

2008/09 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Mohawk Fine Papers Award



KARLA MICKENS

Graphic design

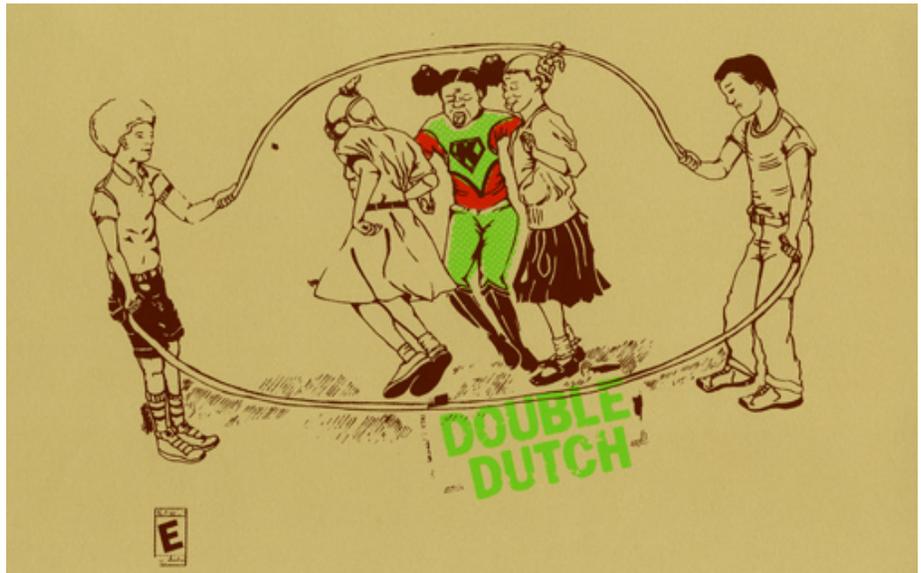
Junior

Virginia Commonwealth University



The sweet smell of oak trees pass through the air. Birds sing their songs back and forth. Meanwhile, I'm making mud pies with my Easy Bake Oven. My mom yells out the front door, "Y'all better not be using that oven to cook dirt." Engulfed by a gray oversized T-shirt that read "GRITS, Girl Raised in the South," she appears at the door. Just like the Ken head on the Barbie doll body, my Easy Bake Oven was used for purposes other than what it was designed for. Similarly, I have found that my purpose in life is completely different than what I imagined it would be. However, I cannot forget the days of my childhood that have made me the goofy, yet humble person I am today.

My childhood was extremely carefree. I often walked around barefoot in my neighborhood, and my summer attire consisted of jeans cut to make shorts paired with one of the fifty Girl Scout T-shirts I owned. On hot summer days my sister and I would race down the long dirt road to the honeysuckle bush. "On your mark, get set, go!!" We always had a hard time deciding who said it because whoever said it got a head start.



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The wooden beads weighing down my braids clacked against each other as I sprinted to the bush. My mom always put braids in our hair in the summer because it was less maintenance. My fluorescent sandals would flip-flop off my feet. To pick up speed, I would clinch my toes tighter around the thong of the sandal. “Beat’ cha” is what we usually said once we reached the honeysuckle tree. We were meticulous about picking honeysuckles, often moving bushes to the side trying to get the honeysuckle housing zero bugs.

I find it impossible to not attribute my every success in life to my easygoing childhood. I had no worries. “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” is what my grandmother always lectured to me. Especially now that I am in college, I am learning to not let the worries of the world—such as war, terrorism or the color of my skin—hinder me. Instead I am working towards goals that will benefit those coming after me. African American Design Student Association (AADSA) has been my first step towards giving back to my community. AADSA, founded at North Carolina State University, is an organization that provides a support network for African-American design students. This year, with the help of four other designs students, AADSA was brought to VCU. There is so much comfort in knowing that there is a group of friends who are willing to give help and encouragement. I am also determined to build a center right smack in my hometown that has an after school design center for kids of all ages to learn art and design fundamentals. To me it’s worth it. After all, I’d rather be sorry than safe. Children aren’t making mud pies at age nine, as I was when I was younger. I strive to simply have peace in my life as well as share with other kids the same peace that I so joyfully played in when I was younger.

