

# 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

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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>	
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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