

# 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</p> <p>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>	
There's a lot going on in DC Bad things and good things, a lot of struggles	But that box You step out like,

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>

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?

Speaking out and saying something changes everything  
 It gave me that power to really speak up

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