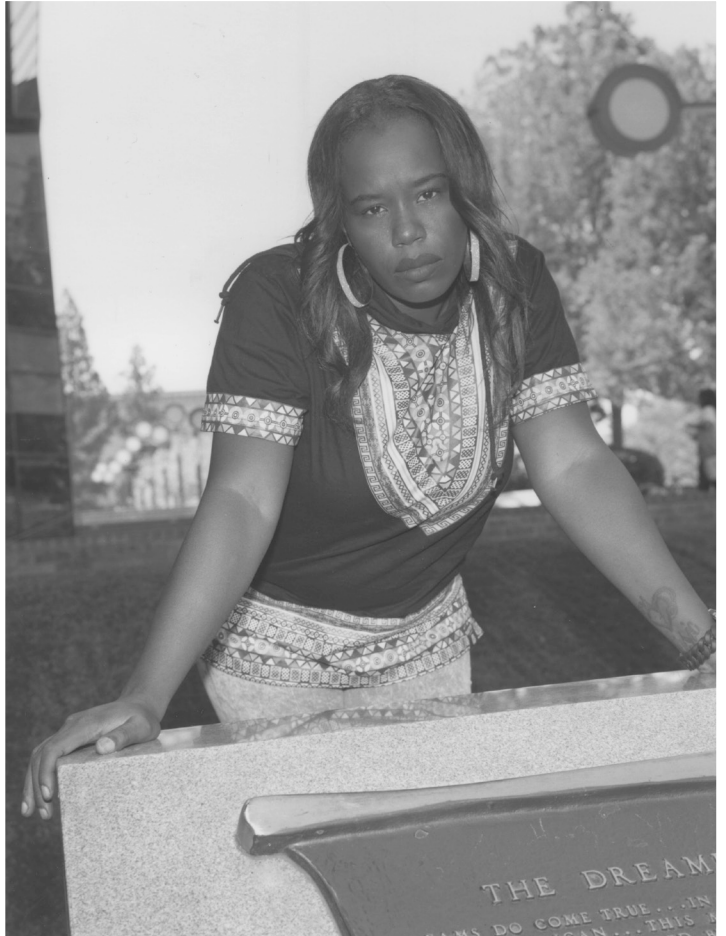


# D-Skyy



*The hip-hop game is hard. It is. But I love the music, so I can't get away from it. They just have to deal with me and how I am, because I'm not changing nothing for nobody. I am not your Rubik's cube.*



My name is Latoya. I'm a mother, a daughter, a sister, and a really good friend. I'm also a community activist and a small business owner. My life is busy, but sometimes I lay awake at night knowing that there's always something more I can do. The world's not going to change if we're sitting on our butts and twiddling our thumbs. I'm the one who steps out on a limb when there is no limb. That's me.

I'm a musician, known by the name D-Skyy. I started writing music when I was a kid, to take myself out of the world I was in. I grew up in a neighborhood where all I saw was violence. To shelter myself from all the stuff that was out there I just did music. My mom used to say, "Why are you being so wasteful?" She started limiting the amount of paper she would give me. So I would write music on the walls of the closet.

Music is therapy. Music is love. Music is passion. And it gives me so much. As a rap artist I am part of the hip hop community, which is male dominated and very directive as to what I am supposed to rap about. Women are supposed to say A, B, C, and D. Don't go past D. And I'm not supposed to be better than any guy, period. Unfortunately, I am.

In the industry and among fans there is also an expectation that, as a female rapper, I'll go half naked. There are two female rappers in history who have been successful, without having to show anything. Two! The rest, a lot of them, they're out there selling albums because they're naked, not because they're any good.

I remember this one photo shoot of female artists from all over California and Arizona. I agreed to be involved until they sent over a description of what we had to wear – black or gold booty shorts, spandex, shirt cut down low in the front, and between five and eight inch stilettos. I'm just not that kind of girl. Nine times out of ten I'm in my chucks, my jeans, my sweatshirts, and my hoodies. I had my manager call the guy and he says, "Do you know who you sent this to!?" And, this is what the guy says, "Eventually she's gotta get



"Blackskyy entertainment is my company, where we focus on helping develop artists, and help them understand that our work is beyond music. It's about focusing on community matters as well."



When D-Skyy was growing up she often wore Chuck Taylors, because they were inexpensive. This pair has been signed by individuals who have inspired her, or who she has inspired through her work.

up out of that phase. She's gotta show some skin."

There was another incident where I was booked for a show. We're at my house getting ready and the promoter calls and he says I have to be there early for a twerk contest. I asked, "Who's twerking?" And he was like, "You!" I said, "No, I'll be performing." And he says, "You can't just come here and perform. You've got to be a part of this twerk contest. I've seen pictures, and I do see that you do have some curves." I hung up.

I'm not gonna change! For what? It's not gonna happen. I've got a homegirl who told me, "You know, ever since the third grade you have not changed." I like to hear that. Let me stick to my guns. Sex sells, I understand that. But my thing is, what are you teaching by doing that - by telling little kids that if they aren't valued for their bodies, they're not worth anything?

I have three daughters, and I'm real big on self-esteem. So I have this long mirror on the inside of my hallway closet, and before my daughters leave the house I make them do a "self-check." I make them stare at themselves in that mirror, and they're not allowed to leave until they realize that they're beautiful. No matter what the world says, they're gonna love themselves.

Sometimes it takes them awhile to leave the mirror,

especially my daughter who has dark skin. In the Black community the different shades of skin color mean a lot, especially among females. I'm dark, too, and you know what comment I get? "You're pretty for a dark-skinned girl." I have to let people know, "No, I'm just pretty." It's things like that giving little girls a complex.

I got a lot of flack for my complexion when I was a kid, and it made me angry! Back then, my reaction was just to punch a person in the face. People still expect me to pop off, to go crazy, to start yelling and fussing and cussing and fighting. I'm from the projects, so I'm supposed to have this Angry Black Woman Syndrome. But I'm actually a very positive and happy person, and I'm too cute for jail bars anyways. And the thing is, I've realized, I can kill you faster with my words than with my hands.