

My name is Lauren Hood and I'm a revolutionary in training. My grandparents, both my paternal and maternal grandparents, had houses a block away from each other at the origin of what a lot of people call a riot, what I've come to know as the uprising. So I'd been to my grandmother's house on Clairemont. I stayed there many times my parents were avid football fans, I'd get left at Grandma's house on Clairemont. They had season tickets, so even on Thanksgiving, dinner was delayed for those damn football games.

So as a child, quite introverted, always observing and always a bridge between different groups. So I grew up in this neighborhood on the northwest side of Detroit, which was all Black working and middle class. I never feel like I 100% belong to any one specific group. So I'm a fringe member of a lot of groups I can seamlessly weave in between so many different types of people rich, poor, Black, White. So I think that being able to weave seamlessly in between different groups of people has kind of poised to me to be the perfect community engagement person. So I'm translating conversations between developers, institutions and residents.

Black culture is being expressive... sometimes it's loud, it's very communal. These are all things that I didn't pay attention to growing up but I miss them now. Yeah, just being musical and expressive and colorful... emotional, letting your human self show up, I think is something that's very specific to different ethnicities and I think those things are what you're told to leave at home if you want to achieve like, traditional corporate success. So I feel like people have kind of accepted that they don't deserve a lot. Something else I used to hear in conversation is, you know, like don't make it too nice here. Why do you think you don't deserve something that's really nice? Where did that inner dialog come from? So the space that I want to work in now is the inspirational space, giving people some motivation. What's important is us celebrating our culture, having more knowledge of our history here.

Whatever those things are that like flipped that inner switch where people can start seeing their own worth and advocating for themselves. I have a lot of access, I feel like I need to leverage that access to do good things on behalf of Black people who are really struggling in the city right now.