From a Dream to a Plan
By: Mr. Ant

I dream a lot. Sometimes, when I close my eyes, I have visions of a better world. It's pretty dope. Like, I can see lively, but peaceful playgrounds, and colorful classrooms, popping blocks, supportive families, mosques, synagogues, churches full of love.

The courtrooms and prisons are empty. We remodeled them, turned them into hospitals and colleges. That's a solid switch up. The police became community leaders, block captains, educators. There we go. We treat drug addiction with rehabilitation, not incarceration.

I think this is similar to what Martin Luther King dreamed of. But Martin opened his eyes, and so did I. Martin woke up from his dream. He saw a deadly war with Vietnam, he saw streets filled with violence and desperation. He saw massive unemployment. He was tired of his people being poor, depressed and unheard.

I opened my eyes. I see the U.S thirsty for war with North Korea, Russia and China. I don't want no more war. Gentrification reminds me of colonization. I just want my people to have their own spaces. From Philly to L.A. I see massive deportations of Black and brown immigrant families. I want nothing but peace for my people in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Haiti and all of the Caribbean and South America.

In 1965, James Fowler, a state Trooper from Alabama murdered an unarmed Jimmie Jackson. This sparked the march from Selma to Montgomery. It made Martin Speak out.

In 2017, Officer Ryan Pownall shot David Jones in his back in North Philly. This murder is one of the many pieces that sparks what I write today. It's something that made me wake up from my dream.

When Martin woke up from his dream Though, he didn't leave it behind, he simply used it to create a plan. He then turned his plan into action. Martin did not just say "war is bad" he became part of an international anti-war movement. Martin did not just wish his people had a voice, he demanded political representation and voting power.

He did not simply hope to end poverty, he began to develop a new economic plan based on community sustainability. It is unfortunate that Martin's dream and his plan was cut short.

But he left a blueprint for the rest of us. Now I know what I have to do.

First I dream, then I plan, then I take action.
Meek Mill Update
Andreis Foxwell

“See you know what’s crazy
I went to court the other day the DA say she hate me
How you gonna hate me when me and Lu just took twenty racks
And put coast on them kids back”
-Meek Mill
“Faded too long”

On November 6, 17 Robert Rahmeek Williams (Meek Mill) was arrested for probation violation. The Philadelphia native was sentenced to 2-4 years in prison. The rapper has violated probation before most recently for reckless driving in New York. The same judge gave the platinum recording artist house arrest for that arrest. There was no such luck for Mill his last court date. Since his arrest the rapper has received a lot of support since being detained. #freemeek has taken over the internet as of late. Even ex friend and enemy Drake has wished for Meek Mill’s freedom.

“Zakari”
By: Tamir Turner
Highlights
Staff Spotlight – Ms. Christina
By: Zion Bunn

Zion: Hey Ms. Christina
Christina: Hey Zion
Z: Umm, it’s a Thursday evening, and I’m here interviewing you... ~laughs~ and, I’m trying to make this as comfortable as possible!
C: No problem.

Z: So, my first question for you [is], are you OK?
C: Yes... I’m good!

Z: That’s good... [what are you] grateful for?
C: I’m grateful to be alive, I’m grateful... just to be able to think about things. Having the opportunity to observe things, reflect on things. And just [to have] the opportunity to work with people, help people, and of course I’m thankful for my family. I’m just thankful for being alive and to experience life. That’s what I can say!

Z: You seem like a person that thinks a lot.
C: I do.
Z: You think about, like -X, Y, and Z?
C: Laughs. I think about more than math!
Z: Of course!
C: I actually think a lot, which is the reason I think I’m really quiet sometimes. It’s because I’m thinking. I definitely need to practice speaking because I always think a lot about people, about how [they] interact with [other] people. I think about how we’re all human, how we all have our strengths and weaknesses and how that affects how we interact with [the rest].

Z: Like psychology, a little bit?
C: Yes, it’s sort of like psychology. Just sort of understanding how complicated we are. It just impacts how we move about in this world. Sometimes, not really taking the time to understand that it’s what causes a lot of tension and conflict between people.
Z: What type of tension?
C: I think any type of tension. Maybe just, somebody speaking to somebody a certain way and somebody not liking it. Or, um, fighting... just not taking the time to understand where people are coming from, and what people have experienced - that kind of makes them who they are or determines how they respond to certain things. So that’s really what I think about a lot.

Z: Wow. Okay, what is your favorite Jamaican dish?
C: My favorite Jamaican dish? Let me think about this... I love escovitch fish! Do you know what that is?
Z: No! ~laughs~
C: It’s literally a whole fish, which I think scares a lot of people because it has the head still on. It’s like the whole fish, it’s not cut into a filet. You season it with like a bunch of pepper, a spicy sauce and you fry it.

