



# What's Up, Dallas! Magazine

Spotlight Edition:

# "Unheard Voices"

Produced by Melvin Bullock Jr.

January 2024 Edition

[www.whatsupdallasmagazine.com](http://www.whatsupdallasmagazine.com)



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# ***The Unheard Voices by Melvin Bullock, Jr.***

*A Documentary featuring Dallas Teens*



Have you ever witnessed an amazing project come to fruition? Like, actually seen the process from the start to finish and still amazed at the final product? That happened to us here at What's Up, Dallas! Magazine.

In January, we were invited to experience the making of "Unheard Voices" By Melvin Bullock, Jr. It was a sight to see, but we glad to witness it in its entirety.

From the beginning, Melvin was given a challenge with the Dallas Art & Design District to make an impactful project involving Dallas Teens, and the wheels began turning for Melvin. Being passionate about having a chance to speak out and tell stories to life and accomplishments, Melvin sought out 5 teens to tell their story of life and what they have accomplished so far.

Inquires started flowing in and the connections were made, and the stories began to flow out. Being super impactful, each guest left a lasting impression on all involved in the documentary. The first teen interviewed with Bryson Baggett, a college student at Southern University. He speaks about the struggle in school with speech and how he became an accomplished athlete and student.

McKelvy Barnett, left the crew in awe by his interview, displaying a compassionate heart for animals and wanting to help others in need. He began to light up and speak out with sheer delight when asked about his favorite things and made it an unforgettable moment to witness.

Briana Carrera, the third student interviewed is a Bowie High School graduate and champion boxer with Team USA. Her story is about changing the narrative of struggles into a passion that truly speaks of "a warrior journey". She is force to be reckoned with, indeed!



Kimmie Love-Stovall, a dance student from Booker T. Washington School of Performing Arts speaks out about how financial challenges didn't stop her from pursue her true passion for dancing. She is living her dream dancing every day through self-expression and being in a school that allows expression and creativity.

Damien Polk, a senior at Spruce High School speaks out about being a new dad, supporting his father, and focusing on school as his everyday journey. Many may not see his journey, but his strength to persevere resound through his interview. He uses every moment as an opportunity to be stronger and being a role model in his baby's life.

Within 4 days, this event was completed for a private screening at the Urban Arts Center in Dallas, Texas. The documentary was beautifully placed together and was received well by all whom attended the screening. Some invitees even asked for Melvin to make the project into a series for all to enjoy and truly see what Dallas has to offer.

Nothing was more magical than seeing these teens witness each other's stories; it was an impactful documentary by Melvin Bulock, Jr of A-list Photography. We looked forward to more of what is to come from this project and the future teens.

Please stay tuned for more updates from positive community projects in Dallas, Texas from A-List Photography and what he is doing for the community and teens. Nothing is more impactful than hearing "Unheard Voices" finally able to speak out.



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## *"Unheard Voices: Bryson Baggett's Journey of Triumph, Resilience, and Expression"*

In the rich tapestry of life, there are stories that often go unnoticed—stories of triumph, resilience, and the indomitable spirit of individuals who overcome adversity. In this edition of "Unheard Voices," we shine a spotlight on Bryson Baggett, a remarkable young man whose journey has been a testament to his strength, determination, and the power of self-expression.

Bryson's narrative is one marked by challenges and triumphs. Originally hailing from Mississippi, his early academic years were marred by a speech impediment that went unacknowledged by the school district. The district failed to recognize Bryson's potential as a gifted and talented student, attempting to place him in special education without acknowledging his true capabilities.

However, a pivotal moment in Bryson's life came when he moved to Texas, where he found a second chance to blossom into the best version of himself. Freed from the constraints of a system that failed to see his true potential, Bryson flourished both academically and athletically. Notably, he became the first black student to be accepted into the International Baccalaureate Program at Woodrow Wilson—a significant accomplishment that he cherishes as a true blessing.

At the heart of Bryson's journey is the unwavering support of his hero, his Uncle. Recognizing the pivotal role his Uncle played in paving the way for his journey, Bryson acknowledges him as a guiding force in his growth. The support provided by his Uncle was instrumental in facilitating Bryson's move to Texas, where transformative changes in his life were made possible.

