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A moral struggle

A Sacramento hip-hop artist wants to chart a new path for his community

BY **MOZES ZARATE** / mozesz@newsreview.com



PHOTO BY MARIA RATINOVA

Just read the T-shirt, folks.

Dewayne Lamont wants to start his own ideology.

And while the 25-year-old, who goes by ConsciBus onstage, is still paving his own road as a musician and youth educator, the rapper's founding principles are in his lyrics.

"Go to college, get the knowledge, learn the game and give back," he raps in the song, "Come Holla At Me." "Keep it solid, stay sober, so your mind's intact / Stay healthy, work out, get a career and then stack / In due time, you'll rise, guaranteed, that's a fact."

Lamont calls those lines "The Formula," and it's a message he wants to preach widely. The songs in his upcoming EP, *Be Real Show Love* are simple call-to-actions told in motivational rhymes behind sunny back beats.

"A lot of it does focus on the African-American community, some of the things that I see that need to change culturally," Lamont says. "But I still present my messages to where it resonates, no matter where you come from."

His mission started at 15, when Lamont, who grew up in the "Shady 80s" neighborhood in East Oakland, discovered a new hip-hop sound from rappers such as Tupac Shakur and Lauryn Hill—artists who understood the language of the hyphy movement he grew fond of, but offered an empowering, alternative message.

The second factor was trauma. While walking home one day, Lamont said he was robbed in his neighborhood.

"What's crazy is that that same day, my mom wanted to give me a ride," he remembers. "People had been getting robbed a lot. But I was arrogant. I thought, 'Ain't nobody gonna mess with me. I'm in my community.'"

The experience had an almost PTSD-like effect on him, Lamont says.

"The fear started causing me to think more, paying attention to who I was hanging around," he says. "I thought, if I want to stay alive, if I want to thrive and do positive stuff, I gotta change my whole life."

More than 10 years later, Lamont says he can speak openly about the experience, even in his music. Like Shakur and Hill, he wants to make positive, self-empowering messages relatable.

"I want my niece and nephew to be able to listen to my music where I'm going, as well as my grandma or someone's aunty," Lamont says. "But I also want the people in the community to be able to relate to it, to be able to understand it."

Songs such as "Get Up" are particularly uplifting, beckoning the listener to roll out of bed and start their day.

"Stop playing with the present / The future is coming and it's a marathon race, so keep running," Lamont rhymes with the tough love of an older sibling. Consider it an alternative to your alarm clock, moving instead snooze-inducing. Other songs, such as "Smile!," demand a positive attitude, accompanied by bright keys and gospel choir.

The EP will be his third release, one of many milestones this year for Lamont, who moved to Sacramento seven years ago. In January, he performed as a headlining act at the Martin Luther King Jr. Day march downtown. In March, he won two SAMMIES awards, in the hip-hop/rap and emcee categories. He recently graduated from Sacramento State with a bachelor's degree in sociology, and works as a supervisor with Youth Civic Engagement at the City of Sacramento, which offers programs that help youth make an impact in local government.

Be Real Show Love drops in August. Lamont says he plans to release a full-length album early next year. Eventually, he wants to build a media platform that would allow others to create art focused on community impact instead of the pursuit of fame.

"That's a big part of what my message is about; staying conscious, that you ain't gotta be part of the hype," he says. "You define the route you want to take, and your influence."

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Check out ConsciBus on Soundcloud: soundcloud.com/consciBus.