BELIEVE.

Chapter 510 would like to acknowledge our generous supporters who **MAKE | BELIEVE WITH US.**

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CHAPTER
510

side by side with teachers and students

Rei Jackler
Workshop Coordinator

ABOUT THE MAKER WORKSHOP

What happens when you cram eight teenagers, a nifty maker cart full of baubles, five teaching artists and a hefty zine-production deadline into the Rock Paper Scissors Collective gallery space for one whirlwind week in summer?

This happens.

And it's awesome.

Go ahead. Flip through the pages of this book. It's evident from their writing that Alexis, Alma, Elena, Ella, Emma, Evelyn, Jade and Kayla are on to something about what makes Oakland Oakland. Or maybe they've proven that Oakland never just means one thing, that it's a constantly evolving puzzle that can never be adequately solved. They also show that that's ok. That's part of the deal. We all live here together. All our voices can be heard in the same space.

But what will that space look like?

How can we, as a community, build a space where all Oakland youth will feel welcome and ready to participate?

That's where *Making* comes in.

To come up with creative, Oakland youth-centered designs for Chapter 510's future writing center, we used Design Thinking, a process for coming up with innovative solutions pioneered by designers at IDEO and the Stanford D.School. Our Youth Makers took it all in: Oakland streets and cultural institutions, the stories of local youth, the voices of artists and entrepreneurs like Favianna Rodriguez, Chinaka Hodge, and Justin Carder. Their new perspectives became the foundation for the designs you'll see in this book—Make-A-Wish Soda for discouraged young writers, a dream cave, a store that turns Oakland into Star Wars.

The adults are listening.

In the end, it's a space like the one these young makers have imagined that will make honest, joyful, life-giving dialogue between diverse young people in Oakland a reality.

May these prototypes, their words, and the power of making spark a conversation for what Chapter 510 could become for us all.

MAKE.

Margaret Miller
Writer-in-Residence

FOREWORD

I had the privilege of fostering creative works by teen writers from MetWest High School and Oakland School of the Arts (OSA) around the concept of, What is Oakland? Being a fairly new transplant to Oakland myself, the students taught me a lot through their writing. Oakland's a tree. A butterfly. Fences. An illusion. Invisible. Colonized. A stand-in. A fearful land. A fearless land. For some students, the question wasn't so much "what" but "who" is Oakland? Who can claim ownership? Who does the city belong to? Who can truly call it home?

As a result of the friction, the lines between prose and poetry, b etween fact and fiction and between being at home and feeling displaced became distorted, the boundaries unrecognizable. Favianna Rodriguez, Oakland-based visual artist, invited us into her studio, her home and her art where lines further eroded, allowing the personal and the political to fuse together. From this corrosive melding, all that remains is a single, homogenizing condition we seem to collectively share: a tension between our community and collective action threatening to both hold us together and pull us apart.

During the inaugural, weeklong 2015 Summer Maker Workshop, we kept circulating around the theme of Oakland as a diverse community. On our community walks we heard the language of diversity reverberate along the pavement and by each voice we encountered throughout each immersion in various pockets of the city. The thing about diversity, which the students distilled and brought to the forefront in their work, is that it inevitably hierarchizes certain identities. No matter how hard we try, what lingers on the other side of the fence—oppressive ideologies and institutions—continue to overpower and penetrate Oakland's core: its people.

Oakland would appear to be burdened by insurmountable odds and perhaps even hopelessness. But, like any good writer, the students dug deeper, excavating the truth through their fiction. I had posted on the board Albert Camus' famous quote, "Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth" to help them be **fearless in their writing** and be willing to accept Oakland as **unresolved**, **unfinished**, and perhaps even a little **unraveled**. It's in the messiness that all the students found potential, and I might even say, hope. By the end of the week, Oakland was no longer simply an amalgamation of assorted identities, or a stagnant printed tree posted on t-shirts, stickers and mugs but rather a work-in-progress, in media res, where that tree "now needs to grow some new leaves." This millennial generation has no need for nostalgia, for looking back. Their hearts are heavy and light with the beautiful weight of this city so many of us cling to as home.