Reflecting on his past, Bryson expresses a heartfelt desire to revisit his grandparents and extend his gratitude for setting the foundational pillars of his life. Their home was a sanctuary for Bryson, a place where he felt the most secure and truly at home—a sentiment that has left an indelible mark on his journey.



Reflecting on his past, Bryson expresses a heartfelt desire to revisit his grandparents and extend his gratitude for setting the foundational pillars of his life. Their home was a sanctuary for Bryson, a place where he felt the most secure and truly at home—a sentiment that has left an indelible mark on his journey.

Despite the rocky path through school, Bryson is grateful for the Texas teachers who took the time to recognize his needs, with a special mention for Mr. Turner, his 6th-grade teacher. To those facing speech impediments, Bryson offers a comforting message: "It's okay. Slow down, breathe."

Looking ahead, Bryson is pursuing a major in Business, driven by a thirst for knowledge in business and marketing. In a vision for the future, he sees himself completing grad school with a flourishing career in International Business—a testament to his unwavering determination.

Beyond academia, Bryson is a poet and short story writer. Through his creative works, he seeks to connect with others, sharing his journey of coping and healing. With a dream to publish his poems in a book and speak to audiences, Bryson aims to dismantle stigmas surrounding the life of a Black Man, urging society to break free from preconceived notions.

In a powerful plea to adults, Bryson urges understanding, emphasizing that students are diverse in their needs. He advocates for recognizing those who may require an outlet, someone to talk to, and the simple yet profound act of being seen and heard.

Bryson Baggett's story is one of triumph over adversity, resilience in the face of challenges, and the pursuit of self-expression as a means of healing and understanding. In amplifying his voice, we hope to inspire others to embrace their own narratives, to stand resilient in the face of adversity, and to break free from the shackles of societal stigmas.



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*"McKelvy Barnett: The Unheard  
Voice Making Waves of  
Compassion in DFW"*

In the bustling city of Dallas-Fort Worth, amidst the vibrant stories of its youth, one teenager stands out as an unheard voice, striving to make a difference in the lives of others. Meet McKelvy Barnett, a senior at Woodrow Wilson and a unique character in our ongoing series, "Unheard Voices."

At first glance, McKelvy may seem like a quiet teen, but beneath his reserved demeanor lies a heart filled with compassion and a fervent desire to make a positive impact on the world. As part of our series, McKelvy's story unfolds, revealing not only his personal journey but also the profound influence he is having on those around him.

For McKelvy, family is a cornerstone of his strength and resilience. He shares a close bond with his brother, forming a support system that aids in their collective healing. In conversation, McKelvy emphasizes, "No one has been through what we have been through. My brother and I help each other heal." Such resilience and camaraderie are a testament to the unbreakable spirit of this young man.

A significant influence in McKelvy's life is his father, whom he speaks highly of.

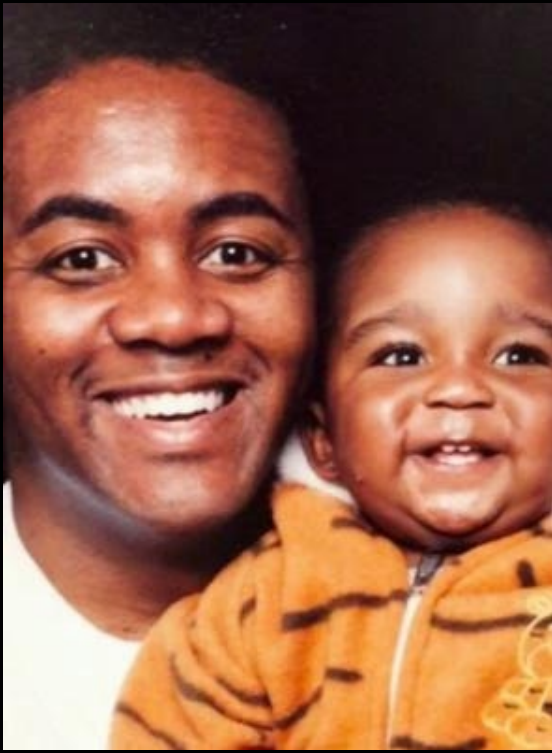
Grateful for the guidance received, McKelvy credits his father for teaching him how to navigate life and stay focused on the right path. Through involvement in Kappa Men, his father instilled in him essential values, shaping McKelvy into a responsible and focused individual.



