

YouthBuild Buzz



Meek Mill

By Rymeeck Peacock

Meek Mill was arrested for a gun back in 2008 at a corner store and was given 5 years of probation in 2009. Then in 2014 tweets criticizing the prosecutor and probation officer handling his case landed Meek back in front of Judge Brinkley. He was locked up for 5 months due to leaving the city without permission and missing his probation officer's phone call. Then, in 2017 he was charged with violating his parole again for three things which were driving recklessly in NY and broadcasting it on Instagram, also tested positive for Percocet, plus a scuffle with a fan in St. Louis Airport, so Judge Brinkley gave him 2-4 years in prison.

But then you have parts of his cases that are not fair. Back in 2009 the cops beat him up. I know he didn't raise his hand to them. They just did that from the fact of who he is – a big time rapper and he's a black male that's wealthy, and they just wanna knock him down because he's up.



The judge is trying to make an example out of Meek to show the world and mostly the youth that if you wanna do what Meek is doing you'll face charges like he did. But Meek is human at the end of the day. Everybody is not perfect but the judge gave him shot after shot and he blew it.

Although parts of his case were unfair the judge is making a good call with his 2-4 year bid because she gave him multiple chance and he blew them all so now he has to face the consequences and be a man about his mistakes.

UPDATE: MEEK IS FREED!!!!



#NoPlaceForHate
Dasean Griffin

With public displays of hate on the rise, it is more important than ever that we take action in making a commitment to providing a safe haven that distinctly describes the expectations in behavior for all members of the community.

Whether you are a student, teacher, or the YouthBuild community, we all have a role to play in combating bias and torment as a means to stop the climb of hatred in our communities.



Artwork by Nae Campbell

Bigger than Basketball

By: Ameen Akbar

On March 23rd we played a basketball game against Crispus Attucks YouthBuild Charter School, but what we experienced was bigger than basketball. This story begins with a legendary coach named John Chaney, inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 2001. What our students didn't explicitly know is they were being coached by John Chaney that day, and furthermore Coach Chaney's voice rings throughout YouthBuild. My father played basketball for Coach Chaney at Simon Gratz High School in 1969 and 1970. Coach Chaney had a profound impact on my father's life and his approach to youth development. While my father didn't know it at the time, the thousands of conversations with Coach Chaney about discipline, manhood, and community would shape the kind of mentor and father he would become. Had it only been about bouncing and shooting a basketball, I'm not sure my father would have taught me the life lessons taught to him by Coach Chaney. I certainly would not have embraced my life's work in youth development had it not been for my father. Being around Coach Chaney as a child at basketball camp or as an adult in the supermarket and watching the genuine interaction between him and my father was always special to watch. At the time, I was unaware those caring interactions were shaping every future handshake, hug and smile that I would share with a young person. Hence, when you get that hug accompanied by some corny joke from me, just know it's coming directly from Coach Chaney. When you hear me on the first day of Mental Toughness Training emphasizing the importance of starting strong - know those words are coming directly from Coach Chaney - as he would always yell "How you start is how you finish!"

It is always bigger than basketball.

Losing the first 20 games of my high school career taught me a lot. In the early 1990s, we literally lost every game my freshman year and every game up until sophomore year. We went 1-20 over a 2 year period. Imagine - as a teenager trying to find your confidence as a player, knowing you and your teammates don't possess the ability or talent to compete as a new varsity program in Philadelphia's tough Public League... it was mentally and physically crushing. Obviously, we were not yet competent at the game of basketball. My Classmates, basketball peers across the city, and people in my neighborhood all played their part in reminding me about how terrible our team was. I didn't say much in return, however I internally was building something with each comment, physical knock down, and loss. Broken finger, broken nose, sprained ankles, broken self-esteem, and dejected teammates never really affected the next practice, game, or day. Something was fueling me as the point guard and leader to get up from defeat and do something to change it. I wasn't sure what that "something" was, but I did know people were depending on me to lead. There was something about the daily act of continuously picking up after each loss, each insult and each mental defeat that taught me about life. There was something about going through that grind with my other teammates, who are now brothers of mine. I would later discover that "something" was our core value, *Resilience*. Yes we eventually won, yes we eventually made the playoffs, yes I was eventually selected as an Honorable Mention All Public player, and yes my high school's basketball program is now solid.



