



AYANNA HORTON

Ayanna, meaning beautiful flower (according to Google), is a 13-year-old bag of emotions who likes to write what she is feeling. This is her second year in Deep, and she loves it. She is ready to blossom into the beautiful flower that she is through her writing.

KEEP YA HEAD UP

After I get out of the shower, I feel as clean as Mr. Clean's head. I slip on my navy-blue basketball shorts and oversized navy-blue t-shirt and turn on the water so I can brush my teeth. I grab my purple-and-white toothbrush and the Colgate toothpaste. I open the toothpaste, put some on my toothbrush, turn off the water, and start to brush my teeth. Once I start, I realize that I'm brushing roughly but not roughly enough to make my gums bleed.

When I look in the mirror, I just stand there and look with self-pity. I look at myself and ask, *How did I get this big? Why did I do this to myself? Why did I eat so much? Why am I not physically active?* I look at myself in disgust and cry. I cry my eyes out and say, *Why? Why would God make me this way?* The warm, salty tears start to roll down my left and right cheeks.

As I am brushing my teeth, my mind starts to wander back to the beginning of my day. I walk into school, looking at the nicely polished floors—so polished I can see my own reflection. I breathe in the smell of Pine-Sol, which makes my nose tingle. I don't get breakfast because they make us eat together.

I walk up the two flights of stairs and get nervous. I start off walking up the first four stairs, which is also the first flight. The next flight of stairs looks like Mount Everest. Then I start getting scared. My heart starts to pound like a drum, and my legs start to shake like maracas.

I touch the smooth railing, taking it one step at a time. Then I realize there are people behind me. I walk faster, then I make it to the top of the stairs, breathing heavily—so heavily that it sounds like I'm having an asthma attack. I want to stop, but don't. I am sweating like a bull. The feeling of the sweat dripping down my forehead makes me even more nervous.

When I walk into my homeroom class, it feels like the tundra. Looking at the desk, I ease my way in and hope it doesn't make a sound. I then go into the restroom, fix myself up, and start my day. I forget about everything except my appearance.

My parents always say, "Don't think about what people say about how you look; just be you." But I can't, knowing that they whisper and talk and make jokes. They say things like:

"Girl, she can't even fit through the door," or "She is just too fat," or

“OMG. You see that girl over there?”

“Lose some weight.”

“Go exercise.”

“Don’t talk to me.”

“I don’t like big people — they’re just too big to be around.”

I get depressed when I hear these words. I really need to talk to someone, but there’s no one to talk to. If I tell my parents, they just say the same thing over and over again: “Don’t worry about them; they’re just haters.” But it’s like me with math. A teacher can tell me the criteria over and over again, but I still don’t get it.

I finish brushing my teeth, turn out the light in the bathroom and walk down the hallway to my room. The only light comes from the TV buzzing in the next room.

I lie down on the cloud-like bed and tuck myself in. I grab my phone, go to Spotify, and shuffle my playlist. The very first song that comes on is “Keep Ya Head Up” by Tupac. I grab my earbuds, put them in my ears, and fall asleep to these words:

And I know they like to beat you down a lot.

When you come around the block, brothers clown a lot.

But please don’t cry, dry your eyes, never let up.

Forgive, but don’t forget, girl, keep ya head up