Alexis Smith

Hello my name is Alexis Smith. I go to MetWest High School. I live in Oakland, California with my mother and sister. My dream one day is to work in the medical field or have a career in forensics.

Home is where the heart is

She called it her home, but
her home was also a place
that made her feel alone. Her
home carried so many different
characteristics that can be classified
as good or bad depending on what
side of the street you come
from. This is the place where dreams
are just dreams and the people
dreaming never seem to be able
to wake up.

She lives in a
place where all you hear is
violence. It grows from
hatred, anger, pain
and becomes the finishing touch to our own demise.
A mother sheds tears for her child's lost soul
and now becomes wrapped and suffocated
with having to live her life without the one that she grew.

She walks
down the street and the cold
hits her with repeated force, one
harder than the other.

When she walks, all she can
think is the streets are like
a battlefield, as she sees a young boy getting robbed
and stripped down of his
pride, courage, happiness.

Constantly
watching her back trying to
make sure
she makes it home
to her mother and not on the
channel 2 news headlines:
"a young black girl has been shot today."

She calls it her home, but
her home was also a place
that made her feel alone.

About this prototype:

For my prototype, I made a wish bottle that was made with a glass bottle, glitter, and colorful paper. I made this bottle because of the person that I have interviewed had a lot of wishes so I created a wish bottle. The way the wish bottle work is you make a wish than drink that magical colorful liquid that will make you wishes come true. You can't unwish what you wish for. So choose be careful what you wish for. The prototype can be used in the center by having it placed on a side wall that says "I wish I wish" and be in a display box for kids to see. The wish bottle is important for Oakland kids because it gives kids a magical feeling.

Alma D. Alvarado

My name is Alma D. Alvarado. I go to MetWest High School in Oakland, California. A few things to know about me is that I really enjoy reading horror novels. To me, horror novels are like a soothing lullaby being sung to a small child. I also enjoy drawing in my spare time. I draw anything from anime characters to a bleeding heart. Lastly, I write poetry. For me, poetry is a way to escape from my depression and allow me to go into my own world that I control.

The Hidden Past

It was a cool summer day in Oakland as Derek Hale, a twenty-two-year-old male with raven colored hair and 5 o'clock shadow, was on his way to work. Derek worked at an Irish pub called The Legionnaire. He would begin work around 4:30pm and he would finish work at 1:00am. While walking down the street, he observed how everyone around him was dressed. Derek noticed that everyone wore baggy jeans with some sort of t-shirt and a sweatshirt. Derek was wearing black, semi-professional skinny jeans with a navy blue t-shirt paired with a black leather jacket; then to finalize everything, he had a pair of Oakley sunglasses on and some semi-casual dress shoes. He quickly stuck out like a sore thumb. It was easy for everyone around him to tell that he wasn't from Oakland by the way he was dressed. Derek was like the runt of the newborn puppy litter. To be very honest, Derek wasn't from Oakland at all. He actually was from another area of California called Beacon Hills. Derek had just barely moved to Oakland about two months ago. He was still getting use to all of his surroundings. All of Derek's neighbors stared at him like he was from another planet every time he stepped out of his condo because of the way he always dressed. Derek lived in a condo complex that was across the street from Lake Merritt. The reason he had decided to move from Beacon Hills to Oakland was because of a traumatic incident that took place there that made him feel both unsafe and uncomfortable. When Derek first moved to Oakland, he felt as if he didn't belong there, but now Derek felt as if he found a place that he could call home. It may seem weird to most people that the place Derek called home was The Legionnaire, but it was because everyone inside the pub never judged him for how he looked. They all treated him like a normal human being and not like he was another species from another planet. Soon Derek reached the pub and walked right inside as he took off his leather jacket and hung it on the coat tree. Afterwards, he began to pull out the chairs and placed them outside before he wiped down all the tables and turned on the lights. Once he finished setting up, people started to walk inside and sit down. After a few hours of being open, Derek was busy taking drink orders at the bar. He was working as fast as he could to get everyone their drinks. It was a bit overwhelming at times, but Derek was used to it since he had started working at The Legionnaire the week after he had moved to Oakland. After a while, the night began to drag on as people came and went. Derek was just there cleaning off some glasses behind the bar when a man dressed in a white suit with raven colored hair and tan colored skin came over and sat down at the bar. Derek looked at the man and asked politely, "what drink would you like this evening sir?"