However building up resilience helped me during the times I wanted to quit, helped me at times when life was a struggle, helped me when I've lost friends and students to violence, and most importantly helps me every time I practice self-talk. So, when I hop in my bag at a Village Meeting about the choice you must make to be a victor and not a victim, or hop in my bag about the importance of having a good team of people around you, I hope you know where its coming from. Remember this context. Remember the team of people and experiences behind those words.

It is always bigger than basketball.

Basketball was never about winning or losing. I barely remember any of the victories, although some of the losses still sting a bit. It was tough driving out 2 hours to York, PA, only to end up losing. Yet, for me basketball is never quite about the joy you get seeing the basketball swish through the hoop. After 35 years of being around the game, the "It" in "It is always bigger than basketball" is about the relationships, the bonds, the brotherhood/sisterhood, the lineage of generational mentorship and the power of people. It was always about players like Ms. Zuri, Malik, Tahmere, Jaun, Dajuan, Zahir, Tone, Rasheed, Deangelo, Ed, David T., David F., Carlos, Zymir, Marquise, Tashere, Mr. Andrew, and Mr. Dasean reaping the benefits of seeds that John Chaney planted in my father in 1969. Thank you basketball for teaching us about life. Thank you basketball for making us closer. Thank you basketball for giving 15 young brothers a new experience. Thank you basketball for strengthening the YouthBuild movement last month.



Fruitful By Taylor Hartung

*On the more fair end of sun kissed
Carried by the Ponce wind
I am finally here
Sinking my toes into the sand of my roots
The comfort in the sway of the ocean
You are here, too*

I first stepped foot on the island of Puerto Rico in May of 2017. I was with family, drinking fruit out of fresh pineapples, relaxing by hotel swimming pools and gazing through San Juan like the tourists that we were. It was a vacation.

But this - this was fruitful homecoming.

On the second day in Utuado, I found a souvenir that can't be duplicated, a gift that isn't tangible to the touch, but I can feel it. I took home a token of identity that I didn't even know I was in pursuit of.

Charles gave me this...

He painted with even strokes of words, the visual of a woman of pale skin and red hair paired with a man of rich, pure melanin.

Looking into his painting, it mirrored my own. I can see my mother - She is me, with a little caramel twist in her skin. And my father, as pure as sugar. A cup of this, tablespoon of that, a pinch of this – they made me who I am.

A child of my British Isles-East European-Iberian-West African ancestors. I connect with every strand of my roots, from this curly head to the palette of shades of skin that represent my people, and my people's people.

My exchange with Charles that day, gave me the space to breathe in the fresh taste of my culture - one of my many - that shed this idea that my Hispanic wasn't Hispanic enough.

I am more than enough.

My skin, my curls, curves, blood, sweat and tears – is enough.



Today, I released the idea that my Hispanic wasn't Hispanic enough.

*Though my skin sits on the fair end of sun kissed,
that's okay
Carried by the Ponce wind,
My roots are nourished by the sand under my toes
The comfort in the sway of the ocean,
We are from here
This is home.*

A reflection...

By Paris Salazar

During Spring Break, YouthBuild staff and students took a trip to Puerto Rico for a service trip. The island was hit by a traumatic hurricane that left the island under severe damage. My YouthBuild family and I went to help people that were affected by the hurricane. Our first day of service, to me, was the most effective service we did the whole trip. We went to a church to help the Pastor and people of the church. We helped remove rubble from the area, painted, threw out damaged equipment, doors, toilets, cabinets, etc. The service day had the most impact on not just me, but everyone that helped. We just didn't see it plastered on TV – we saw the damage first hand. I loved doing this service because I helped make a difference... to see the smile on their faces! It showed us that no matter how big or small the work we did, they genuinely appreciated what we did.

Spotlight – Dorothy Stoneman

By: Joy Purnell

Dorothy Stoneman: Hi Joy!

