

Providence

I was born and raised in the capital city of the smallest state.

And since I can remember I have always had a destined fate.

I was never expected to get a college education, nevertheless graduate high school.

All because I was from a city drowning in poverty.

My city is delicate and ravishing, and I have lived my entire life in this city, unraveling the consequences of my inherited poverty.

My inner-city struggle is the reason why I am so grounded. And with the playing cards never in my favor, I have had to work twice as hard.

My city is the ship that has guided me through oceans, guarded me from deadly erosions, all while influencing my aspirations.

And as I make these proclamations: I make a promise to my city that I will never become a product of it, but that I will make my city a product of me.

Because even with all of the limitations, and the frustrations of structural disadvantages, my city planted and watered the flower that is me.

I am the flower that grew from the concrete.

And though I have risen, I can still feel the concrete on my skin, as cold as ice and as hard as bone.

I can feel the concrete that has been walked on and spit on.

But I am the kind of flower that rises and turns pain into gain.

And although it has been difficult to survive, I have made it to a four-year private university.

And as I thrive amongst my peers, I have noticed that our experiences are incredibly and terribly distinct and in no way are they linked.

I cringe when they open their mouths.

They tell me, "Providence is a slum and the city is not safe."

I ask them if they have ever been to a city that is? And to blame their ancestors for redlining and modern day segregation.

They stare at me in awe, and it takes every ounce of dignity in my body to refrain from punching the bigotry out of their souls.

Instead, I tell them that Broad Street is full of vibrant migrant Dominicans that would never hurt a fly. And that they recently changed the traffic lines, to red, white and blue in consideration of the profound Dominican presence.

I tell them that everyone is black and brown and that the color of our skin makes a rainbow of soft yellow, cinnamon, brown and black. I tell them that my dialect of Spanish is a strange mix of words spoken too fast.

I TELL THEM THAT I AM PROUD OF THE CITY THAT RAISED ME.

I tell them that my inner-city struggle has shaped my existence and my brilliance.

And before all of this, when they hear me speak, they cannot believe that,

I am from PROVIDENCE.