The man looked at Derek and answered in somewhat of a thick Japanese accent, "I'll have a black wolf."

Derek nodded.

"Right away sir." He grabbed some ice and put it in a glass before he mixed brandy and rum together. Derek then added a small splash of vanilla flavoring into the drink before he mixed it all together. Afterwards, he poured the drink into a cup and then handed it to the man. "Here you are, sir. One black wolf."

The man took the glass and took a sip of the drink. After handing the man his drink, Derek washed the glasses he had just used. As he was washing off the glasses the man looked up noticing something in what looked like black ink on the back of his neck as he asked, "excuse me, but may I ask what is that?"

Derek turned around and looked at the man. With a white rag, he started to dry off the glasses that had drops of water sliding down their sides.

"Oh that? It's a Celtic symbol. The symbol is a triple swirl."

The man nodded.

"What is it suppose to represent?"

Derek was a bit hesitant to answer the question at first but he took a deep breath before answering: "well, in my family each spiral means something different. Like the top spiral means an alpha can become a beta while the second spiral means a beta can become an alpha and the very last spiral means an omega can become an alpha or a beta."

The man raised a brow, "are you referring to werewolves?"

Derek sighed as he nodded and tossed the rag over his shoulder: "Yes I am. It may seem silly to be even telling this to you but my family are a pack of werewolves."

The man shook his head.

"It doesn't seem silly to me at all. Actually it makes sense."

Derek seemed surprised by the man's response: "wait...you don't find it a bit weird or at the least a bit frightening?"

The reason Derek was surprised that the man didn't seem frightened by the fact that he was a werewolf was because in Oakland werewolves were known as lower class citizens.

The man chuckled.

"No. Would you find it a bit frightening if I told you that I use to be the bodyguard of Cobra Commander and that I also worked with the G.I. Joes at some point?" Derek blinked, then shook his head.

"No not really."

"Then I don't find it frightening that you're a werewolf. Besides, it's not like you're the only one of your kind here in Oakland."

The man answered before taking another sip of his drink. Derek nodded then looked at the man.

"My name is Derek Hale by the way."

The man looked at him. "My name is Storm Shadow."

Derek looked at Storm Shadow.

"Interesting name. So, Storm Shadow, what brings you here?"

Storm Shadow didn't hesitate to tell his story. "What brings me here is that I was looking for a state where I wouldn't be discovered. The reason I don't want to be discovered is because of a certain mission I was on. Plus, Oakland seemed like the only state where no one would look for me."

To be continued . . .

About this prototype:

So Wednesday, July 8th I interviewed some children about what they enjoy. One child I interviewed, named Jalen, spoke to me about how he enjoyed playing his guitar. He spoke about how he wanted to become a musician when he grows up. So what I did was create a prototype of what type of space would feel comfortable for him. The prototype I came up with was a space that was all music themed. Like for example, my prototype was a wall full of music notes to represent his love for music. I think Jalen would feel comfortable in this space because it has aspects of what he enjoys to do, which is create music on his guitar.

Elena Ruiz

Oakland youth Elena Ruiz is the lead singer of the rock band The Jamming Nachos and does writing as a second occupation. She will be attending her Junior year at Oakland School for the Arts in the Literary Arts emphasis and aspires to be a traveling journalist.

