

Youth and Poetry: An interview with RI Youth Deputy Poet Laureate Eugenie Rose



Eugenie Belony, aka Eugenie Rose, is the 2019 Galway Kinnell Youth Poetry Slam Champion and the 2020 RI Youth Deputy Poet Laureate. She is a young teenager who is a true rising star in our community. I recently sat down with her to discuss her art.

Damont Combs (*Motif*): When did you fall in love with poetry?

Eugenie Rose: I fell in love with poetry when I was about 11 years old, listening and reading into the works of Maya Angelou and Audre Lorde along with Def Jam records as they would perform poetry that always interested me. Seeing how the performers used their emotions and pain to give the image in your head of what they were trying to portray. So from those points on, I began trying it out, seeing if I could portray my emotions with my words. And with time I've come to be where I am now.

DC: Can you create a short poem for us using the words orange, Rhode island and advanced?

ER: As my cocoa butter skin awakens from the glow of an orange sun. So bright and pure it made my life fall into a spectrum of gods and goddesses. Remembering the taste that Rhode island coffee milk left on my tongue. How advanced was my spirit if my soul could dance through a celestial drive by. Did I

really understand the matter of gravity, or was it the history of pain that weighed me down.

DC: What are some important topics you talk about in your poetry?

ER: Some of the important topics that I talk about in my poems are of social injustices, racial discrimination, youth empowerment, female empowerment, global warming, history not entailed and the future (technology, advanced systems, new ways of learning).

DC: So you're officially the youth deputy poet laureate of RI. Can you tell me more about that?

ER: Not only do I get to hold the title of Youth Deputy Poet Laureate of RI, but I also have an amazing opportunity to meet so many incredible youth poets and advocates from Rhode island who have the same mindset as me to get more youth into the poetry community. I also have my partner, who is the Youth Poetry Laureate of RI, and together we are starting to plan more events and places to gather with more youth from Rhode island who either haven't had the resources to put themselves out here in the poetry community or newcomers who would like to start their own poetry journeys.

DC: How is it working with Tina Cane so far?

ER: Working with Tina Cane has just been amazing. For her to have created such an amazing opportunity for the youth of Rhode island in the poetry community has impacted my life and the lives of many others with such helpful resources and guidance.

DC: Do you have any other talents and passion you like to share?

ER: Yes, I do have other talents besides poetry, like singing and producing my own beats along with dancing (all styles and gymnastics), also a very high capability with math skills and I'm multilingual.

DC: Where do you see yourself in 10 years ?

ER: I would hopefully like to graduate from my high school at Providence Career and Technical Academy as valedictorian, go on to attend either MIT or Princeton University to then become an astrophysicist and aerospace engineer. Then work for NASA, but throughout my years of schooling and working, I would like to help other young girls of color to aspire to be whatever they want to be and make sure that they have the right path and take the right steps to get there. Also I would like to have a nice house and enough money to give back to my mom and church for everything they have done for me. Along with giving back to my community and high school.

DC: Why is poetry important to the younger generation?

ER: Poetry is important to the younger generation because it's an outlet. Not just something like roses are red and violets are blue, but truly a way to express your feelings through past and present aggressions and oppression throughout society today. We see all of the protests, marches and rallies held all by the youth of today who have seen nothing but hatred and violence, especially among young kids of color.

DC: Is poetry integral to the culture here in Providence?

ER: I believe that poetry is integral to the culture of Providence because it gives youth a place to put the anger we have against the school systems, or how certain things in Providence communities aren't

up to par with what kids would like them to be. Poetry gives people a sense of being or balance within their lives. And with everything going on from the State House to the Senate, I think having this outlet to show our best qualities and our worst really shows the truth behind smoke and mirrors.

DC: If you could inspire/encourage someone to start writing today, what would you tell them?

ER: If I had the chance to inspire/ encourage someone to start writing today, I would say to them that life isn't perfect. We see what's on tv, on social media, in the newspapers, but you could be the change that happens. You could write out your feelings and express your pain into words that others could feel, words that somebody might need to hear. It doesn't matter if you don't share your work with the world, but to know that however you're feeling is being mirrored by someone else. Somebody somewhere, whether it's your friend or teacher or maybe a complete stranger, is feeling the same way you do about the same topics. Don't ever let somebody yuck your yum because they can't taste the same things that you do. We're all different, so let's enjoy and explore each other's differences and similarities. Whether we like it or not, poetry is a universal language, so start talking.