Z: You fry it?
C: Yes, and then you serve it with festival, which is a fried dough, but it’s sweet. It’s really good.
Z: Sounds good ~laughs~.

Z: How do you feel about the educational system in Philadelphia?
C: Honestly I don’t know if I can say this specifically about the education in Philly or more so the education system in general.
Z: Ok, elaborate
C: I feel like it is suffocating and broken. When I say suffocating, I mean there are a lot of things that get in the way, or impede it from being what it should be.
Z: Is that from a teacher’s point of view?
C: I don’t know if I would say it’s a teacher’s point of view, but, I just feel like because our priorities as a country are not, in my opinion, in the right place, then the things that we think are important in terms of educating our young people are not in the right place. We focus too much on content and not enough on character building. And just about what it means to... I don’t really know how to explain it, but more about what it means to be a “good” person in this world. At the end of the day it’s not so much about the information that you know, or about what you know how to calculate, or the vocabulary that you know, but it’s more about how you see people, and how you treat people.

Z: So the environment of schools?
C: I don’t know if it’s the environment in schools, but I’ll put it this way - one of my favorite quotes by Dr. King is, “the function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.” So I feel like education is not about memorizing, but it’s about really being able to think about the world that you live in, and think about yourself critically, about how things work, why things work they way that they do. The same thing with yourself - not only think about how you move about the world, but why you move about the world the way that you do.

Z: For a student, to hear that from you, it’s like you understand from both sides.
C: I think it’s hard - especially math! I think that’s what one of my struggles is. Yes, I think it’s important to teach you the content of math, to teach you about adding, multiplying, about equations, and thing like that because after you leave here, you might enter into spaces like college where you need to know those things. At the same time, I think it’s more important to build the skill of critical thinking, and becoming a better person, which is something that takes your whole life; it’s a lifelong process. Sometimes it’s a struggle for me, in terms of what I want students to leave with.

Z: What kind of student were you in school?
C: When I was younger, I was very curious, I asked a lot of questions. I just really, really loved learning! When I transitioned from elementary school to middle school, it got more serious, and that part of me [became] stifled, or kind of disappeared. It was very, very much about academic success and doing your best in school. Once that transition happened I was still a good student, but I just really, really struggled.

Z: You made the transition?
C: It wasn’t a good transition. I remember the first few report cards were not good when I went from elementary school to middle school. I [simply] had a hard time dealing with the pressure of doing well in school, and just being so concerned about how well I was doing in school when it wasn’t necessarily important to me, just feeling like it was something I had to do. I just kinda struggled with that as a student. When I went to college, again, I didn’t necessarily want to be in college but I knew that it was expected of me. I remember my junior year, I actually found out about a program where I could do a domestic exchange at Spellman. Bing able to go through that experience, and advocate for myself, and be somewhere else in a different culture and environment really helped me emphasize my desire to experience my not-have-my-learning-just-take-place-within-the-classroom.
I think the kind of student I was, was somebody that desired to learn through experience and not learning through talking about the same thing over and over again. Not just talking about something that’s happening but actually being involved in something that’s happening.

Z: If you could look back to talk to your old self, what would you say?
C: My old self as a student? Or just my “old self” in general? ~laughs~
Z: Building on what you [said about transitioning] to middle school. What would you say to your middle school self?
C: That’s a hard question. I think one thing I would probably say to myself is, take the time to really think about what’s important to me, so not to be so concerned about what other people think is important for me to do, but to really take to time to think about what’s really important to me and then to have to confidence and the courage to vocalize that and take action.

Z: How do you define success at YouthBuild from a teacher’s point of view?
C: From a teacher’s point-of-view?
Z: Yes.
C: From a teacher’s point-of-view, I would say success is just being able to think about things critically, no matter what it is; to be able to problem solve. Success for me doesn't have a lot to do with mastering the content, but more so building the critical thinking problem solving skills because then no matter what content you get, you just have the desire to push through it and problem solve to figure it out.
Z: Wow
C: I just want to add something, quickly. It’s not, “is Zion successful in math?” but, if I’m more focused on the problem solving and the critical thinking skill, then that is transferable to wherever you go. It’s transferable to your other classes, it’s transferable to your life outside of YouthBuild, and it’s just transferable to your journey as a person.

Z: How do you define success anywhere?
C: Sighs. These are hard questions! ~laughs~ [These are] broad questions! Okay, how do I define success anywhere? I think that’s hard to answer because success looks and means something different for each person. I guess success would be knowing and understanding what that means for you, and then going after it. Does that make sense?
Z: It makes sense.
C: I’m sorry, I can’t really give a concrete answer!

Z: Would you say you’re successful?
C: Yes, I would say I’m successful because I feel like every day, or throughout the day, I’m just really thinking about who I am, how I can be better, and just really trying to develop myself.

