

Meet Dana.

Promising Futures Engagement: 2011-2012 peer educator; 2013-2015 youth builder

High School Alumni: Parkdale High School, Class of 2012

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Poem 1: Experiencing Identity

<i>Being a Peer Educator Isn't That Much Different from Being an Urban Youth</i>	
<p>Being a peer educator Isn't that much different from being an urban youth The amount of information I had to absorb on a constant basis About different demographics teach us Just how to communicate Not project any type of like negativity Mindful of my reaction</p> <p>Being an urban youth is internalizing a lot of information Becoming very calculating So that you can put out something that is very positive It's just a matter of thinking bigger Being an urban youth, I have the capacity to do so</p> <p>I like knowing a lot of information About different things Anyone can educate their peers Someone generally concerned about something Can read up on all of these resources You have too much access to information nowadays It would definitely help To have like the kind of structure that we did So it wasn't like you picking up information all willy nilly</p> <p>I admired a lot of people that I was interacting with My peers, the group We were all from different areas</p>	<p>Something that I was struggling with Probably one of my biggest humps Having to figure that out In addition to trying to become more assertive More confident Had a lot of insecurity I knew what was expected of me</p> <p>There was a lot of power I didn't even know that I had Being a peer educator kind of shaped us Putting us in situations when we were uncomfortable Gave me the courage to like stand up It definitely orchestrated conversation A big part of coming to terms with who I was What I identified as</p> <p>Being a peer educator It is part of my identity Because of how much it influences the way that I think now It definitely still resonates in multiple aspects of my life</p> <p>The program definitely helped me break out of my shyness I don't really mind speaking in front of a lot of people When I talk to people They ask me about why or how I am the way that I am Why I don't have a problem discussing certain things I tell them about my background</p>

<p>We were definitely down for the cause Having a good time It definitely kind of pushed me there, you know? Let my hair down, just be myself We're so close It was a really nice group to be a part of Being from Cheverly</p> <p>I don't really feel that I stood out in my high school I was really quiet Flew under the radar Focusing on myself, school, and swimming I kind of listen to more of myself at Promising Futures That kind of altered the way that I was at school Trying to form an opinion On what kind of person I wanted to be</p> <p>When I started getting older in the program It was our outreach work Being very all inclusive, including queer people</p>	<p>With me being very body positive and sex positive It shows when I talk to my friends If they're opting to have casual unprotected sex I still have that prior knowledge Constantly in the back of my mind Maintaining a level of mental, emotional and physical health</p> <p>I don't think that I would be as head strong or serious about it If I wasn't part of the program Just knowing the importance of different things Seeing how easily people get caught up in sex, just growing up</p> <p>That's part of who I am My friends know that</p>
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Poem 2: Reclaiming Identity

<i>What I Think Urban Youth Is</i>	
<p>The DMV metropolitan area Is constantly changing so I guess Being an urban youth has a lot to do with being very ever changing Definitely down to learn Shifting all the time Just knowledgeable</p> <p>They know how to connect with different people Working on themselves in a lot of different ways Not just like absorbing Taking information and putting it back out there Really current in a lot of what goes on in the community, the internet</p> <p>I do think that I'm really up to date on a lot of things but There are a lot of different things that don't really move me Things that I refuse to put a lot of energy into</p>	<p>But I think a lot of it is really ridiculous My values kind of conflict With what my peers put energy into</p> <p>I'm not really like into the whole paper chasing thing No one wants to be young and broke I also understand that not everyone can be the next Kanye West I think that people Really underestimate how important it is to get yourself together Figure out what you want out of your friends, your relationships How important it is to develop a solid sense of self Before if you have all that money</p> <p>I don't really fit into that With me being more about building</p>

<p>A lot of that revolves around pop culture</p> <p>Beyoncé coming out with like a new clothing line for my age group</p> <p>There are so many new apps now</p> <p>Cool articles, think pieces</p>	<p>Who I am as a person</p> <p>It can get a little rough</p> <p>What I think urban youth is</p> <p>My definition</p> <p>Might be completely different from everyone else's</p> <p>I'm pretty okay with it</p>
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Poem 3: Shifting Identity

