

Chicago Rapper spreads message through Psalms.



Chicago Rapper Psalm One in the recording booth.

Ben Yaster of Dusted Magazine calls her “one of the most promising voices of hip-hop today,” she currently sits as the first lady Rhymesayer’s Entertainment and musically she’s gearing up to make 2019 her biggest year yet, but Chicago rap prodigy Psalm One is making an impact on children that speaks volumes louder than music ever could.

The route to stardom hasn’t been a normal one for Psalm One. In her own words she “didn’t know I was going to become a rapper until right when I became one.” Born Cristalle Bowen, the rapper grew up in Rogers Park and it wasn’t until she moved to the South side of Chicago was she introduced to rap music. She initially hated the genre due to the genre’s affiliation with violence. Bowen caught the hip-hop bug later in life when she was re-introduced to the genre by independent and underground artists; however, music was still just a hobby for Psalm One. Bowen attended college at the University of Illinois studying Chemistry and sampling with music until one day she was given the opportunity to turn her hobby into a career and she ran with it.

“A complete Psalm is that ultimate feeling that you’ve said something,” said Bowen. The same feeling that Bowen has continually felt due to her collaboration with the American Scores Program. The ASCAP songwriter residency program takes an artist and places them in a school with underprivileged kids. The artist and the children are then required to write and record a song over the course of 3 days. Bowen turned what originally was a regional project into a national project. She provided tours in ten cities across the United States and in each location collaborated with children in recording an original song. Each song was later compiled to form her critically acclaimed album *Child Support*.

In addition to the ASCAP residency program, Bowen partners with the Intonation Music Workshop on an after school kids program called Rhymeschool. Rhymeschool offers ten week programs that educate kids about all aspects of the music industry and the importance of the people behind the scenes.

Rhymeschool gives artists the chance to work with inner-city kids. Many of the kids whom are effected by local Chicago gun violence and the hip hop sub-genre that appraises it: Drill. Drill refers to music released by gang affiliated musicians who rap about guns and violence. With the success of Chicago acts like Chief Keef, this genre of music has seen a surge in Chicago and has left many concerned on the impact it has on children. However, Bowen goes on to say that the “drill scene” definitely has a negative effect, but that “many of the kids aren’t stupid.” She finds that many of the young kids that she works with find that they can say a better message through their own music.



Psalm One/Bowen and students as part of the Rhymeschool program. Picture was provided by her.

A better message, is something that Psalm One tries to tell through her own music. In her song “Kids Right Now,” Psalm One raps about the importance of being a good role model and giving back to the community when needed. A message that the popular “drill scene” isn’t providing to the young audience that listens to it.

Bowen’s route to fame certainly wasn’t normal, and she encourages kids to “live out multiple dreams in your life and be open to where life takes you,” said Bowen. A phrase that mirrors her path from chemist to musician.

Noelle Prete, an avid listener of Psalm One, said she admires Bowen for “being able to stay true to her message even during a time when gun violence themed music is so popular in Chicago rap.” Prete, who is a music studies major at Columbia College Chicago is also an avid listener of Drill, but prefers the music of artists like Psalm One “because it actually has a message,” said Prete. Prete is also a listener of Bowen’s alter ego Hologram Kizzie.



Bowen, seen here in her music video for her single “Need Love Too,” as Hologram Kizzie.

Bowen has adopted the alter-ego Hologram Kizzie to serve more adult-themed music than Psalm One. Through Hologram Kizzie, Bowen explores her personality and sexuality under the new moniker that allows her to be “free to embrace all parts of one’s self,” said Bowen. Because of Psalm One’s affiliation with kid friendly music, she has the freedom to say whatever she wants with Kizzie.

This upcoming year Bowen has plans for new releases Psalm One, Hologram Kizzie, and an indie band that she’s just starting. Her long awaited new full-length album *Hug Life* is set to be released in February and features a mix of the styles of both of her alter-egos and is a continuation of the Hologram Kizzie released album *Free Hugs*. Bowen hopes for *Hug Life* to

be released in early February along with a following *Hug Life* tour. The new album is said to focus on themes of love, life, infatuation and explore deeper into her personality and sexuality. When asked if she had plans to leave Chicago any time soon, Bowen claimed that she had little reason to move due to the industry that was now present in Chicago.

The popularity of drill music may seem as if it poses a threat to both non-drill artists and to children, but in the case of artists like Psalm One it only helps her out. The new music industry brought to Chicago due to the new genre results in people from all over checking on Chicago artists. And when listeners want to hear music with substance they look to Psalm One.

If anyone would like to get involved in the ASCAP residency program or with Rhymeschool feel free to hit up Psalm One on twitter at @Psalmone or at facebook.com/psalmone.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRgNJkC1ReM> <--- Interview Link

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGwahrC3d_M Music Video (Psalm One)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUEGcClLzsQ> Music Video (Hologram Kizzie)