

Meet Denis.

Promising Futures Engagement: 2010-2015 peer educator

High School Alumna: Roosevelt High School, Class of 2015

Post-Secondary School: Shepherd University in West Virginia, Political Science Major, Class of 2019

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Poem 1: Experiencing Identity

<i>There's No Need for the Title Behind It</i>	
<p>Role is something that you play Something you portray for a time being You only use it in certain situations I don't think I've ever described myself as a peer educator There's no need for the title behind it My skills speak for themselves I just let it come out naturally I simply describe myself as someone who always want to make a difference Help in any way Never make a situation worse Always try to make it better</p> <p>The work was rewarding We go out to these communities, different groups Talk about healthy relationships, healthy living and how to take care of themselves We gave them the information that they wouldn't necessarily get on their own</p> <p>I actually got an understanding, training It solidified it within me You can be a great basketball player but practice makes perfect Same thing with peer educators</p> <p>We get out of our comfort zone We use techniques that help Hip hop, poetry, comedy These are techniques that all teens understand The improv definitely let me be me I did like making up situations</p>	<p>I think of identity as a spider web It connects Identity is who you are from the time you're born To the time you get old In rocking chairs telling stories You always have that identity with you You're always using the skills that you learned in every situation Whether it be with professor, students and a few cousins</p> <p>I find myself using the same skills we applied in our teachings to friends of mine, to peers The skills I learned I always use them I still find myself today talking to my roommate I always apply them People knew I had the skills They didn't know where they came from They thought I naturally had them Some people thought, "Oh you have it like that" Some look at me like I'm blowing smoke Others look at me like I know what I'm talking about It just depends on how they received it Or whether or not they want to hear it With Promising Futures, everyone was expected to do something To come out of their shell It wasn't much of a hassle with that Since I have the training If I was in a group of friends, I'd just be a leader It was an identity</p>

Just having fun with it, letting it roll That's where I grew the most I got to just be myself	
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Poem 2: Reclaiming Identity

<i>Labels Limit You</i>	
Being an urban youth You have grown up in a city environment Maybe gone to public school Involved in youth programs Being urban is just how you get around I pretty much ride my bike everywhere Out in West Virginia, there's just a whole different culture in a sense Shooting guns, having bonfires in the woods, going mudding Doing things that could definitely hurt you Are looked at as a good ol' time Being an urban youth Oh you're ratchet It's not the best image Most people don't live up to it First impression is a lasting impression It's a negative connotation It's not something that you want to be associated with Cause the title of an urban youth I didn't think what that was I know what that is in terms of who I am I never put a label to it or a title I don't like labels Labels limit you The whole urban youth thing, it is me At the same time I don't ever see where I could say that A label is a definite description of an individual	Whether it pertains to their beliefs To their identity Or how they act At the same time we're adaptive We have the ability to put ourself into any group Still come out on top There's always pressure to rise to people's expectations At the same time I'm okay with it I'm looked at as an open book Other people have pointed out to me They can tell me anything I had dinner with my professor and he started going into his personal life I don't think it's something that everyone opens up to anyone about I found myself in this position a lot of times, especially with peers If you say peer educator It's like oh you're only educating your peers, your friends, people you know If you describe yourself the way I do In a sense you can apply that to anywhere I'm from D.C. I love D.C. I'll probably come back to D.C. and live here the rest of my life I go to school in West Virginia I take the skills with me out there too

Poem 3: Shifting Identity

I Knew, They Knew

A lot of ideas Just came naturally I knew I was funny I knew I was adaptive I knew I could get things done I never went around saying anything	My parents knew A couple teachers knew They knew from events we had gone to They'd actually seen us, a lot of social media campaigns they saw me on too It wasn't as difficult as I thought it was going to be
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Poem 4: Being a Change Agent

Especially Urban Youth

I helped out a couple friends But not on the big scale that Promised Futures let me I've met many people who have never been in youth programs	They're wise beyond their years They have life skills They have street skills Especially urban youth
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Poem 5: Reflection

What I Said

A lot of people see something I don't see It's more their interpretation I give my own interpretation	I just have to realize it myself Some of these ideas I struggled with I had to think about what I said sometimes
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