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지문 (jē·mōōn): Exploring Equality in South Korea

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지문 (JĒ•MŌŌN):
EXPLORING EQUALITY IN SOUTH KOREA
Caroline Yoo

Mentor: Lori Watt

How in the twenty-first century, can one strive to understand inequality? In a world that places importance on being individual and unique, where does that place equality in our society? What makes people universal?

During the months spent in South Korea in the summer of 2016, my research focused on how to address these questions by studying the intolerances in South Korea through art in a way that showcased equality over all the inequalities. Every individual is unique and a person of their own. Hence although people are not equal, I was looking at equality in a way in which humans are made up of the same building blocks – we are all of one race, we are all human, we have the same flesh, bone, and beating heart. Therefore I decided to create a piece that enhanced the importance of the human-ness of each individual that blurred the line of the discriminated and the discriminator to show how in the end the two groups were not all that different.

I decided to work the 지문 (*jĕ•mōōn*) which translates to “fingerprint” from Korean to English to accentuate the human aspect of each individual. A fingerprint is unique to the human kind but also individual to that specific person. A fingerprint is able to identify a person through a database when scanned, but without a scanner, a fingerprint is simply a fingerprint, a print that reveals that a person is human and nothing more. I collected stamped ink thumbprints from all types of peoples from a myriad of backgrounds in hopes to showcase the universality of human beings. In highlighting the fundamental core of our being, my goal was to show how to move towards a future with less intolerance in South Korean society by focusing on essence that makes people equal.