

My name is Shanel Adams, and I believe books help us discover ourselves. When I was a child, I grew up in a full house. I was one of six children and I remember always being kind of like the more reserved one and I loved to read. I would always be in my room reading. I just saw how imaginative you could be as a writer and how creative you could be.

So I founded my book club program, *Progressionista*. Five years ago now, I was just returning home to Detroit from college. I had just got let go from an internship. I thought I was going to turn into a job... So I had a lot of time on my hands and I was visiting the library a lot to apply for jobs. I noticed when I was there, I never saw a lot of the kids reading and I thought about my cousins, girls close to me... and I read so much as a child. So I thought about that. And then I thought about all the powerful women I met while I was in college who did speeches or talks and the books that they mentioned in them. And I just knew there was a correlation to be a successful, authentic, fun woman and reading... and I wanted these girls in my neighborhood to know that. So I just began to think about the idea of a book club for girls. They're very girl power... and I added the element of a woman professional coming to each meeting so they can see the woman they would turn into if they read too.

I think my biggest dream is just to see children, especially in Detroit, not be afraid to be authentic. I want more kids, especially in the Detroit neighborhoods, to be inspired to be themselves, because that's how you keep growing and that's how you feel good about yourself. And that's how you share your love with other people. And that's the only way our community is gonna get stronger.