Fenced City

It is 4:30pm on Harrison as Yoli reminds the soles of her black platform boots the harshness of concrete. Jewelry lay piled on top of her, the collection almost as extensive as the homeless man's collection of junk on the corner. She passes him without making eye contact. Blonde highlights run through bottom strands of curls, yellow as the building block in the mural across the street. The cashier at Whole Foods tells her she likes her ombre, Yoli says it's natural as she continues to pay for her overpriced paneer tikka. Isn't this the point of Oakland, to be urban but still affordable?, she thinks to herself. Catching the word urban in her train of thought it would have been a more suitable term for the bearded gauged hipster purchasing a cold kombucha behind her in line. These thoughts follow her out the door. Whilst overlooking the receipt she bumps into a gangbang of fixies, wonders when they got there, and from the image of pavement paneer and a small knick in her left knee, she whispers "There's something going on in Oakland."

Eventually Yoli will meet up with another Oakland native at some cafe between 19nth and 12th street. On the walk there she catches a glimpse of Zio Ziegler's mural against the clouds, shining and beautiful as construction is underway on Latham square. Fences are the only view outside all the new pubs lining the sidewalk. A man inside occasionally sipping his pale ale makes a comment to his colleague "These fences are separating the people from the city. What is this Uptown Utopia concept? I remember when this bar use to be a locally run shoe shop." His colleague will shrug as his eyes drift to Yoli's through the tinted window. He begins to curse "You can thank those damn hipsters," pointing towards Yoli as her back turns away from the glass. She fights the urge to use the man's tie as a choker making his 6$ beer come back up, a reminder of his rude comment. Instead she remembers a friend telling her to pick her fights wisely and fumbles with the bracelet on her right wrist. Yoli has always hated being mistaken as a hipster, the term making her retire the platform boots she so proudly dug out from the grave in her closet. Ever so often she would ask herself the infamous question of humanity, the big 'Who am I,' but she knew the answer would never be a pabst blue loving indie rocker, she wouldn't allow it. The only thing hipster about her were the underwear she wore when laundry was over due.

Yoli enters the pricey cafe to find her friend Mai sitting at a table close to the stage. They begin to talk about her rude introduction with gentrification. "Twelve fucking dollars on the ground and that's not the worst part," she bickered.

"It doesn't take long to realize the colonizing companies and corporates are at it again, taking over our real estate as well as our culture. The difference is they don't want to diminish it, but take part in it, it's cultural appropriation at it's finest." Mai adds in. "I was born and raised here, this is my city you know? Now I can barely afford my one bedroom apartment because some hundred google employees need a place to occupy residency. They see Oakland as nothing more than an opportunity, and of course there could be improvement, but "For the People by the People," should become the new motto."

"I feel so helpless in the situation. I'm just as removeable as the concrete down the street, the city is losing it's balance day by day." Yoli slouches as the words drip into the coffee cup frantically presented at her lips after every sentence. "I don't know what to do."

Mai with a look as fragile as already broken glass furrows his eyebrows and says "We've got to pose a question to Oakland."

About this prototype:

The prototype I created was a movie theatre based store front with a writing center in the back. The front of the store would use large signs with lights surrounding them, creating a bright inviting and overall eye catching presentation of the store. The signs that would usually say now playing will show the workshops available for that month and the dates they will take place. The interior of the retail space would be decorated with film memorabilia, toy cameras, movie posters, and more. There would be tons of interactive activities to part in such as a phantascope, color-in movie covers, and action figures to play with from people's favorite films. The store would sell candy, popcorn, and delicious drinks. This idea was based off an interview with a 4th grader named Sebastian. Sebastian was a big fan of going to the movies so I wanted to create a space to meet his needs of interaction, creativity, imagination, and fun.

Ella Zalon

Ella Zalon is an incoming junior at Oakland School for the Arts in the Literary Arts department. She is passionate about the bay area, writing, theatre, and arts advocacy in general. She is a Teen Core Council member at the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre and an ensemble member at Gritty City Rep. In 2015 Ella was awarded a Silver Key from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for poetry. She has lately found herself writing funny(ish) poetry.

WHO IS THE TREE?

Hot on the nape, and draped;
we are itchy (I'm not allergic to the grass,
we all itch) and wonder how it stays so green
in the Current California Condition.

