

Meet Braxton.

Promising Futures Engagement: 2012-2013 peer educator

High School Alumna: School without Walls, Class of 2013

Post-Secondary School: Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Ga, English Major, Class of 2017

+++++

Poem 1: Experiencing Identity

<i>If I Wasn't an Urban Youth, I Don't Think I Would Have Been a Peer Educator</i>	
<p>A Black girl living in the city A student in a public school A daughter, a best friend So many different identities I had I was also a peer educator It complemented my other identities</p> <p>Educating peers I saw every day I went to school with I interact with Who are my age We share certain life experiences</p> <p>My peers Respond favorably Speaking the truth On sexual issues and lifestyle choices Giving tools necessary to better yourself May have been unfamiliar or foreign message They know me Made it more digestible Me being in a similar age group Not in an authoritative role I use relatable language They had to respect that</p> <p>Before I said lines that other people wrote For the first time Saying my poetry, my work That vulnerability I felt</p>	<p>Being a peer educator helped me Bring certain topics to peer groups Speak fluently on different health issues Become more comfortable That entire experience Made me Made other people Perceive me more confident Impacted my growth as a person</p> <p>The peer educator process Doing it together, really important I'm not the only person Learning this information for the first time Learning this information in this way When we get on stage I won't be the only person on stage We were a team Played off of each other Seamless At home, I didn't have the group</p> <p>In regards to my identity If I weren't an urban youth I don't think I would have been a peer educator My becoming a peer educator It was a role At the time—sort of a job, a task Until I came to understand what I was doing Developed a passion It infused with my identity Inherent to what you are</p>

<p>About speaking in front of large bodies of people I found that confidence I found my stride</p>	
--	--

Poem 2: Reclaiming Identity

<i>Why Would You Want to Describe Yourself as Something Negative?</i>	
<p>I am an urban youth Grew up in the city, live in the city That's how I would identify If not for the negative stereotypes surrounding urban youth Urban youth are considered at risk Disadvantaged Encounter obstacles and hardships posed to youth in an inner city Lack of resources The media portrays urban youth being negative Just bad It's in movies, news, everywhere The stories specifically twist and highlight negative aspects of what's going on It could be a crime and all of the suspects are I don't know</p>	<p>Other people's perceptions Influence how you perceive yourself Some people may see my peer education as negative Depends on how people view me It would be easier to convey how people viewed me And how I viewed myself Negative connotations about urban youth Influenced my life experiences and who I am</p> <p>Why would you want to be Wanna describe yourself As something with a negative connotation There could be something positive about identifying as an urban youth I wouldn't know what it is I never really gave it much thought</p>

Poem 3: Shifting Identity

<i>Being an Urban Youth Taught Me to Think Differently and Maneuver in Different Ways</i>	
<p>Being an urban youth Growing up in an inner city Taught me to think differently Maneuver in different ways As opposed to people growing up in Mississippi or something</p> <p>Speaking on sexual reproductive health and lifestyle choices To my peers</p>	<p>I'm doing something productive Something admirable Made people more susceptible to the message of peer education Promising Futures was all I could talk about I'm doing community activism My mom was proud</p> <p>I'm more of like a lifestyle educator now I set an example through myself As opposed to just outwardly educating</p>

Poem 4: Being a Change Agent

We All Out Here

STI rates in the city

This is a problem

We need to talk

It made me more empathetic

We all out here being afflicted by the same things

We are all out here doing the same things

It took some of the stigma away

The mystery and taboos around sex

Not only is everyone doing it

Everyone's also catching this stuff

It really made me speak more candidly

With my peers

Anybody can be an educator if they wanted to

I really liked the hip hop theater aspect of it

Just being able to showcase my creativity

Everyone else's creativity

Fuse both

Awesome

Poem 5: Reflection

Not Necessarily Proud to be an Urban Youth

I guess in some ways

The way they saw me

Teaching them stuff

I could see myself in that same way

Being an urban youth influenced how I view

myself

I'm proud of where I grew up

I'm proud of the city

Not necessarily proud to be an urban youth

I don't know