

Photo/ A. Arroyo

THE TRUE COLORS OF DES MOINES

A look into why you should put the shade of Des Moines to rest for good

What is Des Moines? Love, unity, laughter, creativity, diversity, and most importantly a place to express yourself. Des Moines is a city full of creativity and even more full of people ready to express that creativity. Des Moines is a place where people feel safe and part of a community. It's like we're all part of one big family. The amount of support and love between everyone is unreal. Of course there's this little percentage of people who like to throw shade and diss on one another, but the majority of people in this city are humble and know how to love themselves and the ones around them, while rising above the hate. Des Moines has so many individuals who go to work, school, extracurriculars and still make the time to create art or express themselves in whatever way suits them. Des Moines is full of hard working, devoted, and loving people who deserve credit and attention.

Throughout Des Moines, graffiti and murals are scattered. These murals are beautiful and show all of these artists' true potential. JJ Emunah is one of these local graffiti artist. According to Emunah, it feels very honorable to be able to express his creativity through his art because the people in our city are very attracted towards it.

"There are alot of people in the area who kindly support local artists, so it's an honor to have a community who will here and there snag a photo of your art and post it, or even compliment it," Emunah said.

Emunah's favorite thing about Des Moines is how the people in our community show their affection towards things done in the area. People get happy to see new things in the community. Whether that be a new landmark or park, and especially new art. Emunjah mentioned something that I also appreciate about our city very much. We always have something going on here. For example, get togethers that close to everyone attends. Some of these events being Summer Fam Jam, Teen Summit, 80/35, The Asian Festival, 515 Alive, The Color Run, The Des Moines Arts Festival, and many more. It makes it even better that almost anyone who wants to can show their special talents. Including local singers and rappers of many genres, paint artists, break dancers, videographers, photographers, and so much more.

Jalesha Johnson is a member of Movement 515, a local spoken word group here in Des Moines. This group is huge throughout Des Moines Public Schools and the movement has a big impact on students in Des Moines. Being able to be a part of this group has made many students more confident

and walk around with more of a positive and woke outlook on life. Johnson helps facilitate weekly spoken word workshops with Hiatt and Brody middle schools as well as with all five comprehensive DMPS high schools. Johnson touched on the fact that she loves how close knit Des Moines is. By that she means how almost everyone knows everyone, and if not directly it could be through a friend or family member.

"It's very hard to feel isolated in Des Moines, and I appreciate that," Johnson said.

Movement 515 speaks nothing but each individuals truth, and has made many individuals see certain issues from a different perspective. These beautiful, talented poets could change your firm belief in something with a quick but outstandingly powerful poem.

With all of that information, here's my outlook on it. Although I hate the snow, I love everything else about living here. Des Moines is my definition of home, and not just because this is my

home but because I feel safe here. I feel like if i hadn't grown up here my outlook on life and on everything would be so different and not in a good way. Living somewhere where lots of people would call boring is the complete opposite to me. It's a big adventure to live in this city. Growing up here, you don't get handed anything because we don't live close to anywhere that fame could be reached down the street or 15 minutes away. We have to work hard to be able to have the things we

**"We just need one another and that's what makes Des Moines so special, and I think that's the power of this city."
- Jalesha Johnson**

want. We have to do everything we can to reach our hopes and dreams. Growing up here calls for lots of adventures and roaming to find something to do (which there is always something going on) but within those adventures and nightly trips driving around, we find ourselves in a way that a lot of people anywhere else wouldn't get to experience. We get to find the things we are good at, we get to experience things from many different perspectives with and from lots of different types of people. I love my city because we have to be creative to make fun out of a lot of things. Most of all I love my city because there are so many people here with amazing amounts of talent. Looking around everywhere in our city, you see crazy art plastered on buildings. Downtown especially you get to hear local artist perform, at festivals you get to experience people embracing their culture through their love of sharing their food with the world. The people of Des Moines deserve loads of credit and appreciation. That's why I love my city, and that's why you should love it too.

Story / S Alsted