

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 13: Nargas Hyman and B Spirit

Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

I'm Marc Steiner. Earlier this week I went to one of the cities most drug ridden areas-Park Heights and Belvedere, to the home of Nargas Hyman.

We walked down into her basement. I was not prepared for what I saw. At least 25 kids, crammed into a space no more than 10 by 15 feet-doing homework, studying, being tutored. One computer. Sitting on little plastic chairs and old couches. Like a bunker in a war zone-a place of safety from the madness of the streets.

This is Nargas's evening homework and educational center for youth called B-Spirit.

And it's a place where they are expected to perform. While we were there, Nargas drilled the youth on science.

WHAT IS THE SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR SKULL?

WHAT IS THE SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR COLLAR BONE?

WHAT IS THE SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR SHOULDER?

WHAT IS THE SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR BREASTBONE?

WHAT IS THE SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR HIPBONE?

WHAT IS THE SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR THIGH?

Femur.

Very good, Let's go to the next one, the digestive system.

From 5 to 6 they do homework and study time, so if they don't have homework they supposed to study. After than we have empower hour where we talk about black history months or African American heroes, or we do sign language, or we focus on math and science, HIV Aids prevention, substance abuse prevention, teenage pregnancy prevention, peer mediation, conflict resolution, domestic violence, gang prevention. We do a little bit of everything. We try to incorporate everything I taught the youth, my oldest son, his group, and they teach the younger ones what they were taught. We do the HIV Aids awareness event twice a year. I educate the youth and the youth educate the community. We have someone come in and do testing and counseling.

And we also have dinner. And then we eat for, we have social time from 7:15-8:00...they can eat, talk, play play station, play board games, talk, listen to music, whatever they want to do. And then we end in prayer, and everyone has to go in a circle and say what they are thankful for.

Nargas has been running B Spirit out of that tiny basement for 13 years. The first group of her kids are now in their mid-twenties and they mentor the youngest ones.

There were 14 females and 40 males in B Spirit 1. Out of 40 males, 28 graduated from High School, two got GED. 18 went to trade school and/or college. Out of 40, 5 were teenage dads, so that left 35 that weren't, and out of the 40, we have 12 now that are dads. And out of the 40 we had 5 that were

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incarcerated. Out of 14 females, 10 graduated from High School, 2 got their GED. 4 were teenage moms; the other ten are not moms at all, and they between 19 and 26. There is 8 that went to trade school and or college. None were incarcerated.

Gratitude fills this small basement. Soon, we'll hear from some of the kids who grew up in her program and how it changed their lives.

Music: Nina Simone, *Ain't Got No; I Got Life*

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

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