

Sheila Rodriguez

One of the hardest questions I've ever been asked is, "who are you?" or "tell me about yourself". Whenever this happens, I tend to get stuck or think to myself, "Well I am a 21-year-old woman from New York City". Oftentimes when I'm asked this question, I think about *gender* followed by my *ethnicity*, *age* and my *role* in my family. Essentially, I am exactly that, I am what I was born with but also what I experienced, learned and adapted or changed about myself throughout all the years of my life so far.

The process of creating a t-shirt that represents who I am as a person was tough at first, but it soon became clear. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, my sense of style was something that was affected by it. Staying at home was hard but I decided to work on myself because of it. For my t-shirt I decided I wanted to reconstruct it into something comfy that is easy to throw on but still stylish.

I first ended up picking up fabric dye in order to color my shirt into a brighter color and then reconstruct it. The color I ended up picking was a light green. I decided to pick green since it's the color I mostly relate to nature and also my favorite color at the moment. The color green to me represents the earth and nature which is something I've been enjoying a lot lately by going to New Jersey with my cousins. After I dyed my t-shirt and let it dry, I ended up cutting it in half in order to create a cropped shirt and shorts set. I learned to make a pattern in order to create the shorts and since the sewing machine and I are not exactly best friends I decided to use glue to put it all together.

Once I created the shorts, I used a letter stencil in order to paint the word "woman" in the back of the shorts. Since *gender* is something significant about myself, I decided to paint it on the back of the shorts which I found to be pretty cheeky. Besides it being my gender I find women to be the ones who make the world go round. Another important thing that makes me who I am is where I come from and who I come from. Both of my parents are from México and although I was born in the U.S. I still strongly represent my parents' motherland. I spent my early childhood years living in México with my mother and family, so I decided to paint the Mexican flag on the left front of my shorts to represent my *ethnicity*.

Since I turned my t-shirt into a two-piece set, I had to add to the crop top as well. I also ended up using paint on the top but instead of white I used pink. The reason I used pink was because of the contrast it created with the green of the shirt. Pink is also considered to be a "girly" color which is what I sometimes can be through the way I *dress* and my style. For the top I ended up writing a phrase in Spanish on the top left side. I wrote "hija de mis padres" which translates to "the daughter of my parents". I decided to write this in Spanish because it is my first language as well as my parents' language. Although the phrase is pretty self-explanatory, I like it because it signifies who I come from and the *role* I was born with. I am my parents' daughter, not the only but the first and oldest. I am also the first granddaughter and niece on both my mother and fathers' sides of the family which is funny because my parents are also the first borns of their families. Being my parents' daughter came with a lot of responsibilities, I am a first generation Mexican American as well as the first to graduate high school and go to college which is a huge accomplishment. Being born into the *role* of oldest daughter is something I can't change but rather embrace.

On the right hand sleeve, I decided to include my zodiac symbol which is virgo and looks like the letter "m". I decided to include this because one of my main interests includes astrology and space which is something I am still learning about. On the back on the t-shirt, I included all 8

phases of the moon. The reason I included this is because of my interest in space. I always liked outer space and looking at the stars while being in México since you can't really see them from New York. I also like to think that the phases of the moon somewhat symbolize me in a way that I am always "going through phases" or changing like the moon does. I say I'm "going through phases" because I'm still at a point of my life where I am discovering myself and who I am or who I want to become.

This is all I ended up painting on my shirt and shorts and although it was a process to learn how to create a pattern and put it all together it was fun and it represents who I am, at least to this day. The graphics I included on my garments are not a lot, but they represent deeper meanings of who I am, what I like and the *roles* I was born into as well as who I want to be in the future. Now whenever someone asks me who I am my answer will be, "I'm still finding out".



Figure 1: Shirt front & back



Figure 2: Short's front & back