

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 15: Cierra

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

How do you rise above the pain in one of Baltimore's most violent and crime ridden neighborhoods?

How do you walk through those streets everyday and not succumb to the corner life?

What does it take?

Government programs?

An inspirational after school program like Nargas Hymans B Spirit?

More devoted school teachers?

Or does the street sometimes demand a greater sacrifice?

This is Cierra's story.

It's some females nowadays do hustle. But I never hustle because when I was 9 years old-It was a Sunday, April the 6th, 1997/ Everybody was gone. My sister was outside, my brother was outside. And they got old enough they didn't have to go to church anymore, but since I couldn't make no decision, I couldn't really say nothing so I still had to go to church. So that Sunday, that Sunday evening, it was about 6 clock. I came home, and my grandmother—you know, us people move faster than our grandmother. So I took her pocketbook and I was going in the house. And my mother was an IV drug abuser, and I thought she was asleep or something, and she fell asleep on the floor instead of the chair. So I walked over, so then I thought about it when I put my grandmothers pocketbook down, she ain't moving, she ain't doing nothing. So I walked past-I was so scared. I walked back over her and went to the door like, Grandma, my mother not moving, my mother not moving. She like, what is you talking about? I said, Grandma, it is not like one of her normal days, she is really not moving. She was like, Check her pulse, you feeling anything? So I am like, I'm not feeling nothing, I'm not feeling nothing. And I found my mother dead-of an overdose.

Nine years old, and so terrified I was going through it

That's what made me never sell drugs because I feel that people selling drugs, just like whoever sold the drugs to her, that is why she said, so me selling drugs is like, killing somebody's grandparents, mother, son, daughter. You killing peoples family members. That's why I would never ever hustle. You just making someone's life that much shorter.

I got one or two friends whose mothers have died offa drugs. And some of their parents still on drugs. And its hard, seeing what they are going through, just like my mother died one day, they gotta go through their mother just died. Never gonna be able to see them again...

Cierra is now 20 years old. She is a student at a local trade school and is going to graduate this May. She wants to become a Registered Nurse, just like Nargas Hyman, who runs the youth program BSPIRIT that Cierra is a graduate of and where she now works as a youth mentor.

Music: Puff Daddy with Faith Evans, *I'll be Missing You*



a 360° view of the people and stories behind the issues

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