 30"

Ink Wash and graphite on
stretched paper.

2021

10.



*Smile If You Know What's
Good For You...*

20" x 30"

Ink Wash and graphite on
stretched paper.

2021





RD OF LIVING
There's no way like the American Way



RLD'S HIGHEST WAGES
It's no way like the American Way



WORLD'S SHORTEST WORKING HOURS
There's no way like the American Way

