

Meet Maniya.

Promising Futures Engagement: 2014-2015 peer educator

High School Alumna: Benjamin Banneker Academic High School, Class of 2015

Post-Secondary School: University of Oklahoma in Norman, Ok, Accounting Major, Class of 2019

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Poem 1: Experiencing Identity

<i>Being A Part of Something</i>	
<p>I'm too cool for this I ain't got time, I ain't got time for this This is not my style I'm stepping out of my shell for what? How is this going to help me?</p> <p>You don't even know it's helping you Every rehearsal I was like what am I doing here? You know what I'm saying? Not seeing my growth until I got on a stage, in front of people Adrenaline pumps You're scared to do it Then you do it Didn't mess up It was all worth it You did not think one bit that it was</p> <p>We did workshops We even went out on the street Passed out condoms, weirdest thing in my entire life I've never done that We are out here, talking like we're big dogs "It's Promising Futures, mom!" "Oh my God, did they take you seriously?" I didn't even take myself serious until the experience. They did</p>	<p>Meeting other people from around the world Seeing how they do things They are different from us Made me, you know, more open minded Oh you look at it this way, oh we look at it this way I can understand where they're coming from type thing How they go about living their lives</p> <p>The people that I was with in the group At first, I wouldn't have said more than two words to them Sad to say but true Getting to know somebody you never thought you would is so fun "You watch that? I watch that show too. It comes on at nine o' clock, right?" It's like you never thought you be doing certain things with people you never knew Being in a group with different personalities It makes it more better</p> <p>Being a part of something The people that are a part of it wants you to be a part of it They want you to be on the same page with them When you're not it's like, "Where is Maniya"?</p>

<p>Talk to these people, let's go Give them words of wisdom, let's go The ball is in my court I had control I didn't know how to handle it Whoa, where am I going to start? These kids are not going to take me serious I'm just a grade higher than them, two grades higher That was like really messing with me This is not what I am used to I am used to somebody guiding me, telling me this, telling me that I realized Maniya just be you</p> <p>Do it creatively Instead of doing it automatically or repetitively It kills the power of the message, you know what I'm saying? So, that's what made me really realize that If I was going to be involved in something I'm a give it my all Don't just be doing it just to do it Show them that you can kill it</p> <p>It was a lot of respect given that I was not expecting "I love your performance" Wow, people are really paying attention Just imagine if I was up there half stepping</p>	<p>They're looking for you to be there with them You notice I wasn't there? Really? That touched me</p> <p>I don't want all eyes on me all the time - yeah when I talk When I'm quiet, I wouldn't expect you to be looking at me This is a healthy space, a comfortable space, so why not? Knowing that I am safe is what changed me Somebody has my back, regardless That actually made me want to talk more They're here to back you up if you can't articulate yourself quite well "Maniya, I know what you're talking about" "You're talking about this" Helped me to really open up I'd rather be saying something</p> <p>When you talk to people and open up Give them a piece of who you are Puts you in different space, you know?</p> <p>I wasn't Maniya no more I was a peer educator It separates me from the Maniya that I was at first Makes me grow into somebody else or somebody that is better The role playing It's not a role that I'm playing now After I've done it, it's a part of me No separation, I'm all one person It's all me</p>
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Poem 2: Reclaiming Identity

<i>Urban Youth—I Consider Myself Part of That Power</i>	
<p>There's a lot going on in DC Bad things and good things, a lot of struggles</p>	<p>But that box You step out like,</p>

But urban youth
We have so much to do
Got power like we can do something in life
There's so much talent in today's youth
A lot of people don't see
It's hidden
Don't know what to do with it
Scared of what the world might think
They still have it, it's still there
They just probably need some time

It's not always about guns and violence
It's not all about hair and nails
It's not all about light skinned-dark skinned
It's about talent, you know what I'm saying?
Something we can do in the world
With the power we got
That we don't know we got

When the world see you in a way
Put you in a box
It's not much you can do with it
It is not much you can place in it
One way in, one way out
I don't want to be put in that box

Urban youth
It's kind of a label
But it's not being put in a box
Only because like how much power we got

Kids from the DMV area
Have all those resources and they are not
using them
Like a voice
When all that stuff was happening with the
killing of the young boys
If there weren't people from the previous
generation telling us
Pick up a pen. Write a letter
Go speak to someone. Go create posters. Go
walk
If that wasn't told to us
We wouldn't have done it

"Aww, man, are you still going to look at me
the same?"

I don't do what certain girls do
Haven't been involved in certain situations
Gives me purity

Daddy, I'm not perfect
I'm pressured into a lifestyle that I wasn't
ready for
By just doing the right thing, majority of the
time
That overwhelms me and you just don't know
You are saying it as a compliment
I am not taking it that way
It's a little bit scary
What if I do just want to have fun?
It's no stepping out of my shell

That box
People see me one way
Something I don't want to be seen as
I don't see me like you see me

I don't know who Maniya is
I battle with myself all the time
I'm lost
That's why I decided to come out here by
myself
I don't want to be hand held in this situation
I still cannot let my father's hand go with
certain things
I really don't understand who Maniya is
I can't tell you what Maniya will do all the
time
Makes me scared, you know?

