

My name is Angel Gardner. I am 19 years old. I have been writing a little over nine years now. I recently won the title of 2016-17 Seattle youth poet laureate. I was and still am very excited about that. I am expecting my son in about three months. And I am equally nervous and excited about his arrival. I believe that writing will always be a big part of my life. And I hope I can make a big difference in other peoples by continuing.

Mama Wants Success

I am balancing on a line in-between what I need to be and whats expected of me.

Calloused feet no match for the wire gripping the thickest pads on my soles.

And pushing.

The pressure of responsibility

Sending my nerves to a point they never warned me about, In sessions of adult preparations, appropriate reactions and DBT.

Now bound tight to a life.

That I am learning how to nurture to a being, From what was once a seed.

Know,

That Mama doesn't want you to see a survivor.

I need you to see us as nothing less than a success story.

They tell me I survived as if my chapter is somehow finished.

As if I approached each battle shameless and naked, To be told that I was to retreat.

Rather than rebirth from ash and fire like the phoenix I've made myself out to be.

So now I find myself balancing on bare feet, Wire close to the tendons taut underneath.

Breathing harsh from blunt realization,

With one hand spread across my middle protectively.

Only I can know what to expect from me.

And Mama

Expects nothing less

Than a success,

Story.

We Are.

> We are poets. Our voices vibrant and loud. Truth projecting out of our experienced mouths. Bitch slapping virgin cheeks with meaning. Gutting out clogged pupils. Forcing in this growing movement. Poetry. Its not a word to be taken lightly whether Im speaking with words that will comfort or I scream out all the things I've seen. We've seen. Screaming that this twisted trick. This silent movement. Hushed voices in the bloody blurry backgrounds of solitary confinement. This age of ultra-violence. Bloody outlines on our gums marking true defiance. The most vulgar moments will be the ones to define us. Stepping out of the comfort zones placed as a so called option around us. They say to break the barriers now only for you to find out that one slow step and anxious finger is all it takes for you to be shut down. Some may riot and that some may sometimes be me. But right now I'm coming straight out with poetry. A child from a broken home, or designated pavement. I dont need weapons to get this point across. I could resort to arson but I know what is really feared. Its the chance that a simply educated, proper tongued, stiff backed, calm, collected, controlled, black, native, latino, asian, white, what ever color in the damn rainbow individual can tell you whats really wrong, and change this dirty nations song. We are poets. Our voices will break through your sternum like bullets have broken through thick flesh and durable craniums, our syllables will wrap around your lungs, invade the dusty corners that are unoccupied in your brain. Nothing but letters but the power we pack behind each description of disdain, neglect and hate. Is enough to drain you completely. Until your dry and brittle picked up by your cowardly ankles snapped like whip over my left shoulder you break. We are poets. And we have something to say.