Have I always driven past these big block letters
and seen the same thing?
Now I notice because it's people I know.
Now I notice because I know.
Splif smoke drifts.

The paint to paper is Oakland but the paint to wall,
suits us best. It is not only tongue, but throaty,
and joints. Disjointed is the point. Here is
the eye of it-

A mess of smells that may not say to you:
butter, baking soda baked beauties
in a warm kitchenette
with customized tiles
More like: we all made it.

More like:
Okay, there's some overpriced handmade soaps
with unnecessary shit in them (like plastic stuff?)
but not everything has been painted into blank,
for the technology artists.

More like:
I hope my parents don't sell the house because
I won't be able to move back. (It'll be fixed up
by Pixar parents.)

They don't want to leave this-
our bus routes,
the way our bare legs
sticker peel off the orange seats in summer.
Coin operated laundromats
and at least we can rely on the
Colonial donuts!

About this prototype:

I interviewed Zane, Ben, and Sebastian. For their ideal storefront, they expressed interest i the qualities of interactivity and variety. (They specifically said “all the random stuff.”) For the prototype I designed, the idea was to make something enticing (hence the DO NOT OPEN, wich might not actually be a good idea, but I was thinking along the fun lines of reverse psychology). The concept is an interactive cabinet or set of drawers with a range of activities and strange objects. Some of the things would specifically be interactive, like art supplies, while others would be somewhat random, which goes along with another desire they expressed: “stuff you don’t need but want.”

Emma Talamantes

Emma Talamantes is an incoming 11th grader in the Literary Arts department at Oakland School for the Arts. She works on the staff of the student run literary journal Enizagam and has been published in the school's annual anthology twice. She lives with her mom, sister, and dogs in Oakland.

Thank You Reagan

In Jack London, there's a view of the Bay and a small harbor where people keep their boats. We sit on large concrete steps at the entrance to the harbor and watch the water sit motionless like my grandmother would at church services: one hand on the bible, the other holding mine; she was always patient in a God's presence whom did not answer every prayer.

My grandmother loved Oakland, but I've never gone to Jack London with her. As my own mother becomes older, I see more and more of my Grandma's ghost possessing her. I've noticed that at one point in every woman's life she begins to go through a metamorphosis into her mother. Had my mother been taken from me, had the police been called by a neighbor who heard the yelling, had small bodies in blue spilled into our house and ripped her crying body from her bathroom floor and into a small car, would I be the same woman I am today? I meditate on this a lot recently; how different I would be if my mother was absent in my life. I haven't decided yet if my mom will break out of her cocoon as a butterfly or a worm.

As we sit together, we watch a man slip in and out of consciousness. He is a palm tree; his skinny trunk sways back and forth, curling forward in his cardboard seat. Briefly, I watch you watch him, like I imagine the whole city of Oakland watches men who have been taken advantage of by drugs, poverty, or America's system as a whole. I've been trying to look at America like it is tired machine, taking people and spitting them out again but I keep that to myself. Instead, I tell you that if my grandmother was here she would have thanked Reagan sarcastically. You laugh, and then we sit silently again, both pretending we don't see him. I want to tell you that in ancient Judaism, palm trees symbolized the tree of life. I watch the water and I think about how it does not exclude anyone from being healed and baptized. I say to you that I'm envisioning my grandmother coming out of the water, head first, and inviting the man to come and swim with her. She had a bad liver I say to you. She hadn't been able to swim when she was alive.

You keep looking at the man rocking back and forth like he is being beckoned by the ocean to return home. A seagull lands next to us and watches us watch the man. We are witnessing a body surrendering itself to another body of water, I think, the man rocking back and forth to the earth like a prayer.

About this prototype:

My prototype is a Mac Dre lightsaber that plays “Go Stupid” when you press the center button. It would be sold at my idea for the new Chapter 510 store, a place that merged Star Wars and Oakland. I came up with the idea to merge these polar things when interviewing Noah, a student at NOCCS. He was looking for something interactive and kid friendly, and I was looking for something that involved Oakland and was inviting to all ages. Because the cranes in Oakland inspired the Star Wars creator, a store that merged the two would be very unique and fun and fulfill all my goals.

