

Dignified

Music is universal; it's a connection between sound and emotion. Since 15 I've been writing music, from my lowest points to my highest it's always been there for me despite any changes in my environment or those around me. That's why I chose to write music for this competition, to share my story with those who have been through or are going through similar tribulations as I. Not everyone may listen to rap or have respect for it, but I hope even those who don't can find their own connection through my words. Everyone has a unique story, I choose to share mine through lyrics.

I think what makes my music so important is my background. I was born in Joplin, Mo but moved to Kansas City around 3 or 4 due to my adoption. My bio Mom did her best but was unable to raise me due to an abusive father & different substances. For the majority of my life I dealt with abandonment issues, PTSD, anxiety/depression, etc. I simply did not know how to love myself; instead I looked outward to find that gratification. I turned to drugs, alcohol, and others to make me feel better. While I felt great in the moment, using & basically hiding from myself only led to bitterness and my downfall. I was in and out of Crittenton, a residential facility for those who need mental/emotional help, along with a few group homes. I was 15 when I was admitted to Crittenton for the second time, that's when I found music. My therapist at the time told me I should try to focus on a different way to get out my feelings. I was sitting on my bed one day staring out beyond the bars on the windows and it came to me. It started with poetry/spoken word, and with help from different friends and producers I came into contact with I eventually began rapping and making songs. Since then, anytime I'm down and out or feeling some type of way I turn to music. It's not just rap to me, it's my way of life.

I got the inspiration for this song from my past. When I was 17 my adoptive parents kicked me out and I was forced to struggle for food, clothes, shelter, and other basic needs for a kid who's not even old enough to buy a pack of cigarettes. Thanks to this program I was allowed to stay in their emergency shelter for 30 days which helped me figure out where to go next. On my last week my biological mom, who I had never spoke to, messages me on Facebook offering me to move in with her in St. Joe temporarily until I get on my feet. At first I was very hesitant to accept, however I had no other options at the time. Moving in with my bio Mom ended up being the key to my success. We were broke, several nights I had to do things that stretched my moral to the brink just to eat. You will hear many references to these tough times in the song. I tried to make the first verse more about my personal experiences and the second speaking to those who have been through similar struggles. Now I live in a TLP program and have access to a music studio to make my music.

I want people to find hope in a rap culture that can be primarily degrading & unrelatable. Everyone's different, but everyone has dark days. We all struggle, but no one has to be alone. For years I was unsure of my future, contemplated suicide, and felt no hope. Thanks to music and a good support system I overcame things unimaginable. Remember, the toughest hardships are given to those who are strong enough to overcome them.

David Valentine aka Young Dave