

Community Spotlight April 2018 – DeWayne Ewing Jr.



(DeWayne, next to an image of himself promoting Los Rios Community College District)

If you want to know what cool looks like, take a look at DeWayne Ewing. Community advocate, full-time student, and artist, DeWayne is a one-man example of the kind of holistic change the Sacramento Promise Zone seeks to inspire. By leveraging talent and energy from his diverse interests, ranging from musical to academic, the Sacramentan known as Conci8us is opening new doors for youth in the Promise Zone. A full-time student at CSU Sacramento, DeWayne also works as an Outreach Coordinator at the Oak Park Community Center, where he runs the summer youth leadership “Inspire Me.” Additionally, this artist has been hard at work creating music with a message. His song, “Freedom,” started the 2018 MLK March on January 15.

But before he learned to, as he likes to say, “make conscious cool,” DeWayne was not always such a positive force. Growing up in Oakland “in a very rough community,” he faced an environment similar to other inner-city communities, one where a dearth of public resources, economic opportunity, and positive influence was the rule, not the exception. This environment shaped his identity and informed his artistic development in areas ranging from style to moniker. Conci8us was once Shady, a name taken from and descriptive of his old neighborhood. This name also reflected his attitude and performance at the time, which often featured profanity.

But as DeWayne continued to grow and learn more about the world and society, through education and exposure to more conscious artists, he sensed a need for change in himself. “That really inspired me . . . I was still called Shady but I knew I was going in a different direction.” Soon after, DeWayne made the decision to transition towards being conscious, in name and action. He asked himself, “How can I make my music

engaging and cool without cussing? Although hip-hop sometimes stigmatizes consciousness, DeWayne was determined to make it cool. He realized that, with an uplifting and empowering message, he was also better able to go into any environment, from the stage to the classroom. Conci8us pulls together his different talents and interests to serve as a model for action. "It's about how can I create a flow . . . where all these things connect together so you can be effective in how you utilize your energy and find your sense of purpose."