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McKelvy's passion extends beyond borders, as he has traveled to various countries, including Haiti, to contribute to building homes and support communities in need. These experiences have provided him with a broader perspective, making him appreciate the privileges he enjoys and instilling a profound openness to helping others.

One of McKelvy's proudest moments is being a Big Brother to a younger student. He reflects, "All the things he was going through, he is not going through them now cause I'm bringing him around and showing him things." It is evident that McKelvy finds immense joy in assisting others, a sentiment reflected in his genuine smile during conversations about his experiences.

Beyond his humanitarian endeavors, McKelvy has discovered an unexpected passion for dogs. What started as a social media hobby has transformed into a small business, where he dog-sits for owners during their trips and vacations. McKelvy's love for dogs extends to strays and owned pets alike, and he actively participates in adoption events, significantly contributing to the placement of numerous dogs into loving homes.

Walking through downtown, McKelvy's commitment to animal welfare shines through as he stops by adoption events, playing with puppies and contributing to their adoption. His genuine affection for dogs is not merely a hobby; McKelvy aspires to train and work with dogs regularly, harboring dreams of turning this passion into a fulfilling career.

In the vibrant mosaic of Dallas-Fort Worth's youth, McKelvy Barnett's story stands as a testament to the transformative power of compassion, resilience, and a genuine desire to make a difference. As his unheard voice resonates, may it inspire others to embrace empathy, connect with their communities, and create positive change in the world around them.

## *A Fighter's Redemption: Brianna Carrera's Journey from Trouble to Triumph*

In the bustling corridors of Bowie High School, Brianna Carrera was not just another graduate; she was a testament to the transformative power of resilience, discipline, and the unwavering support of a loving family. Today, she stands proudly as a three-time national champion, a two-time state champion, and a two-time junior Olympic champion in the competitive realm of Team USA boxing. However, Brianna's journey to success was anything but conventional.

During her early years, Brianna found herself entangled in a web of trouble, leading to multiple expulsions and even trips to juvenile facilities. It was a seemingly endless cycle until her father intervened, steering her towards a life-changing visit to the boxing gym. Little did they know, this would be the turning point that would shape Brianna's destiny.

Boxing became more than just a sport for Brianna; it became a sanctuary where she could channel her energy positively. The ring taught her valuable life lessons in patience, discipline, and the honing of her innate skills. As she embraced this new path, Brianna discovered her true calling and a way to express herself without falling into the pitfalls of trouble.

A pivotal moment in Brianna's life occurred at the tender age of 14 when she clinched her first national title. The surreal experience not only brought her face-to-face with her Instagram idols but also served as a catalyst for her unwavering dedication to boxing. Surrounded by like-minded individuals, Brianna's career gained a sense of purpose and direction.





Central to Brianna's narrative is the figure of her hero – her father. Resiliently navigating the challenges of Oak Cliff, he remained committed to doing the right thing for his family, steering clear of the temptations that surrounded them. His influence instilled in Brianna a sense of responsibility and the importance of staying true to one's principles, even in the face of adversity.

Looking ahead, Brianna envisions a future where she not only conquers the boxing world as a world champion but also becomes a beacon of hope for others. Her dream includes establishing homeless shelters and youth centers, driven by a genuine concern for the well-being of children who might tread the same troubled paths she once did.

Brianna aspires to be a role model, ensuring that youngsters find guidance and inspiration to navigate life's challenges without succumbing to the perils of the streets. Throughout her journey, one person stood out – Ms. Moorehead, a teacher who refused to give up on Brianna when the education system seemed ready to. Brianna emphasizes the need for adults to recognize that children have lives beyond school, urging for a supportive environment where they can truly be themselves.

The catalyst for Brianna's personal transformation occurred at the age of 17, marked by a harrowing incident when her house was shot at. Faced with the stark reality of her family's perilous situation, Brianna knew a change was imperative. Though difficult, this change brought peace to her life, unveiling her true potential and giving her renewed purpose.

In Brianna Carrera's remarkable journey, we find a story of triumph over adversity, of a young woman who turned her life around through the discipline of boxing, the unwavering support of her father, and the belief of a dedicated teacher. As Brianna sets her sights on a future where her success becomes a platform for positive change, her story serves as an inspiring testament to the transformative power of resilience and the pursuit of one's dreams against all odds.