Z: What brought you to work at YouthBuild?
C: I think it was the mission statement, or the desire of YouthBuild to develop the whole person. Where I was teaching before, I felt very limited in my interaction with students. I felt it was just about math, all I was, was a math teacher. And that’s not what I wanted it to be about. I wanted it to be about interacting with the person that is my student and really getting to know them, learning with them, growing with them. In other spaces I didn’t feel I had the space or the time to do that. I had this idea in my mind that YouthBuild - because of its mission, goals - would be a space where I could really interact with my students and build relationship with my students and staff and really learn and grow together.
Z: Wow - that hit me a little bit because, you know, it’s not a lot of teachers that care.
C: Yeah, it’s unfortunate but…
Z: Well I appreciate it.

Z: Why do you hang around here so late? ~laughs~
C: That’s a funny question! I hang around here late, I’m gonna admit - and people probably already know this about me - I am slightly a perfectionist where I just want things to be done well. I think that comes from how I really value what I do, and value my students and really want them to get the best of me. I just work really hard at thinking about what I’m doing, how I’m gonna do it, what is most effective, and what is really important. I just spend a lot of time really refining things, creating things and building things so that when I present it to students, it’s like my best work.
Z: So you put as much effort in as you expect from the students.
C: Yes! Yes.
Z: All them papers… I don’t know how ya’ll teachers do it. Ya’ll got it.
C: I mean if you love what you do then, it’s a lot but it’s worth it.

Z: Hold on… so we made it to the last question.
C: yay!

Z: Describe how you can contribute to your environment.
C: Again with these broad questions! It’s funny because I’m actually applying to go back to school for marriage and family therapy, and on the questions was “what do you think you can contribute to the program.” I think it’s similar because the contributions are the same. I think the one thing, or the biggest thing I can contribute is, perspective.
Z: Why is that?
C: Well ok, I won’t say it’s the only thing, but for where I’m at right now, what I’m really thinking about is perspective. Just thinking about how I see things, or what I value. I feel like that’s my biggest contribution to the world - expressing and showing and sharing my thoughts, my values. It’s kind of like sharing a piece of myself with the world. I know that’s very vague. More specifically it’s like teaching, I’m sharing my values with my students. Or like community service - I feel like all of those things; those are actions. At the end of the day I feel like those things are a display or an expression of what we value. That’s why I say the biggest thing I can contribute to my community, to YouthBuild, to the city is my perspective and the things that I value.
Z: Well… thank you Ms. Christina.
C: You’re welcome, thank you Zion. for leading for so long!
Z: Yup, you seem like a passionate person. Keep being you.
C: You too Zion, you too.
Starting Journey
By: Candyce

I come from a very unusual home. see I never got congratulated on my success or really coming out strong. I was always treated unfairly or like I didn't belong and it wasn't because of my religion or the color of my skin it was because I was intelligent and had a heart within. we have the ones who's scared to show how smart they are because they came from the "streets" and they didn't want to be the odd ball out so they kept they side quiet and to themselves, then there's the ones who think being big and bad is gonna get them to success but in all reality you could be practicing your professional skills and rocking that latest suit or vest. but there's the ones who go unseen because they are focused on their goals and dreams they are not afraid to show their intelligence or their excitement about education because they already know what it’s like to fail and fall short and they never want to visit that horrible life's report. Youthbuild was some of our breakthrough to reach the top and keep going and oh reclaim our education too. never let anyone who already knocked you down have that control over you again or beat you black and blue because when you see class of 2018 at top don't ask yourself why you couldn't win. All the power and success starts within.

Untitled
By: Secret

Remember all the fun we had?
Remember when we were out all night and when we headed home we had to take a ch _____?
Now-a-days all we seem to do is fight, not so much physical but now it’s emotional, because I’m voicing how I feel. I just wanna be ya only interest, you say you love me but I don’t feel love because ya love surround material objects that I never asked for, but are grateful I received.
I entered this relationship for love, nothing more, but you don’t see that. You’re hurting me. And my b****y behavior is because you don’t notice me. I’m more like a visual picture on instagram or facebook you double tap with likes.
It’s like you trapped my mind when I gave you my heart ‘Cause you was the only one I had heart eyes for. Our arguments aren’t arguments, they’re disagreements, ‘cause you feel the things you do aren’t wrong, and always try to fix and forget them with a simple sorry, but I stopped accepting them - cause I want action not a word that gets tossed around all willy-nilly.
See, I started letting you side with all your lies So you started taking all your glides, because you knew I would never leave ‘cause your grip had a hold of me and I was scared of being lonely,
I just wanted you to have eye for only me But in reality you were mind-f***ing me and I let you control me
I was drifting - suddenly now our love is history. Do you miss me?