Evelyn Rodriguez

My name is Evelyn Rodriguez. I am 16 and I live in east Oakland. I am very family oriented probably because I am Mexican. I am interested in fashion and makeup.

Burning Alive

It is 3:00 pm on a Sunday afternoon. Families standing on the hot concrete floor, people looking left and right, but no sign of a cop car. This is pretty normal. The neighbors are always helping each other out. The cops tend to serve people with a higher social class than us. They always come late, when we don't need their help anymore. There is so much smoke you can feel the burn in your nose when you inhale it. Little kids coughing, people freaking out running away from their house to the scene. Mothers comforting their kids. You can see the fire from my room window. I quickly close all the windows. Hoping to block the smoke, I run outside to see what is going on. The two-story yellow apartment in front of my house is falling apart, the flames of the fire eating the apartment alive, not knowing somebody is inside. The street is dead silent. You can hear the frantic breathing and gasping of the people surrounding the apartment. I spot a frantic mother yelling and begging to go back into the building. Everyone thinks she is crazy for wanting to go inside, but they don't know her son is in there. I hear the woman yell a name. When I hear the name, my heart sinks. It's Ron. Ron is one of my friends. We kind of had a thing going on. I have never met his mom. She is always working. I couldn't talk, or move. I just freeze and think about the memories I have with Ron. I have known him since middle school. We never really talked but got closer when we graduated high school last year. It was hard for us to see each other because we both had things going on. Between school and work I didn't really have a chance to hang out with friends. On the other hand Ron worked part time at a fast food restaurant. He didn't have enough money to go to community college. He helped his mom make ends meet. It was his responsibility because he was the man of the house. He had three younger sisters. He said his dad left them when he was about 11. He hated his dad because he use to beat his mom and his sisters. He didn't really talk about his personal life, unless he was drunk. Sometimes I purposely get him drunk just to get him to share his feelings and talk about his life. We had a lot in common--I didn't like to talk about my feelings either or my life. I only did with people I really and truly trusted, and he was one of them.

Eventually the cops, firefighters, and the ambulance arrive. I wait for the ambulance to come out with Ron on the gurney, but they didn't.
I pray and hope that it isn't my fault. We had a horrible fight three days ago, and hadn't talked since then.

(flashback)

It was a saturday night and we were hanging out in the park with a couple of friends, just chillin' and talking. I thought me and Ron were more than friends. I guess not. He kept talking to some other girls and flirting with them in front of me. When it was us alone, he would always say cute and sweet things. But when we were in public, he would treat me like shit. That is so humiliating! That night he pushed my limit, so I went off, "Ron how can you do this to me? All that shit you tell me behind close doors doesn't have a meaning? I am not your fucking blow up doll. I have feelings too, you know. How can you tell me one thing and then do the other. I am so sick of this!" I yelled. I didn't want to cause a big scene. He pushed me away and tried to calm me down. I wasn't even paying attention to what my friends had to say. "Jess, Jess, stop, calm down, you're embarrassing me," Ron said. "I am embarrassing you really!?" I fire back. "You know what, I hope something bad happens to you so you can feel what I have felt for so long. Fuck you Ron, I hope you die. I never want to see you again."

I don't have the guts to go up to Ron's mom. I go back inside to my room and start to cry. The next day I call my friend Ava and tell her everything that has happened. She quickly comes over and tries to console me. She doesn't know what to say. Ron burned alive in the fire. He had third degree burns and he had inhaled too much smoke which made him suffocate. I can't stop thinking about it. I just wish things were different.

To be continued . . .

About this prototype:

I made a stage with couches all around. I made this because the student I interviewed Samiya wanted to feel safe. When I interviewed her she was very quiet, but once she felt comfortable she became talkative. She only feels safe when she is with family and friends. She is pretty outgoing because she talked about running track and having a lot of friends. I made the stage because she can share her achievements with her parents or peers. I think once she feels comfortable with everyone, she starts being confident and outgoing. Having a stage and pushing her to share will push her confidence. I added couches because if parents want to stay and wait for their kids, they have a seating area. It is like a 2-in-1, a stage but also a parent area.