<i>People Have This Stigma</i>	
<p>Your skin is really radiant</p> <p>What do you do? Your skin is so smooth</p> <p>Yeah, you know, dark skinned girls have nice skin too</p> <p>It challenges their normal standard of beauty</p> <p>People have this stigma</p> <p>When it comes to like more kinky black hair</p> <p>If you touch my hair</p> <p>It is soft and it smells good</p> <p>People see that and they're just, "Wow"</p> <p>Kind of challenges what they would normally deem as like beautiful</p> <p>People see my haircut to this day</p> <p>An afro on top</p> <p>A twist out</p> <p>People don't get it</p> <p>Me going against the grain in some way</p> <p>People have this stigma</p> <p>Okay they're not listening to me</p> <p>They go to this alternative school</p> <p>They're going to be bad</p> <p>It got kind of rowdy sometimes</p> <p>A lot of kids that wanted to get out of their community</p> <p>Some that didn't</p> <p>I think they didn't really have people</p> <p>That would like sit and talk to them</p>	<p>A lot of my friends are really antsy</p> <p>Around homeless people</p> <p>Not that we were dealing with homeless people per se</p> <p>But just, people are just completely different from our walk of life</p> <p>They are still people, you know?</p> <p>Just have a conversation</p> <p>We all want the same thing</p> <p>That actually opened my eyes</p> <p>Just how people navigate</p> <p>How to just get over myself</p> <p>People have this stigma</p> <p>The D.C. area, crime wise</p> <p>Parents make sure their kids know how to handle situations</p> <p>There is a lot of theft</p> <p>You kind of have to have self-assurance, confidence</p> <p>Don't get taken advantage of</p> <p>Have to have that when you live in the city</p> <p>People have this stigma</p> <p>They were very confident</p> <p>Living in the city</p> <p>Fun whimsical comments or just clap backs</p> <p>I don't really feel like I had too much of a backbone</p>

<p>Show genuine care and concern For like what they are trying to do What they envisioned for themselves I've met a lot of really nice kids</p> <p>People have this stigma</p>	<p>Living in suburbia with my parents I have to take like two buses and a train to get to the city The environment definitely altered the way that I interacted</p> <p>I mean People have this stigma It was very interesting to me I think it affects me today</p>
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Poem 4: Being a Change Agent

<i>We're Going Through the Same Thing</i>	
<p>If someone were looking for a Kim Kardashian in me They would be incredibly disappointed There is just a lack of variation Genitalia has to look a certain way Boobs has to look a certain type way The stomach has to look a certain type of way That's problematic</p> <p>Women have stretch marks Might have longer boobs Like that's real life It affects the way that men view women I don't see half as many memes From women about man and their appearance I don't think that's cool I don't think that that's fair</p> <p>The most that women might have to worry about Is just a guy that might be well endowed Some women are completely fine with not having that Aside that a lot of guys just have these horrible standard Projected by our pop culture idols People don't really look like that</p> <p>I know that my girlfriends Constantly need affirmation I have a roll here Everyone has rolls, girl! You know you like to eat, it's fine</p>	<p>I was definitely very inspired by my peers That I was working with Just accepting me Like, we are people We require the same amount of concerned love Genuine care, you know?</p> <p>Becoming a lot more self-aware Knowing how to communicate with people from all walks of life Not just like older people But people that are also younger That may be coming from lower income areas It kind of humbles you in a way You realize that in a lot of different ways You are literally just alike</p> <p>Being a part of a program That acceptance was there It was consistently there There was like certainly no shame We weren't just gearing our conversations to heterosexual relationships There was no bias That acceptance A lot of people don't get that from their family Definitely helped me through where I was</p> <p>There was no way anyone could have felt left out I think that that's important when you're trying to talk to youth You don't know what people you're dealing with</p>

<p>I just hate how much we kind of internalize these things We make ourselves feel like crap</p> <p>I don't think that I would be so adamant Or really care about it Without being a peer educator</p>	<p>You don't know what kind of dynamics They go through when they go home</p>
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Poem 5: Reflection

<i>What I Stand For</i>	
<p>I am a very vocal person When it comes to social issues and things of that nature I think Women should have the same level of sexual freedom as men do I'm still very head strong about having protected sex Very true to my values Not something that I have ever compromised With any of the partners I have had</p> <p>I do talk a lot about like human sexuality Not being raunchy, more like educating A lot of people don't know how their bodies work Or they just have a harder time accepting Different body types</p> <p>I'm very sex positive Something important to me I grew up very biblical, very Baptist A lot of what I stand for A lot of what I believe in today Completely goes against the grain</p> <p>A lot of the things that we kind of take on as truth Are projected by men How they feel like you should act The expectation of who we should be as people, physically That's crap The reason you feel this way Is because of what you have been taught Kind of internalize all these preconceived notions</p>	<p>I value information Interacting with people that bring different things to the table I like people that are smarter than me In a lot of different areas The main things that I focus on are Black issues</p> <p>Very pro-Black My appearance My hair My Blackness is really important to me A lot of the carefree Black women out today Are really inspirational to me</p> <p>My appearance is a big part of who I am I wasn't always confident Accepting of my skin tone No one really looks at your beauty as a norm</p> <p>As I have gotten older I've learned to love those things I really like taking care of myself The way that I smell Maintain my skin</p> <p>I will speak freely I don't shy away from those topics I can have mature conversations about those things</p> <p>Some people think I'm really like out of control They have trouble about like why I'm what I am It is so weird to them</p>

About sexual relationships and love

Then there is other people
That are just, "Ah, you're cool, we get it"
There is a level of respect there