



FIGURE 2.2
Untitled.
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nowhere? Those who stash their wealth in one country, their children in another, and their ex-spouses yet somewhere else? In other words, broad identities, worldviews, and experience are only valued as a result of wealth and choice rather than the opposite, even if the opposite contains the same base ingredients. A foreign accent can either be a key that opens doors or shuts them in your face. And based on what exactly? This too is referenced in this image. What does it mean to belong in a globalized playground and not in a localized ghetto, self-made or otherwise? Who decides whether you are a rube or a sophisticated person?

I see the engagement of modern-day slavery status as a consistent theme in Leroy's work. The brown skin of the subject therefore becomes code not for something exotic but for something less protected. Whether we are talking about equal opportunity or legal protection, these rights cannot be taken for granted by what must be acknowledged as pervasive white and male privilege, which still dominates much of our culture. One would only have to look at the lack of wage equality, disproportionately harsh sentencing, and more, to know that these are ongoing and serious issues.

The stars are above the heart, suggesting by implication, that it has been pierced by the journey long ago of ancestors whose abduction was also navigated by the stars. We are pointed to the place that pumps our blood throughout our body and where the deepest, most private and never visible pain hurts all of us the most. The broken heart is maybe the most difficult to heal and by directing us visually with the suggestion of "under the skin," we will eventually come to rest there as viewers.

Leroy's exploration of her subject matter continues with the image of the boy tearing at the paint, at the label, at the flag, at his skin. DNA evidence is often found under a victim's fingernails when they have been able to fight during an assault. How others paint us is often wrong and can lead to frustration turned inwards which is associated with depression, lack of confidence, and even self-harm. To develop a positive self-image takes acceptance and support from families, communities, and peers. Many take this

for granted and have difficulty imagining anything else. Unfortunately, that is also true in reverse. LeRoy effectively appeals to our collective responsibility to make the American Dream a reality for all (Figure 2.2).

Conclusion

There are as many ways to read photographs as there are people looking at them. I hope to show you a variety of approaches and suggest where they may lead you intuitively—they may even prompt you to undertake some research.

The formula at work here remains concerned with the elements and how they can symbolically direct the viewer. What we have added is the consideration of certain formal, compositional, and organizational elements that effectively work as tools for directing and misdirecting the viewer's journey through the image.

Assignments You May Want to Challenge Yourself With

- Contemporary issues
- Racial identity
- Aspect of US history
- US flag