

LOVING BROWN BABIES: Raising Leaders to be a Voice for the Voiceless

By Senior Staff Writer, Donna Ramos



Say hello to Elika Bernard who is one of the first of several parents THE HUB has had the opportunity to interview for the Loving Brown Babies social media campaign*. Elika Bernard has been teaching visual and performing arts in Sacramento for ten years. While attending Sacramento City College (SCC), she was the President and Director of the SCC Gospel Choir. Elika studied art under Frank Zamora and Ethnic Theatre under the masterful guidance and direction of Dr. Angela D. Alforque. She went on to study at William Jessup University, where she earned her Bachelors of Arts in English with a minor in music. She also studied voice there for two years. She loves singing opera, jazz, contemporary worship, and neo-soul. In her twenty-eight short years of life, Elika has been given wonderful musical opportunities. She has performed for many famous faces, including Condoleezza Rice at the John W. Rice Awards in 2009. She has been in many shows and musicals. Among these, she counts her most memorable as "Pop Rocks" at the California State Fair directed by Dr. Sharon Goodrich, and "A Blessing in Disguise" directed by Jean Newman.

She was a member of the William Jessup University Choir and Orchestra, WJU Master Works Chorale, and a team member on the Center of Praise Worship team. She led the worship and children's ministry at Clear Voice Ministries in Roseville, California, where she also graduated from the Chaplain Academy. She developed and directed the Roberts Family Development Center Youth Chorus, and taught children's choir and beginning art at Charles Mack Elementary School. In 2012, she worked at CBS 13 News where she learned to manage and direct a newsroom. Elika now teaches choir and piano for the Aspire School District in the Sacramento region, with over one hundred students enrolled in her program. Currently she is the Communications Director at First United Methodist where she also attends church and hopes to continue her studies in music and education.

Elika who is 29 is raising her 3 ½ year old son, Eldra Lewis and shared with us on how she is living a fulfilling life as a single parent.

THE HUB: Traits of a good mother?
Bernard: Self-care, patience, boundaries and education

THE HUB: Hopes and goals you have for your son?
Bernard: I hope Eldrah stays focused, comes to love humanity and God and respects women. Another hope that he is able to find the path God wants him to walk and stay focused on that and is the best at that. I hope he becomes a leader and a voice for the voiceless.

THE HUB: Challenges you face as a single parent?
Bernard: Time, I wish I could spend more time engaging him. I will next year but that was my challenge this year. Also, finding resources that challenge his imagination. Because he's a boy he's expected to act a certain way, especially in the African American community. I want him to be able to be himself. I don't want him to repeat the pattern of people who came before him or stereotypes as well.

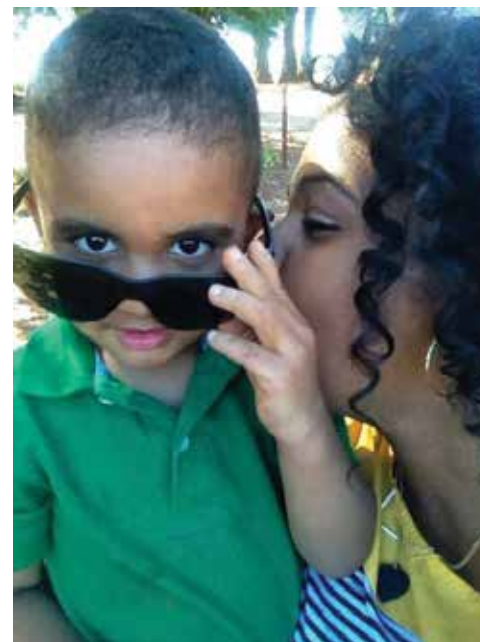
THE HUB: Greatest reward of being a parent?
Bernard: My son's unconditional love and seeing him flourish; his mind flourishes like a flower.

THE HUB: When you think of "Loving Brown Babies", what comes to mind or what does that mean to you?
Bernard: Total dedication and investment.

THE HUB: Do you think there are resources readily available for you to access in supporting you as a single parent in Sacramento County?
Bernard: I have a village, so I rely on them. I realize I couldn't raise him on my own. People in my family and community help me with him. Every mother needs a village, it's impossible to do it on your own. We should not have guilt about leaning on the village.

THE HUB: What are your thoughts on African American/Black Lives Matter vs. All Lives Matter? And, what direction do you see this movement going?
Bernard: I believe that all lives do matter but there needs to be emphasis on the fact that the value of a black life in America does not carry the same weight as their white constituents. Saying all lives matter in the face of our adversity is dismissive to the reality that we are not treated as human beings. We are at a disadvantage on every level from police brutality to healthcare. So, if it's true that all lives matter then that needs to be reflected in how we are treated.

THE HUB: As we move forward with our new president, how do you feel about you and your son's future as well as the country's future?
Bernard: Personally living in Sacramento, the community in Sacramento is very supportive, coming together and living in unity. But professionally Trump could reverse things affecting my job i.e. tax credits (his policies have a negative impact on my business, we rely on government funding for programs). Due to Ben Carson and how he feels about charter schools, my business will suffer because lots of funding comes from charter schools.



THE HUB: 3 words that describe you as a parent?

Bernard: Tenacious, responsible, nurturing

THE HUB: 3 words that best describe your son?

Bernard: Intelligent, vibrant, strong-willed

*Loving Brown Babies (LBB) is a social media campaign focused on the pleasures of motherhood and families in celebration of raising African American children. The campaign is a part of the efforts led by the Steering Committee on Reduction for African American Child Deaths (RAACD) which is funded by the County of Sacramento, City of Sacramento and First 5 Sacramento, and is managed by The Center. To learn more, visit www.shfcenter.org/raacd.



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