Joy Purnell: Hi! How you doin'

Ms. Dorothy?

DS: Good! I hear your a member of YLC now!

JB: Absolutely! It was a great experience!

DS: That's a very big deal.

JB: *giggle* thank you!

DS: What made you run?

JB: Nothing really in particular. It was just a one-shot, I should go for it. Mr. Ameen had told me he got that email about it. So, I was thinking about it and said - 'you know...I'ma try it!' But honestly, I wasn't gonna do it cause my essay wasn't going to be done in time. But, everyone kept telling me 'just finish it! We can still send it in. The worst they can say is 'no.' So I finished it and sent it in... and they accepted it.

DS: So then, you became a candidate and you made a speech

JB: Yup! I became a candidate, went down to DC, wrote my speech, said my speech in front of all my peers, and got my seat!

DS: That's awesome! That's awesome. Let me just give you one piece of advice...

JB: Absolutely -

DS: Don't drop out. You have a three year term, right? Stick with it for three years because most people don't. There's a lot you gain over three years, a lot of what they call 'social capital.' You know what that term means?

JB: No.

DS: Capital typically means money, wealth, or stuff you have. When you say social capital, it's [about] relationships you get through being involved with other people who are connected, who have influence, who have knowledge. And it turns out those connections you have with other people have huge value in your life. More valuable sometimes than money.

JB: Social capital sounds just like networking

DS: Well, Joy, I know you're supposed to be interviewing me and not the other way around. So I'll stop!

JB: laughs. Well, for my first question - would you describe a typical work day?

DS: In 1978, when I started the first YouthBuild program. That was forty years ago, I was 36 years old. I was meeting with young people around East Harlem and I had put together a staff group of seven people. Each one of them was organizing at least one community recruitment project around the neighborhood, on their own block. My days would be moving from block to block seeing what each group had done, meeting with the staff, meeting with the group. We had a policy council back then, so I'd meet with them to decide what we were going to do next. We'd be organizing an East Harlem gathering of a couple hundred young people for the East Harlem Youth conference. I had a little office in a little tenant building on Park Avenue and 112th st. I would sit in my office with two staff members that I would run around the neighborhood with, with all the young people. That was forty years ago. Then, ten years later when we began to spread YouthBuild around the country and I had to move home to take care of my mother who had Alzheimer's disease. I moved back to Belmont, Massachusetts - into the house I grew up in - with my husband and daughter to take care of my mother. So, I commuted from Boston to New York for three years. I stopped doing that in 1988 and started the national replication of YouthBuild. And, I did it out of my mother's living room. I hired staff, and for four years we grew from three staff to seventeen staff. We put staff in the basement, staff in the living room, in the dining room, in the den, in the bedroom - we spread them all over the house. We got money from foundations to start YouthBuild in twenty other cities - to do the Youth Action Program around the country. So, the person who started YouthBuild Philly came to visit me in my home and said, "I want to start YouthBuild in Philadelphia."

She had a plan and she put it together, raised the money and started YouthBuild Philly. Her name was Taylor Frome, she ran YouthBuild Philly for the first ten years, maybe longer. She did a great job putting in together. So that period of time from 1988-1992, my day was in my living room. I [also] had no idea you could sit in your living room, be on the telephone, and work with a staff person to write legislation! We created the 'YouthBuild Act,' introduced in 1990, and it passed in 1992 [with the help of] a few champions on Capitol Hill - including John Kerry!

JB: March For Our Lives has taken the nation by a storm. It's been a hot topic because some say only certain groups of students get visibility on certain issues, while the rest get ignored. Do you have any thoughts on this?

DS: I have a lot of thoughts on that! It's true that group of students, because they have a degree of privilege and confidence, storm forward, as if they had a right to be heard. But, really, they were the first group of students whose *high school* got shot up. That isn't what happens in low-income communities. Black high schools are not being shot up by lone shooters who come in and shoot seventeen people. The violence against young black men from police - that's a different issue. And, the violence that happens on the street among young men who have been kicked to the curb, and out in the streets - that's still a different kind of problem. We've never seen quite the same kind of organizing. But, the good thing about this Parkland group of students is - first of all, and this doesn't get much publicity, but the first thing they did was go talk to people in the south side of Chicago, and in Baltimore, and then Anacostia in D.C., and they met with young people in low-income communities and they learned about both the police violence and street violence they face, and they built in into their presentation. Not for themselves, though.

