EDUCATING AND HEALING OUR COMMUNITY
DONTAVIUS DEAN

“Who am I?” I ask while walking down abandoned streets with a feeling of despondency. Flickering lights, shriveled homes, and moonshine joints suck the life out of generations of majestic scholars who look like me. I walk to a school that does not sustain me; it becomes harder to press on. We are children living in a confused society that does not honor us. I am overwhelmed with this feeling of being alone and forgotten. Can’t they see that not being a child prevents a child from wanting to mature?

Being a student in the Atlanta public schools was very challenging. I along with other children ate poor quality food, had no connection with our community, and took test after test – without the benefit of hands-on activities to connect our learning to real-life. Counselors often did not correctly place students in classes they needed for graduation. My teachers did not seem to understand the stresses we were living with. Many kids wore summer clothes in the winter time. Clean parks, clean water, and community centers were not available for those of us who just wanted to be around something positive. To make matters worse, it was hard to find fresh fruits and vegetables in stores near our homes. It made me think that if our brains and bodies were not properly nourished, how could we even focus at school?

As a student, I felt disappointed. I never knew where I could get support. I stopped wanting to go to school. I didn’t have money, which separated me from those who did. Leaving school made sense. Because my brother and I were sharing the same frustrations, we began thinking about what we should do. We were tired of not having our basic needs met. I was landscaping and gardening to make money and he was good with money and management. So we decided to

The “Destroy Injustice through Gardening and Art Initiative” was a collaboration with local schools, businesses, and community organizations designed to educate children and adults about food and give them positive artistic outlets. D2DAW, LLC focused its curriculum on: Nutrition Awareness, Sustainable Agriculture, Basic Horticulture, Community/Innovation, and Art. Photos courtesy of <d2dawllc.weebly.com>.

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start our business. Since we both love our community, we came up with the idea of urban gardening to give back. It gave us thoughts of empowerment while ridding ourselves from habits contributing to being unhealthy.

In 2014, my brother and I started our urban agriculture business called D2DAW, LLC. (Dawn 2 Dusk Agriculture Way). Our goal is to advocate, stimulate, educate, and heal our community.

Located on the west side of Atlanta and in the heart of downtown, we have impacted our community by providing healthy foods at the Indigo Learning Farms. Students come to the farm and learn about grading eggs, identifying plants, natural fertilization of soil, and creating natural remedies. They are digging in the dirt, being scientists, learning new words, and using math methods to water the plants and space the seedlings in rows. We connect them to nature not just by growing natural local foods, but also by taking them canoeing down the Chattahoochee River and hiking up the Great Smokey Mountains.

We are letting children be children. They might ask themselves, “Who am I?” And if they do, I hope they can answer, “I am a child. I am a scientist. I am connected to my community and the environment. I am learning and making real life decisions that impact my life and others. I have a future.

Dontavius Dean is a student at Atlanta Technical College and co-founder of D2DAW, LLC <d2dawllc.weebly.com>. He was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. He is a vegan and eats all natural products. He makes and sells jewelry using natural stones. He loves to dance!