

Never Done Object Tour

Co-curator Minita Sanghvi reflects on artist Renee Cox's *Chillin' with Liberty*, 1998.

Transcript

Minita: I love this Renée Cox piece titled, "Chillin' with Liberty." While it may seem like a pop-cultural reference and a fun piece about superheroes, I believe it has many layers of meaning, especially from a socio-historic perspective about rights, freedoms, liberty, and the role of African American women in the making of America.

Let's start with the pop-cultural reference of a Black female superhero. This is still a surprising idea to many. In these past few years, we have seen many female superheroes emerge on the silver screen, *Wonder Woman*, *Captain Marvel*, General Leia Organa and Rey from *Star Wars*.

But all of them are white. So, a Black female superhero is still a novelty, unfortunately so. Actually, sitting atop our nation's symbol of freedom and liberty is not lost on the audience either, especially at a time when some members of our society still can't bear to say, "Black Lives Matter." African American women have played a pivotal role in the making of America. Their history is one of the darkest chapters of American history and continues to be so. While this piece is from 1998, it is especially important and timely today, as we are about to swear in the nation's first Black, South Asian female vice president.

It makes me think Black women are superheroes in America. They're often the most important vote in our elections. They carry an enormous burden of moving the American democracy towards progress, even as their kids are being killed on the streets, in their homes, playing with toy guns, or driving while Black. And while we may have achieved a great victory with Kamala Harris, our work towards life, liberty, and equality for Black lives is far from done.