The speakers the Parkland students arranges alternated - Latino, white, and black. They had black students from Chicago and Baltimore, speaking about street violence, about what they think, and the loss of their friends, and how all of this is related. I felt they did a good job of pulling the other issues in, even though the press didn't publicize it. So, I think it's a mistake for low-income young people to be pissed off because these white students are getting all the attention. I think they need to say, wow! This is our moment. Because [students from Parkland] have seized the moment, let's join with them and say the violence in our communities is caused by the lack of resources for our community and the lack of schools, jobs, and opportunities. It's not caused by lone mental health challenged individual students. It's caused by poverty, oppression, and racism. That needs to be addressed just as much as gun violence. It's not just about gun control. It's about ending poverty.

JB: That was deep. I loved that! I was writing it down...!

JB: What parts of your job do you find most challenging?

DS: It's the long struggle against injustice. Sometimes, it makes you tired. I've been working on this for fifty years, and it's an uphill struggle - why the heck can't we change all this stuff... and I'm tired. So, on that level it's frustrating. [You feel like saying] we know how to solve these issues, give us the money, and we'll solve them. I suppose that's the deepest, biggest challenge.

JB: My next question, *smiles* you might like this one! What is your "Why?"

DS: You mean, why do I do this? JB: Yeah. Why do you do this? DS: A lot of different reasons. One, because I have a different vision of the world. I think everybody should have the same opportunities to fulfill their potential and their noblest aspirations. I want to be a force that takes us in that direction. Why do I feel that way? As a child I was very lucky, I had every opportunity and good fortune you could imagine. Secondly, when I was young, I first came in contact with poverty.

I went to Europe and saw poor people on the street, homeless, and I said this shouldn't be. I hadn't seen it in the United States because it was segregated enough by class and race that I never saw anything that was about people suffering. I never saw anyone begging for food, never saw a homeless person. I lived in a segregated white middle-class community in the 1940s-50s. White kids were not informed about poverty, injustice, and racism. So, when I saw it in France, I said whoa! This is what I'm going to work on for the rest of my life. Then, when the Civil Rights' Movement happened in the sixties, I was in college. I said - this is where I can help and make a difference, I'm going to join. When I finished college, I went to Harlem, New York to the Harlem Action Group, and I loved being on the frontlines. I said, this is where I belong! And, I stayed in Harlem for the next twenty-four years. Then, I fell in love with so many young people - I was a teacher, I organized the Youth Action Program and I met so many people over the years that really wanted to make a difference. That part of the struggle, I enjoyed. The part that liberates the energy of young people to be in struggle. The part I don't like is the resistance to it, that takes people so long to overcome it.

JB: That was deep too!

DS: *laughs* I'm glad you like it! I like sharing with you.

JB: How have you seen the YB movement change over time?

DS: Uh, well of course it's gotten bigger! It went international. It was quite a moment when we [did that]. For over twenty years I said hey, we don't have any time for that. We have enough suffering in the United States - that's my focus. So, when people came to me and said we should bring YouthBuild to England or Germany, I'd say just take our books and ideas, but I don't have any time for that. Then, there was a special moment right after 9/11, one week later in East Harlem there was a delegation from South Africa that had come to the United States to find something that would work for the young people in South Africa. I met with them back in the East Harlem office, where I've always

stayed connected. Someday you should come visit it! I'll meet you there [editor's note: Joy and Ms. Hiba would love to take you up on that offer btw]! The guy said to me, we've searched for the right program and we think that's YouthBuild. Will you please come to South Africa and teach us how to do it. And I said yes! At that time I thought, we shouldn't be hoarding what we have. We should be sharing it with people, and I will help do it. So [in that moment] that was a big change in my mindset. Now, YouthBuild is found in twenty one countries.

JB: Twenty-one countries!

