

# RECOLLECTION

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**SECOND PLACE:**  
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Language, it's delectable. Through words we can portray intention and purpose, passion and inquisition. Through words we can paint pictures to decorate the mind. Finally, through words, we have the ability to evoke emotion. However, take a moment, and imagine the emotion that is propelled by the trapped words of true story tellers. Imagine being silenced, not able to freely express oneself when communication isn't a want, but a need. Imagine the feeling of injustice that comes with the inability to connect with others. Using the greatest cultural universal, Shauntay Grant has helped shape and define Canada's diverse heritage and identity through re-establishing the true meaning of a storyteller.

My mother, with her gentle smile and kind eyes, used to say, "Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you." An infamous lie, I would argue. Words, language; they're the most powerful tool I know. I'll never forget the day that I spent sitting in my third grade classroom, listening to a woman speak about her experience growing up in what we all were told as children was a "rough" part of town. With her book in hand, and every crisp turn of the page, I listened to her sweet voice in envy. Prior to my exposure of *Up Home*, a children's book written by Shauntay Grant, I had never paid attention to what North Preston had to offer. A sense of community and togetherness, I see now, is something they always had and continue to maintain. Grant has done wonders exposing the insider view about this Nova Scotian town, using language to send an emotional message.

Inspired by her roots of storytelling, Grant's ancestors were members of the Black Loyalists, Jamaican Maroons, and Black Refugees of the 18th and 19th century. Not only is Grant a writer, she is also a spoken word performer, broadcast journalist, and musician. With a strong focus on African Nova Scotian heritage, she started a wave of change regarding the perspective of young Black Canadians, particularly the youth in my community. Moving from a provincial to national audience, Grant is selected by the Writers' Trust of Canada for the Berton House Writers Retreat (2015-16 cohort) as one of four Canadians. In conjunction to, she was Halifax's third Poet Laureate (2009-11). With many other distinctions and awards, her powerful message is ever-growing.

Fast forward from the third grade to this fall, the fall of my grade twelve year. In September, I was in Halifax at the Canadian Student Leadership Conference. I looked up at the stage one day to see again, for the first time in years, Shauntay Grant. She stood before one thousand individuals and shared one of her pieces. She used gorgeous descriptions, arousing all of the senses. The room was silent. As the audience became aware that she was addressing the topic of rape, many shivered, many stiffened, but all eyes focused ahead. After the presentation I heard whispers around me, noting in what a beautiful way Grant addresses the truthful secrets behind an act so ugly. Within a few short minutes, we were given the privilege to reflect and to sympathize. To think. To take a moment, and embrace the impactful words she had shared. That day, we were given a gift. I have never seen so many thoughtful youth in one place.

Fact: Racism exists in my community.  
Fiction: It can't be changed.

Words give us knowledge; the greatest gift one can give. Shauntay Grant is an African Canadian woman that helps establish and reinforce African Canadian heritage, particularly in my home province, Canada's Ocean Playground. We as humans are more apt to accept what we know over the unfamiliar, which is what Grant provides as she shares her insight on what it really means to be from North Preston, Nova Scotia. It only takes one voice to create change, and through the joy of song and poetry, it is being instilled. Sometimes it isn't the bold political statements and incorporation of the "shock factor" that create social change. Sometimes, it's introducing old concepts to new groups of people, and welcoming them with open arms.

Language, it's delectable. Through words we can portray intention and purpose, passion and inquisition. Shauntay Grant is spreading messages to unmask the prejudice eyes of society. As a writer myself, I hope to challenge social boundaries regarding what's morally right and wrong as a human being, without labels. What message are you sending with your words?

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