

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Dealing with Cultural Collision in Urban Schools

What Pre-Service Educators Should Know

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I think your ears have lied to you
And your eyes have implied to you
That Urban means undeserving and absent of purpose
So give me back!!
Give me back my identity!!
Give me the opportunity
To break free of influential essentials that my community
seeks
And have been lead to believe
Either from Hip Hop vultures disguised as moguls
Or mass media outlets that televise and overemphasize
What is deemed a deemed a destructive culture
Broadcast and typecast misguided black youth
That lives below the reality of broken homes, economic
oppression, and a multitude of Half-truths

And finding no salvation in my inner city school
Because educators aren't there to educate
But instead baby-sit and dictate
Further reinforcing and filtrating the messages that distort
who I am
And who I could grow to be
So I ask why haven't you extended your hand
To enhance my ability, expand my ideals and possibilities
Versus leaving me to discover my identity through manipulated
mediums
And an environment that welcomes my bemused condition
I mean more to this society
My articles of clothing, vernacular, or demographic
Do not define me
Contrary to popular belief I am also aspiring, inspiring,
and operating as a prodigy born out of art
So it is evident that I have the ability to play more than
just this part
But I am also a product of my surroundings...and my
underdeveloped mind often has no protection. . .
Then difficult to discover my identity and direction
This is a burden that I cannot overcome alone
Give me something additional to relate to before I become
prone
To embracing what is put into my universe to be adopted
as my own
Way of thinking, living, feeling...I am a king on my
way to being dethroned
Understand me rather than abandon me and pierce me
with labels
This is when you find distrust, despair, and anger
I need positive influence to rival the issuance of negative
imagery so common in my world
I am young, black, impressionable, but imperiled
Look at me!!

- "*Look At Me*," a poem by Krystal Roberts (of Atlanta, GA)