DS: Yeah! South Africa, Mexico, Central America, and other countries.... You can find them on our website.

JB: What is your favorite memory of YB in Harlem?

DS: Wow.....huh. There was a young man named Victor [unintelligible]. He was one of the sixteen-year-olds that helped create the first YouthBuild program, which we called Youth Action program. We organized a youth congress and put together a couple hundred young people... and Victor stood up and took the mic and said "There's a lot of love in the Youth Action program, and someday we're gonna spread it around the world! I mean, we're gonna take it to the Bronx! And to Brooklyn! And to Queens! And to New Jersey!" *laughs*

JB: *laughs*

Ms. Hiba: [under her breath] Jersey... *laughs*

DS: I listened to Victor and I thought ... you know! Those are my marching orders. Victor said I had to spread it around the world. This is 1981 or '84. We didn't start spreading around the world until 1988, but I had Victor's words in my ears for the rest of my life. Victor passed away about five years ago, but some of the other young people who were there are still on the board of the YouthBuild program in East Harlem.

JB: People say you are always in motion. Do you ever slow down? How have you cared for yourself over the years doing this kind of work?

DS: That's a very good question. I don't ever slow down... but I do care for myself in a few ways.

Number one, I have a great husband. I took a long time choosing the person I was going to marry. I didn't get married until I was thirty-two! And... I had at least forty boyfriends *laughs* between age 12 and 32, so for twenty years, I searched for the right man, and I found him! We've been happily together for fifty years. So that's one good thing - have a great relationship with a partner, and of course my husband, John, worked with me for the Youth Action program and then with YouthBuild so we were partners both at home and work. Number two, I make a point of crying at least an hour a week. *laughs* In 1972, one of my college classmates introduced me to something called co-counseling, where people get together and they listen to each other. And they take turns listening. No advice, no interrupting - just wow, tell me more, how do you feel? And, we cry our heads off because we tell each other all our pain, and we dump it out. And after forty-five minutes you feel a lot better because you had a chance to tell every bad thing that happened that week, and what it reminded us in our childhood. We'd cry, laugh, rage. And then say thank you very much and go on about our business. That has really helped. Number three, a group of us - about four families - together bought a place on a lake in the Berkshires about forty years ago. And, every summer we spent the whole month of August on this lake. We brought our children and our families, and didn't work for that month. Just paid attention to our families, played tennis and rode in boats. Took care of our children. That was a good balancing act, to get away from work for one month and be with family. I also make sure to stay in touch with my friends. That's the fourth thing. How's that?

JB: Great! People tell me I have to listen better.

DS: Well, you've been listening great on this call!

JB: Absolutely.

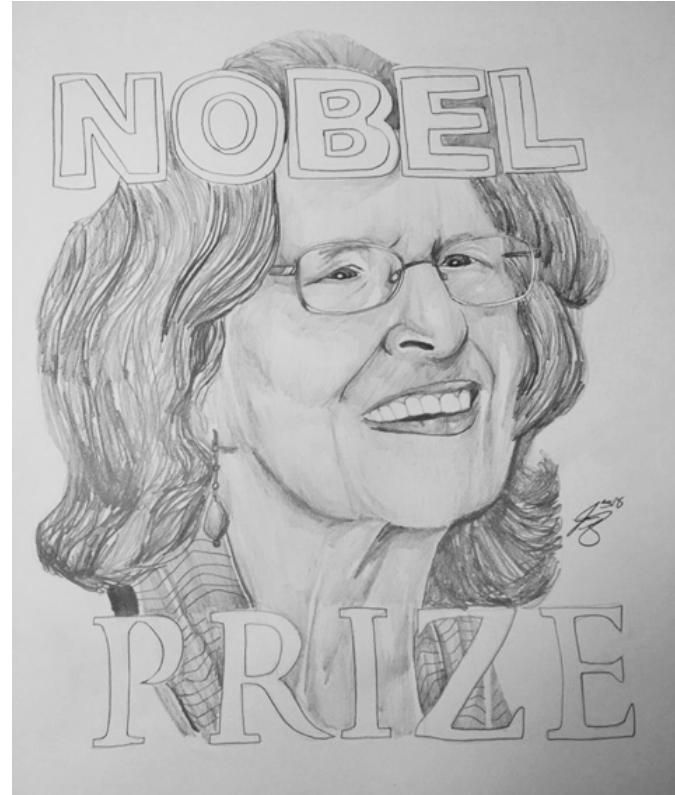
DS: And you also need people to listen to you...