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## Empowering the Beat: Kimmie's Dance Through Challenges and Dreams



In the vibrant halls of Booker T Washington High of Visual Arts, one student, Kimmie, stands out as a testament to resilience, self-expression, and the pursuit of dreams. A dedicated dancer, Kimmie refuses to be a follower, fearlessly carving her own path in the world of visual arts.

Facing the challenges of limited family income and the support of a single parent, Kimmie's story is one of triumph over adversity. Undeterred, she turned to online resources, learning from videos and creating her own choreography to overcome financial constraints. The school became not only a place to acquire skills and techniques but also a platform to showcase her talents when she wasn't busy crafting her unique routines at home.

Among her many achievements, Kimmie proudly stands on the GPA Honor Roll this year. Her commitment to academic success and her unwavering focus on personal goals have paid off, showcasing the rewards of hard work and determination.

Inspired by the entrepreneurial spirit of Beyonce, Kimmie aspires to follow in her idol's footsteps, charting her course in the dance world. The Royal Family's hip hop vibes have captured her heart, and she dreams of one day performing with them.

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Reflecting on her childhood influences, Michael Jackson's legacy in choreography and dance resonates deeply, leaving an indelible mark on her artistic journey.

While Booker T Washington High provides an environment rich in artistic exploration, Kimmie yearns for a change in the attitude of the teachers. Advocating for a shift from a carefree approach to a more focused commitment, she emphasizes the need for attention to academics and performance over uniform regulations. Her plea echoes the desire for a learning environment that prioritizes substance over appearance.

Looking ahead, Kimmie envisions a future filled with success. In 10 years, she sees herself graduated, residing in a spacious home, and pursuing a career in visual arts. As a dance teacher, she imagines herself shaping the next generation, imparting the freedom and self-expression she cherishes in hip hop. However, she emphasizes the importance of understanding the stress and challenges faced by students, urging adults to recognize that the school journey can be demanding and exhausting.

Dancing across various genres, including Hip-Hop, Modern, Ballet, and Jazz, Kimmie's heart lies in the freedom of expression found in Hip Hop. Unconcerned with others' opinions, she embraces her outgoing nature and is ready to dance away the troubles that come her way. Kimmie's story is a testament to the power of perseverance, self-expression, and the transformative potential of the arts in shaping a young individual's journey.



## *A Tale of Resilience: Damien Polk's Inspiring Journey at Spruce High School*

Life can be a challenging journey, but amidst the difficulties, some individuals stand out as beacons of resilience and determination. Damien Polk, a student at Spruce High School, is one such individual whose story is both inspiring and heartwarming.

Hailing from Florida, Damien moved to Dallas with his family, facing financial hardships that made the pursuit of education a formidable task. His father's disability added an extra layer of responsibility for Damien, who found himself not only navigating the demands of high school but also shouldering the care of his ailing father.

Recently divorced parents and a significant move had a profound impact on Damien's family, transforming their once comfortable living situation into a financially strained one.

Despite these challenges, Damien remains steadfast in his commitment to graduate and create a better life for himself and his loved ones.

A typical day in Damien's life involves juggling multiple roles – a student, a new father, and a caregiver to his father battling congestive heart failure. The weight of these responsibilities might crush others, but Damien takes each day in stride, making school work a priority while attending to the needs of his newborn and ensuring his father's well-being.

Amidst the chaos, Damien finds solace and inspiration in his instructor, Sergeant Wright, who serves as a father figure and mentor. The influence of Sergeant Wright fuels Damien's aspirations to join the military, specifically the Marine Corps, instilling in him a sense of duty, honor, and the importance of doing the right thing.

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Damien's admiration extends beyond his immediate surroundings; he expresses a deep appreciation for the wisdom of Malcolm X, someone he studied in the past. Damien recognizes that wisdom brings peace, and he draws strength from Malcolm X's example of resilience against those who seek to bring you down.

Spruce High School plays a crucial role in Damien's life, providing him with the support needed for a student in his unique position. He commends the school for its understanding and support for new parents like himself, acknowledging that there's always someone to turn to when he needs it.



In offering advice to adults dealing with young minds, Damien emphasizes that forcing a child is not always the right approach. He believes there are alternative ways to convey messages and help them see the bigger picture.

