

Linear Notes

The World We Know was written based on an experience that I had during the pandemic. I went to buy supplies for my family and while at the store I encountered a man from a different race and ethnicity. For some reason, he looked at me and just said “hey, how are you doing through all of this?”. I paused for a second and I then replied, “I’m doing ok, just trying to make it through”. We then spoke for a while and in that moment, I realized that we were two people that society has said should be on opposite sides of the fence, however, on that day we were just two men trying to take care of our families and make it through one of the most challenging times that the world has ever seen. We concluded our conversation by wishing each other the best of luck and told each other that we would both be ok. When leaving this conversation and reflecting upon it I thought to myself “with all of the divide that we encounter in our community, that’s the world we should really know.” That moment is a reflection of our world should be, we have the power to care for and respect each other now no matter where we are from or what our backgrounds may be. This song serves as the catalyst for this project as we must consider ways to use areas of divisions as opportunities for unity.

Dare to Dream Children. As an educator and clinician for many years, I have the opportunity to work with a variety of students from all ages and backgrounds. One of the most consistent questions that they ask is what I think is in- store for them in their future. Many times, students are told to live and learn in one lane or think out of one box. Though that may work for some it doesn’t work for everyone. I learned that many people see the world in different ways and while it is important to provide them an education, it is equally important that we encourage their individual visions and dreams so that they may reach their own potential. During many of my clinics and workshops I have to remind students that the most important thing about dreaming is to actually not be afraid to dream. It’s ok to see the world through a unique perspective and find ways to offer society something that it has never seen before. It takes bravery, commitment and consistency but everyone can reach their potential if they can just see it first.

No Place to Go focuses on mental health which is a major issue that plagues our society and is increasing in our adolescent children. I decided to address it by creating an arrangement from a song performed by the vocal group *Perri* entitled *No Place to Go*. This song was originally composed in the 1980s to address the issue of homelessness, however after doing some research I felt that this tune could be adapted to address the mental health issues that we are facing today. The chorus, “no place to go” reflects the feeling that many have as if they are trapped inside themselves without a way to escape. The first verse is from the perspective of a person dealing with mental health and the challenges that they face every day. The second verse is from the perspective of a friend who recognizes that someone that they are close to is dealing with this disease and needs to seek help. The friend is encouraging their loved one to persevere and seek the assistance that they need so that they can continue to live a stronger and healthier life. The third verse is from the perspective of triumph as the person afflicted with this disease now believes that they now have the tools and ability to cope with mental health and win. We hope this song provokes discussion throughout our communities to address an issue that is facing us all.

Generations. This selection is especially important because it addresses the breakdown of communication that we have in our community. It’s important to remember that everyone’s perspective is through the eyes of their own time and era. The purpose of this song is to increase dialogue across age demographics and remind our more experienced generation that the goal is to prepare our young people for the world that they are entering not the one that’s being left behind. Conversely, it is also a reminder to our younger generation that to build the world they are entering, they will need the wisdom of the generation that has come before them in order to succeed.

A Mother's Cry... A Father's Tear captures the feeling of a mother and father learning about a tragedy that has just happened to their child and the hopelessness they feel as they see them helpless, holding on to life only the sound of their heartbeat. The solos depict the voices of three scared children who are victims of this unspeakable act and the fear that they are experiencing as they cling to life. We are all caught in this web of destruction and it is time that we come together and remember; a cry knows no race, pain knows no ethnicity and a tear is felt by us all.

Sweets Revenge is dedicated to my mother (Deborah "Sweets" Bryant). This song deals with the challenges of broken homes and the affects that it has on families. My mother would always say (as most do) that she did not want me to become a victim of statistics. So, along with providing a solid home structure, she also understood the value of creating a strong circle mentorship around me. With that in mind, I was surrounded by great teachers, coaches and musical mentors that guided me and shared wisdom through my upbringing. As you listen to this song, please consider the strength and bravery along with the challenges that are involved with raising a child (or children) alone. Consider a family or young person that could benefit from your time, wisdom and mentorship. It will truly make a difference!

The Village Speaks is inspired by the African proverb *It Takes a Village to Raise a Child*. This is a call-to-action meant to challenge society by asking "if the village could speak what would the village say to all of us?" This is a reminder that we need to come together as a community to inspire and protect our children regardless of race, ethnicity or socio-economic background. The village protected us, it's time we protect the village.

In Memory Of is written in reflection of friends, family and loved ones that we have lost, that we miss and that we hope to see again one day. It's a reminder that we all must appreciate those around us and value the moments that we have together. This song is dedicated to the memory of my nephew, Micah Damon Cross II.

Freedom Day was composed and recorded by Max Roach in 1960. Though this piece was written in response to the civil rights movement, it also reminds us all that freedom has many shapes and means something different to us all. I was inspired to record this piece based off a quote stating "we will all never truly be free unless we strive for the freedom of someone else."

Hope Wins encourages all of us to uplift ourselves and each other and never forget that no matter what we can all make it if we work together. A belief in oneself plus a belief in others equals hope and HOPE WINS!