JB: Last question. If you could give any advice to someone young, what would it be?

DS: Trust your judgment, spread the love, work hard, make friends, cry a lot *laughs*, and change the world!

JB: I really appreciate you again for taking the time out your day to talk to me. I would love to do this again, just to talk!

DS: Let's consider ourselves friends. I'm available to you anytime. I'm very happy to have met you! Thank you for wanting to talk to me, waiting to hear all I have to say. We'll talk again.

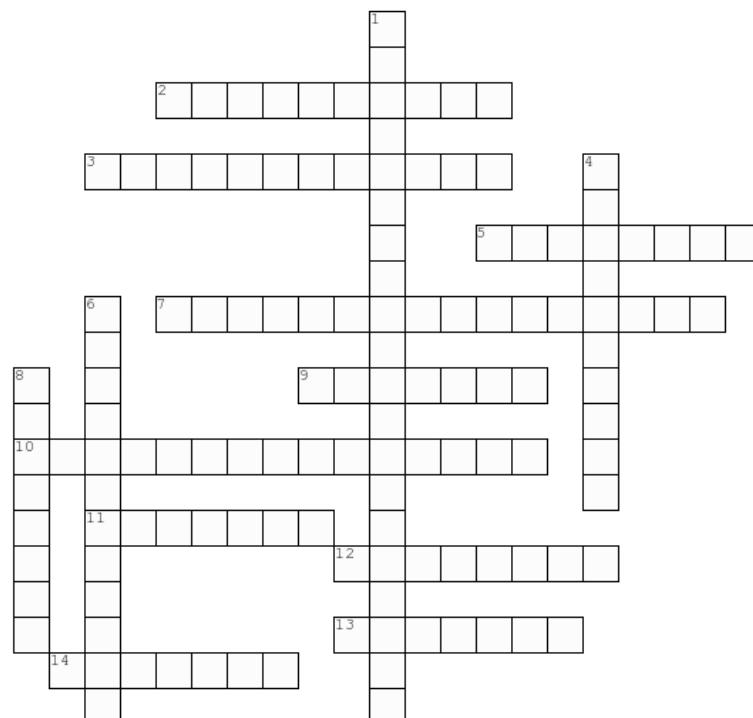


Artwork by Justin Lockley



Name: _____

Complete the crossword below



Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Puzzle Generator

Across

2. Students and Staff went to do hurricane relief service with our people in
3. Gap, Banana Republic, and Old Navy are apart of this bridge program
5. On April 22nd, we recognize we should take care of the wold we live in for
7. All students must do a end of the year presentation called
9. This form of protest involves not spending money at an institution
10. This 2 year technical school is a bridge option for students
11. The name of our newest Community Projects Coordinator is Ms.
12. This Philadelphia Rapper was released from prison on 4/24/2018
13. On May 15th, many of our Muslim YB family members will begin fasting for
14. It is our duty to fight for our

Down

1. A community around 22nd Jefferson worked to revive this park
4. Students meet with mentors to set goals and look over their past session in a
6. This Lawyer came and did a 'Know Your Rights' Workshop at YB
8. Our first school dance was called the

Creative WRITING

A Letter to Philadelphia
By: Tyonna Smith

Dear Philly,
I love you. I love everything you have from YouthBuild on Broad Street to Dilworth Park in Center City, to the Philadelphia Zoo and Girard Avenue. All the way back to KFC on Broad Street, where I ate almost every day at my times in YouthBuild, going to Dilworth to "chill and linger with friends after school. Just to repeat everything "tomorrow." The 215 numbers to call when I'm running late, to catching SEPTA while running late. To hoe people always saying "There's no love in Philly." There is LOVE in philadelphia. All around that I've found!