For Damien, every hardship is a temporary obstacle on the path to success. He urges fellow parents not to quit, emphasizing the impermanence of difficulties. "Stay positive, and you keep yourself mentally locked in, there is nothing to stop you," he advises, encapsulating the spirit of resilience that defines his journey. Damien Polk's story is a testament to the indomitable human spirit, a reminder that with determination, positivity, and a supportive community, individuals can overcome even the most daunting challenges. Spruce High School stands as a beacon of support, and Damien, with his unwavering commitment, serves as an inspiration to all who face adversity on their journey to success.

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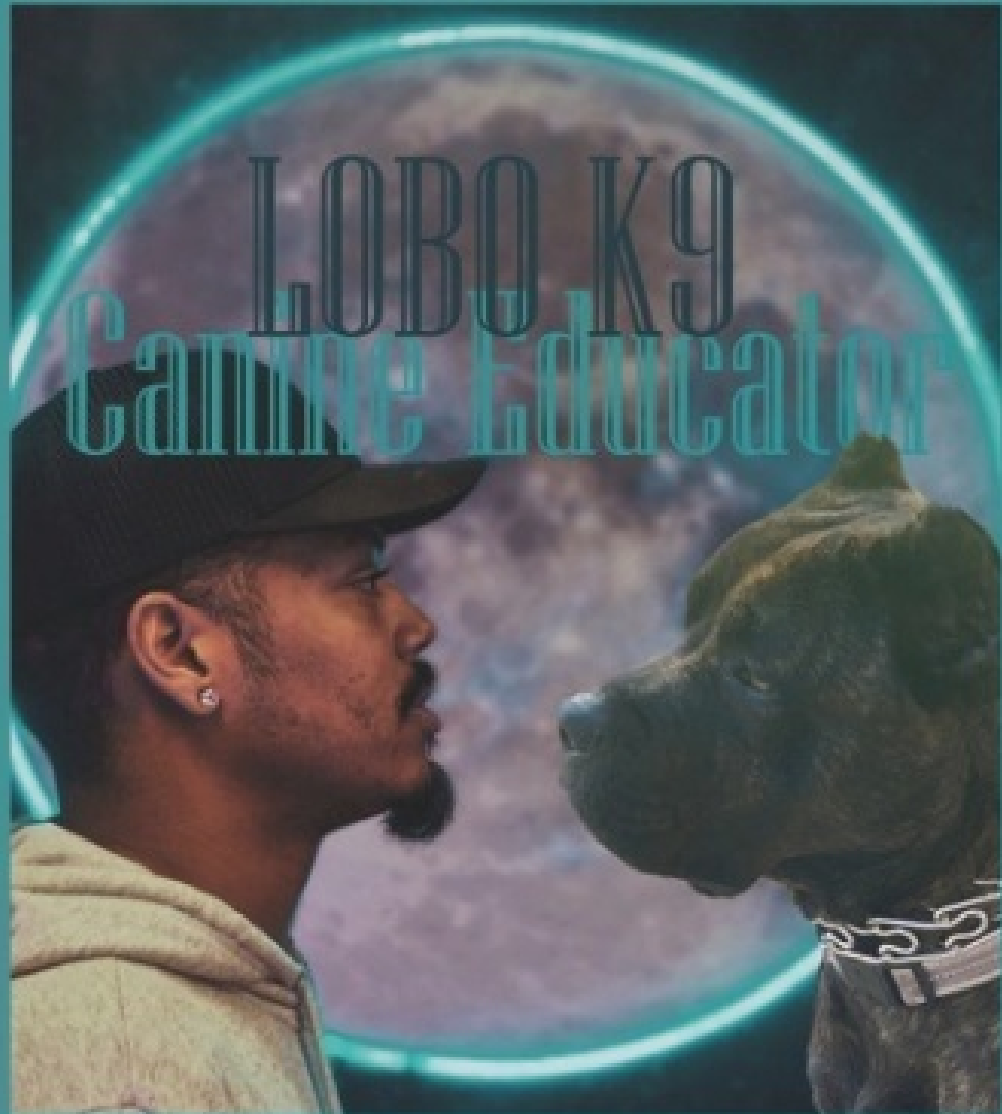
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