

Narration: Music is, without a doubt, a large part of Black culture. In the Black community, it serves a tangible purpose. Yes, it's true - we make incredible music. But, more often than not, it also doubles as a political statement, or an act of resistance. Looking at both the creative and production side of things, it is clear to see that Black folks have taken their rightful place in the world of musical innovation.

My name is Gloria Essien, and I'm taking a look at how Black students at Brown navigate the music sphere on campus. Over the course of my time here, I've seen music serve as both a unifying force within Black community and as a healing mechanism during rougher times. I sat down with a few of my friends to talk about how they use and create music.

D: Hi my name is Dustin Abade, I go by Knohisry as like my alias towards music...So, like, I'mma scratch that 'cause that sounded... that didn't even like flow, I'm just gonna do that first line.

N: Dustin even cares about his flow when he's off the track.

D: My name is Dustin Abadie, aka Knohisry. I engineer music, I record and produce beats. I'm just like a hermit crab that will be in my room like making beats sometimes.

G: Tell us about your name, what does "Knohisry" mean?

D: "Knohisry" kind of came out of the same formation of like putting two words together, and so it was off of an ideology of like wanting to promote having knowledge and wanting to promote for others to seek knowledge of themselves, and to know more about... you know, just like the world around them and everything.

D: When I was younger, my nana, she always would explain to me how, like, why the world was so effed up in different ways and everything, and, so I was always very observant [*indistinct*] when I was younger. In the ways of which we call like "socially conscious" and everything, I was kind of socially conscious then. And then like even more now, and just, like, you know, growing and learning and everything. So whenever I think about, like not even music but just as far as like what I want to do with my music as the voice of what I try to release music as and everything, I'm always like pretty conscious of my social spacing positionality, like... I feel as always like I wouldn't mention this, but it's something that's kind of almost so important it can't be not mentioned, which is like, before when I was younger, I knew that I was lighter skin, and I would sometimes be perceived as different, but being more so socially conscious to understanding the ways in which the realms of me kind of being "white-passing" and everything and I remember, like, maybe sophomore year, I felt like I struggled with then allowing myself to be fully, freely me and everything, because I would question my own self... but I would always try to be conscientious of just different things I did and, like, not actions I would do but just how

people might see my portrayal of myself and just, like, making sure that I'm always true to myself and true to who I know I am and everything.

But it was almost as if a veil was then lifted, you know? So it made me more productive about knowing the ways in which I could use my voice without... without, like, voicing over other black voices, but also knowing that my voice is also a black voice and so that it also has, like... that I wouldn't have to question my own validation, but that like as a black man on campus, and a couple of my friends and everything, that our voices are validated through not even just our music, but just in being ourselves and everything.

G: What's your process when it comes to making your music?

D: I'll do trials and errors playing with different sounds and notes, and I'm like, "Mm, this might sounds good... oh, nope, that doesn't sound as good as I thought it would", and then I'll plug and play with different sounds and different notes until I have a melody that I'm like, "Yeah, this is a kind of okay melody," and then I'll build the drums and then, sometimes I'll work on a beat, I might start a beat and as soon as I start it, I'll just be either filled with so much energy or just really in the moment of enjoying that sounds, I can start and finish it as soon as I start it within that day. And some tracks, I can start and then come back to like a couple days later or a week later, and I'll make notes sometimes for like mixing, and I'll be like, "Maybe this doesn't sound good at this point, oh the hi-hats here should do this kind of role, the snare's like a bit too low", I'll just do those kind of techy notes, I'll just go back and reorganize the track and mess with it until I like it.

G: Aight, so you dropped an EP last year.

D: The EP is called "Beta 01". It goes through all these pretty eccentric beats of, like, very walled sounds. I don't know how to particularly describe the sounds besides like, experimental sounds because, like, it was just... it was a couple of sounds I was making in the course of making the track. And also, the order of them, it wasn't like I sat down and I made one track and thought, "Oh, this is gonna be the..." No. Like, all the sounds kind of took form and shape in their own time and place and everything just within that year/period and everything.

G: Mhm.

D: I hear the project now, and I'm like..."Blah..." Like, that's some mundane stuff, like it's okay, like when I hear it I'm like, "Ah, that's okay beats, kind of mediocre stuff." It was fun making it at the time, I like... I... I thoroughly enjoyed all the beats I guess. It could've been that I had ear fatigue from hearing all the beats so many times, it's a project that I enjoyed making, and now that I made it and put it out and everything, like... that's done with, and I'm ready to make more new projects more... more, like I'll start emphasizing towards beat tapes and more collaborations and stuff.

G: Is there anyone on Brown's campus that you'd want to collaborate with?

D: Yeah, actually. Warner Meadows. *[laughter]* Warner, we... we have yet to collaborate on a track. We must soon, 'cause that's gonna be a banger. *[laughter]* I promise you. *[laughter]*

N: Music isn't the only thing going on in Dustin's life. He's also very into sports video games like FIFA and 2K, and he's got some choice words for a couple of his friends.

G: Um... anyone you wanna challenge? *[laughter]*

D: Yeah, a few challenges out there. *[laughter]* Francis Rosenberg. *[laughter]* Antone LeBlanc. *[laughter]* And, yeah. *[laughter]* Yeah, Tone. *[laughter]* Gotta hit up that rematch. Oh! And Todd. Todd has yet to play me in 2k, 'cause he knows I'm nice in 2k. *[laughter]* So, yeah. Couple challenges out there. yo, please respond to them challenges, I know you all ready. I know you all - Yo! I know y'all been playing 2k, I know you been home playing lil' FIFA. *[laughter]* Don't be scared to take an L in it, just, y'know, take an L that day and then you'll be aight. Then. *[laughter]* That's it.

G: Alright, so last thing, for all of our listeners out there, haha. "What's the Soundcloud?!"

D: So, [soundcloud.com/knohisry](https://soundcloud.com/knohisry)

The way I find, like, most of my new music and how I started getting into making music was just like, finding all kind of artists on YouTube, and so, I might start uploading to YouTube. *[laughter]* So be on the lookout, jus know the tag is "@Knohisry", I'm on Instagram, I'm on Facebook, and Twitter. Follow me on Twitter, get my Twitter followers up. *[laughter]* 'Bouta make Twitter active. *[laughter]* But, yo, thank you all for all of you listening. I really appreciate it. Many blessings to you all. Yeah. 2017 is about to be the year.

N: Looking at how music is celebrated by Black folks here on campus has heightened my appreciation for music: it's got me paying more careful attention to the motive that drives its creation, and to the contexts that give it the most meaning. It's a beautiful thing to witness young, Black students so entrenched in their craft, using music as a creative outlet of expression.

A large part of Black culture in general is reclamation - turning things that have been used as tools of oppression into tools of uplift and empowerment. As I've witnessed through these conversations over the past weeks, music has clearly acted as one of those vehicles of healing and reclamation. It's incredibly powerful to be able to share music together as a curative tool within the community, a tool that is created for us, by us.