You're not about to see me to fail
I'm making a certain move or doing this a
certain way
It's for myself but it's really for you
Everybody is watching
I do feel like I can conquer anything
But sometimes I'm an ordinary person
I'm just regular, you know?

<p>All that hidden power no one is like acknowledging</p> <p>Being a peer educator You look at yourself in the mirror Am I going out here, doing things for myself that I can do, am I doing that? If we just open up our mouths It can change everything Cause the world is already changing from that incident If we do that on a regular You know how much we'd really change? Urban youth - there is so much power there I consider myself a part of that power, a little bit</p>	<p>I don't like to be that one you're looking up to all time If I take a loss Are you going to take the loss with me? Am I going to be replaced? Are you going to say wipe it off, get up, you're good?</p> <p>I'mma be a grown woman But I'm still hung up on what my mother and father think After a while, it's not going to be what you think no more I'm not really in that stage yet I still fully care That's what gives me a little bit of power Not a lot right now</p>
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Poem 3: Shifting Identity

<i>Feel You Got a Voice</i>	
<p>My mom found leftover condoms "Maniya, what you doing with these?" "Mom, I am a peer educator" I help people on the street, in my workshops We pass out condoms We pass out flyers, like we be downtown I had to show her the Instagram that we had. The Tumblr She was like, "Oh! That is legit"</p> <p>Being a peer educator Being an urban youth Connecting with people genuinely Them wanting to know what you plan to do with your life How would you act in a certain situation? Just asking me about myself It really let me open up You really want to know what I would do?</p>	<p>I can raise up my hand in class now a days in college I just wouldn't do that If I never had that experience, you know what I'm saying?</p> <p>When I feel comfortable Feel I got a voice I'm going to use it I never thought I had the power to do that Who am I to talk to you about this? I'm not one to preach to you kids I don't have that clout</p> <p>You never know Somebody feeling the same way you are Somebody got the same question you got Somebody want to say the same thing you are saying but scared</p>

<p>It turned me into wanting to get my voice heard Making sure you know my opinion on things Making sure I'm not left out, you know?</p>	<p>Speaking out and saying something changes everything It gave me that power to really speak up</p>
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Poem 4: Being a Change Agent

<i>We're in This Together</i>	
<p>I was angry about everything I really had an attitude problem growing up Then I lost my brother Made it worse</p> <p>Going through things Loss and insecurities Being sensitive Not understanding why This is a certain way and have to change This is how I was This is how I am, on certain occasions This is my life</p>	<p>What I like about Promising Futures - the connection How we communicate You don't have to help me You don't have to go out of your way for me You don't have to speak to me You don't have to talk to me or even look at me When you do those things I'm going to give you that same respect back</p> <p>We're in this together type thing</p>

Poem 5: Reflection

<i>How Passionate I Can Be</i>	
<p>High pedestal Anti-social Mean Stuck up Four. Big. Words.</p> <p>I was only in seventh grade Kind of hurt my feelings a little bit But it makes me stronger I prove them wrong I'm not like your average girl At college I'm getting the same thing When people call me mean</p>	<p>I'm not really...I can't do it this time I don't really feel like my inner opinion matters right now When I feel it matters When I feel I have confidence speaking in front of people That's when I will just break down those barriers Be like, you know what, "I'm going to talk to you guys today"</p> <p>I'm always scared about something Nervous about something Worried about something in my life</p>

"You're just so mean, you don't have no feelings towards nothing"

In all actuality, I'm a sucker

I'm very emotional

I've been hurt a couple times

I'm a very sensitive person

Music is like therapy sometimes

I really have a lot of inner frustration

I cleanse my mind by just crying

I let out through art sometime

I sit down and draw or just write

Even let out through my homework

When I don't it really takes a toll

On how I look, how I act, who I want to be around, what I like to do

A lot of the things I say

People are like, "what are you talking about?"

I'm just like, you don't understand me

I'm not going to want to say that forever

I'm going to want you to understand

Cause you're going to feel what I have to say

Feel where I'm coming from

Maybe I am thinking too deep

They be like,

"Maniya, why don't you just say it"?

Cause I'm scared to say it

I don't know nobody in here

I don't really feel like I have a voice

You're the cool guy or you're the cool girl

Can you just say this?

Can you be the speaker of the group?

I've always been like that

I struggle with school because I'm so afraid to fail in life

When I fail

Or, I take a step back

First thing I think about, "Oh my gosh! I got to get myself together"

I'm going to fail

I can't fail

I can't do this to ya'll

It's not just me right now, it's like ya'll

After school

After I get a job

After I be successful

I want to share it with somebody

I want to be the man my father wants to be

Who he wanted me to see him as

I'm very connected with my family

One of the things that keeps me pushing on

It really affects me when stuff happens to them

Being a part of urban youth

Seeing their raw talent

Seeing their power

I'm all hung up on passion

I feel like it's what made me feel like I had something

I'm somebody

Who is strong enough to deal with me?

With what I feel about myself?

How passionate I can be