By Jaqirah Wright-Whitney

Rd momma I love u I'm leaving , " I love u Too be safe don't let no one kidnap you " those words repeatedly playing in my mind as I step forward into the world pretending . I've been losing it all but now I see how myself reflect on to others and how my actions say I'm stronger I'm better as the words slip from my mouth with my demons pulling me down how can I say I'm wiser ? If my actions make me seem weak how can I say I love u to those around me not knowing all along when my momma say " don't let no one kidnap u " what she's truly meaning is me allowing my thoughts to kidnap me back into that careless mindset. I've been searching for someone to listen to me so when I repeat my story Nd say " I MADE IT" they feel that shit with my current mindset and my momma words helping me make it and not turning those demons actions into consequences, I look back at what the streets had to offer and what youthbuild actually provided I kno I can say I made it IM STRONGER. Walking through them doors help me make it without my thoughts kidnapping me everyone morning . Never would have made it without feeling the strength of those around me . Real people talk real shit and once real shit is spoken you WILL FEEL IT!

Good Times
Marisol Latorre

Sometimes I wish I can get you off my mind
Random times you come to my mind
Wish I can go back in time
To the days we stood up late at night
Talking and being there for each other
Out until late at night just to see you
That smile on my face
Wish it could have stayed
Not as happy as I was when I was by your side
Wish I could just see you one more time

The Chips Are Placed
By Hadiyah Brown

A reality of legal animalistic abuse
When the darkest humans were sold according to there amount of objective use.
They called us N****s
Treat us like alien figures

And today they push us to the edge and then dare us to look like we can think up a[trigger].
Cuz you know there's consequences,
Might shoot you in daylight, leave your body to rot and disfigure

We used to have to run, find a place that's free,
But the the revolutions begun now we're investing properties, were learning how to build, our youth are learning community uplifting trades and professional skills.

We're Learning how to live
In a world, correction *country*
that confines us, makes the problem, sells a disingenuous solution for blood, sweat and too many dollars and ultimately forces us to resign from trying.

It's the biggest American lie
We don't get a slice that American pie.

We get placed into...
f*** your say, f*** your health, f*** the kids, ain't no wealth,
f*** your education, f*** your neighborhoods, f*** you culture, f*** your futures, f*** your Lives...

So some divide
Sell drugs to get by
Use drugs to get high
In hopes that maybe they can escape far enough for the mistreatment to subside

We got these chains to claim
Its a real bad blame game
It's a damn shame
the way we cycle the same things
because oppression of one group of people unfortunately means the powerful has so much shit to gain.

All your life they just rinse your brain
And raid you homes
Say f*** all of your goals, as a whole
Instill deeply rooted cultural molds for full control
Threaten you and your families lives but you better have a license for that pistol!
Or its boom, slave hole you go.
And off each head, some wealthy white man makes a motherf***ing bank roll
So it's F*** that parole!
Keep the hearing on hold

But they about to free my pop cuz when they sentenced him to life he was only 15 years old.

I know I know
Sounds so cold
It is
The Governments always been this bold.

Just to feel the white man's riches.

Confusion

By Jaqirah Wright-Whitney

Marcus ?..... Marcus ? “ what Ashley “ I looked at him with so much hate how could he do this to me I gave him everything? “ so we back on this nut shyt? I asked him.

Marcus just stood there watching me as if I was the clown as if I did him wrong! “ Ashely you not my girl and if anything I come back to u almost every night why is you even going through my phone” I couldn’t believe it he’s questioning me when he’s the one who was texting these slida’s while laying with me every night. So a title is what means everything to you rite? “ I mean we never discussed you being my girl that’s all I mean if you wanna talk to other niggas do you I don’t care” I watched him as he laughed as he looked down on me like he was better! I couldn’t believe it. I mean standing approximately 5’5 brown skin , long curly hair , thick waist , I had one dimple on the side of my face , a little chubby but I was the shit with my mom being Indian and my dad being Haitian people was mad stuck on the kid. Here I am crying over this wack ass n***a who begs his moms for money.....

