

I am Arielle Johnson and I am a female icon encouraging real concepts of empowerment. The sisterhood and the sistership of being a young girl, the second to youngest of five daughters to a single mom was an empowering experience as well as a challenge, of a lot of women that are very opinionated and have a lot of... a lot to say. And so it taught me how to be able to speak up and to advocate for what I felt was right or for just for myself and what I wanted. It also showed me the importance of having that nurturing spirit, but also being able to stand up for ourselves, not having any men in the home to take care of us. So we had to make sure we stood in the gap to get everything accomplished.

The future feels like being able to create a safe space, a one stop shop for someone who is seeking empowerment and growth in our community. In terms of workforce development in a city where the workforce participation rate is at 53.4% and the literacy rates in some adults are around 40%. We want to make sure that we are able to empower individuals to take advantage of the economic growth that is happening here, but also making sure we're addressing the whole person. So *Fierce Empowerment* wants to make sure that not only are we making sure that individuals have jobs, but that you have access to quality housing and you have access to childcare. And we know that we can only do that through collective impact. And so creating those partnerships and making sure that we have created the infrastructure to truly empower the women we serve, is my goal... and I'm not quite sure how that road is going to go, but I know that we will get there.

When I'm serving the girls that I work with and I see that their lives have been impacted by the work that we do, it's fulfilling and it's empowering for myself. Having come from exactly the places that they've been, I've experienced homelessness. We've lived in hotels. We've had days when we didn't have water, we did not have lights. And the fact that I was able to grow and become successful of where I am not because I pulled myself up by my

bootstraps, but because my community took responsibility for me and my success. The fact that I can be a part of that same type of community to young women, it makes me feel empowered and it makes me feel like I'm truly fulfilling the calling that I was placed for, here in Detroit.