Jade Herbert

Hi, my name is Jade Herbert. I am from Oakland, CA and I am in the eleventh grade. My passions are singing and reading. In the future I would love to go to medical school.

You have me all wrong or figured out

Hi everyone, my name is Ashley. I'm eighteen years old and I live in Oakland, CA. I'm what some people would call a "hoe." In my opinion, I am a young lady who does what she has to do to get to where she needs to be. To make money, I work at a strip club called Pinky's. I know what you guys are thinking: "she a hoe, she lazy, she gives it up to anyone." In all truth, I'm actually a born-again virgin because I was raped when I was sixteen. But, that's another story for later. This is really awkward, I have never written in a journal before but bear with me. I have no one else to talk to about this. I don't know where to begin. I guess I'll just start from the beginning.

Anyways, today is Monday and I had my regular shift. My schedule is 11pm to 4am, Monday-Saturday. When I arrived at Pinky's on 23rd Ave in the Fruitvale area, I went straight to the back and changed into my booty shorts and pasties. Then I went to go work the floor. Working the floor is really just easy for me. All I do is give customers drinks and sometimes I ask them if they want lap dances. Just to tell you all, I'm not a cheap lap dance giver. By the way, my stripper name is Bubbles.

Around 2am, it was my time to go on stage. I went to the back and changed into my playboy bunny outfit. When I walked out, DJ Oakland-ish started to play Fetty Wap-Trap Queen. That was my cue to go on stage and start dancing. Then I danced to three other Hip-Hop songs. Most of the songs I dance to in general have a very fast beat and most of them are disrespectful to women. I know you may think, just change the music, but the music that I choose seems to make me more money, so, oh well.

When I was done, I collected all my money off stage and went to the locker room. I counted all the money and I had made about three thousand dollars. Not to brag, but I am the best stripper at Pinky's and I make the most money without even having sex with the customers, which is saying something. When I was done counting my money, I put it in my locker and changed into my pink lace bra and thong set. I have to admit, I looked like the baddest girl in the world. These guys go crazy over me just walking by. Anyways, It was time to work the floor again. I honestly wanted to go home because I had a bad feeling something was going to happen tonight. However, I still had about an hour left until work was over so I had to suck it up and stay. I started to have mental thoughts on why I dance but then I realized its because I can get easy fast money without really doing anything.

I started walking over to the bar and seen a cute man staring at me in an admiring way. I started to remember that he was staring at me when I was on stage dancing. My body wanted to approach him but my mind was telling me he may be a creep. So, I decided to keep walking over to the bar. Tonight my stripper friend Nataya, AKA Lollipop, was the bartender. We had a short convo about outfits that we thought were cute in a random magazine. Just then, our manager, Mike, came over, interrupting our conversation. He told me that this guy wanted a lap dance from me and he was willing to pay a real pretty penny. Of course I started to protest, but Mike said he would fire my stuck up ass if I didn't. He said the guy was in the private room in the back of the club. I know you guys are probably thinking I should just quit. But you guys can shut the fuck up because a girl need to pay the bills.

Anyways, I walked into the room and it was the guy who was staring at me all day. I have to say, he look way better up close. I introduced myself as Bubbles. Then I started to dance but all of a sudden he told me to stop and sit down. I thought he'd drop easy money for me. He introduced himself as Ali. He then asked what my real name was. I told him it was Ashley. He seemed a little too nosey for my liking, but whatever. He then asked me, why do I strip. I hesitated at first, but I felt like I could trust this Oakland "thug". To answer his question, I told him that I used to live in deep East Oakland on 98th ave in the ghetto. Also how my mom had to work three jobs to put food in the house for me and my two twin brothers. Later on, my brothers were killed in a driveby shooting on 58th and International. They were killed by a gang but it was mistaken identity since they supposedly were in the wrong color car and with the wrong people at the wrong place. Then I had to get money to help my mom with the funeral cost. So I started stripping when I was sixteen to support my mom and the funeral cost. As soon as he was about to respond, we heard really loud noises from the other side of the door.