♪ ♪ Backbeat ♪ ♪

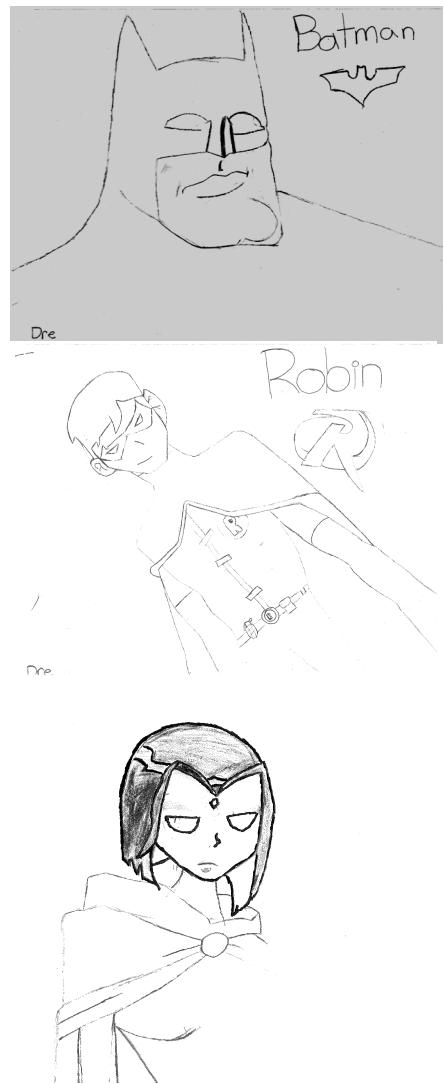
By Zuri Stone



As I prepare to co-facilitate a national conference workshop on the power of music and its influence on society, I felt it only right to share some of that energy. It is undeniable that soul and life experience has created the "backbeat" to music all over the world. By definition, the backbeat is the steady accent you hear in most popular music on the 2nd & 4th beats in a song. By way of creativity, the backbeat determines the groove of the song and the feel it gives the listener. It influences how fast or slow the song seems to progress. For that reason, it is all the more important to pay attention to the emotions in the music that moves our culture. These popular songs, as society's backbeat, push and pull us in & out of the latest wave. Some choose to surf the waves, others choose to swim against the current...you decide!

1. Of course we have to start this list with hip hop's current people's choice: **Cardi B**. Just dropping her 1st full project, she sent out a wave of authenticity that has allowed every woman fan to find a piece of herself hiding in the lyrics. I have got to give my top choice to the song with my favorite feature and an anthem I can get behind, Best Life featuring **Chance the Rapper**.

Artwork by Dre



2. Say what you want, but Nice for What by **Drake** is going to be the anthem of the summer. I feel like these releases are what is bringing the sun out this weekend here in the mid-Atlantic. The feeling I get when I hear it is already contagious, plus it was topped off with a video that celebrate women making moves in the industry right now.

3. Will Smith recently found new life in technology and social media streams. He has been an inspirational addition to my timeline, but I have to say, his son has been an inspiration to my playlists. I knew his daughter Willow made radio with a pop hit some years ago and then I found out **Jaden Smith** could rap. Check out his latest album project, SYRE. He is definitely in a lane of his own, that isn't as mainstream as others, but good music has something for everyone!

4. **Migos**, what do we say about the 3 amigos? We say that their video for Walk It, Talk It is an ever so familiar feel of the *Soul Train* shows originating in the 80's. It is complete with the infamous 'soul train line' and word wall puzzle. I have heard some folks complain that is it disrespectful to the history and others celebrate the homage...I won't make that decision for you; go see it for yourself.

5. I don't want to admit to getting old, not because I don't want to age, but because it shows itself in ways that I never imagined. I have always loved to dance and the latest moves were natural to me. You go out, you see someone do it, you try it, and BAM you break it out the next place you go where you know no one else knows it. Then it hit me, I was home practicing the 'shoot' dance, hoping to get the arm/leg coordination so I don't make a fool out of myself. Shoutout to **Blocboy JB** and check out his videos for Shoot and Look Alive to catch up.