

LIFESTYLEPEOPLE YOU SHOULD KNOW

Slamming her fears

Jasmine Combs is raising money to attend the Individual World Poetry Slam, held in Washington, D.C.

by ALEXANDER CASPER | 08 SEPTEMBER 2015



DANIELA AYUSO TTN Jasmine Combs, a junior English major, started writing and performing poetry with Babel, a poetry collective at Temple. | Daniela Ayuso TTN

There are some people's stories that need to be told. Senior Jasmine Combs brought one titled "Shameer" to the National Poetry Slam, named after her sister's old friend.

"They were just hanging out that day catching up." Combs told The Temple News. "He walked her home that night. Seconds after she got through the door, we heard gunshots. My sister ran outside, and Shameer had been shot and killed. It was the first time death directly related to me. It happened right in front of my house. It took forever for news coverage to even say anything about it."

Combs, an English major with a focus on creative writing who is also working toward her master's in secondary education, started performing spoken word in the 2014 season. Since then, she has competed in the 2014 and 2015 National Poetry Slams. The latter took place in Oakland, California, from Aug. 10-15.

At this year's National Poetry Slam, Combs performed individually with her piece "Girlfight" along with a few group pieces where her group made it to the semifinals.

Now, Combs aims to perform in the Individual World Poetry Slam from Oct. 7-10 in Washington, D.C. She was also crowned this year's Grand Slam Champion of The Philly Pigeon, a local poetry competition.

The IWPS competition is similar to the National Poetry Slam, but is limited to 72 poets from around the world who qualify to compete at the event.

However, the Philly Pigeon isn't capable of raising the funds for her to compete. She is currently raising money through a GoFundMe page, in addition to selling her chapbooks—which are small collections of her poetry—and doing features on different works and performances.

If she is able to go, Combs plans on bringing multiple pieces to the competition, like "Girlfight" and another piece she's currently working about depression.

"I haven't been diagnosed with depression so I don't want to say depression, but it's about dealing with unstable emotional trials," Combs said.

She also plans on bringing a couple of pieces about race, like one about hope and dealing with racially charged violence in her community.

Combs began her poetry career with Babel, a poetry collective at Temple, where she started slamming to get over stage fright.

"I just told myself one day, 'Jasmine, you have to work on your performance,'" Combs said. "Everyone tells you that you write very well. You should be able to put this on a stage and perform to people."

She didn't win her first slam, but she captured an interested audience.

"A lot of people came up to me afterwards," Combs said. "They told me they really vibed with and really respected it."

One of the first pieces Combs wrote was "Monster," a poem influenced by a bad relationship with her father, who passed away.

"He stifled a lot of my forms of expression, and poetry and writing was [some] of the only ways I felt I could express myself," Combs said. "Almost all of my poetry is somewhere centered around my dad, but 'Monster' was the first poem I actually wrote that was about my dad. What 'Monster' is really about is me struggling to define myself now that my dad is gone."

After college, Combs plans to open her own publishing company and focus on the works of women of color. For now, she is currently working on a second chapbook, which she said will continue along her trend of writing about personal experiences.

"When I get my second chapbook out, I want it to be completely about my sister and the influence she has had on my life," Combs said.

Alexander Casper can be reached at alexander.casper@temple.edu.

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

* Name

* Email

Website

6DLaxuX5nEVZ

*** Copy This Password ***

*** Type Or Paste Password Here ***

463,078 Spam Comments Blocked so far by [Spam Free Wordpress](#)

Comment

You may use these HTML tags and attributes: <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <blockquote cite=""> <cite> <code> <del datetime=""> <i> <q cite=""> <s> <strike>

Post Comment