All of a sudden the Oakland Police Department busted through the door with a warrant looking for underaged girls. I freaked out and ran out the back exit. I was running home and when I got there I decided to tell you all about my day because I am scared and I need someone to talk to. Hopefully I can find another job. I wonder why Ali wanted to only talk to me so bad?

About this prototype:

I interviewed Jalen and he is nine years old. His passion is music and baseball. He wants to play baseball in the future but now he is really into playing his guitar. In my opinion, he needs a variety of ways to express himself. So, I made a dream corner prototype. It is a corner where you can draw your dreams and put them on the wall in the dream corner. It is a relaxing area that you can go to escape writing (taking a break). The corner has a bean bag and a nice white fluffy rug. The lights are dim and there are stars and streamers hanging off the walls.

Kayla Keith

Kayla Keith is an upcoming 11th grader at MetWest High School in downtown Oakland. A passionate activist and public speaker, Kayla is an inspired communicator and ally on behalf of her community. She recently interviewed Oakland artists, leaders, and politicians to learn and write about their commitment to youth. Her lead question: How has Oakland influenced you?

Our Silent Cries

Oakland is the homeland of diversity. Because I live in Oakland, San Francisco envies me. They try to copy our natural rainbow by painting their buildings fancy. Everyone talks about us being dangerous but everyone wants to be us.

Everyone wants to live here, grow here, put down roots here, and die here.

Oakland is like a tree. The trunk full of businesses with branches stretching into their own communities with their own cultures.

Unfortunately, Oakland is losing its colorful sea of faces and races and everyone is saying, enough is enough and even enough is too much of this hate and rejection we get, so we start killing. We kill each other, the oppressed, when we are supposed to be together until the point I fear, we kill our family. Not only the family by love but the family by blood that not everyone is so lucky to have and, some don't have some by love either.

Oakland is filled to the brim with artists covering the city saying I'm done. I don't want my children's first word to be

Gentrification.

Even with this word that we don't need to know, we know that something is happening to our communities. Everyone's believing in "liberty and justice for all," and "all men are created equal" when African American men can't walk down the street without people on the sidewalk thinking, I must flee.

Can you imagine looking over your shoulder wherever you go, even in the city you call home? Home is where you stop running but nowadays, it seems like home is teaching us to run from the start. Our children grow up knowing you have to start running before you crawl. We are teaching our aspiring actors and models that you have to be white to get a shot on the big screen. I don't want to see them 40 years later just hanging on to the dream because they weren't the right complexion to get affection by the producers who make people stars. L.A. is a dream.

All this six hours away from where we rest from a long day surviving. Our struggles make it impossible to live. We are surviving each other because we never know when our neighbor of 8 years might pull a gun on us. Yes, we are surviving.

We are becoming so numb to seeing black boys on T.V. reported dead. Soon enough we'll see chalk outlines on the streets reminding us that we are beat. We are beat because we don't help each other out so we have all become full of greed. We don't know any other way than "take now, ask later"; "rob now, hide later"; "kill now, worry later." We are full of anger and fear when we hear a police car outside our window. What did we do wrong? We forget who we've lost already, so we think it's okay to kill more. The government has won for sure when there's no one here left to kill.

You would think people of color wouldn't be used to cop car sirens because they come too many hours too late. If the sirens went away, we couldn't sleep at night without the steady lullaby the government has given us. The sirens are mistaken for music we need to be proud of. We hear them so much. I'm stuck here waiting.

Waiting for Oakland to get back to it's former glory and grow some new leaves.

About this prototype:

My prototype is a sculpture of two people playing soccer. My idea is whenever you need a break from working, you have have a soccer break. I interviewed Naia who is a soccer player. What I got from her is she likes to do things she's good at. I think she will break out of her shyness if she does something that she enjoys.

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