

20539/1

Parris Goebel - Hip Hop choreographer and dancer

I have learnt sometimes I am a rose with thorns and other times I am a daisy, but either way I am going to bloom.

- Parris

I remember the time when I first saw a video of Parris and the Royal Family dance crew. I thought they were amazing and the dancing was out of this world! At the time I didn't know very much about The Royal Family dance crew and I didn't even know that Parris had set up this dance crew in her late teens!

A year later I saw adverts for a show at The Opera House featuring The Royal Family! I was so excited but unfortunately I missed the tickets. By this time I knew a little bit about Parris, that she set up an amazing crew, The Royal Family.

I first started dancing when I was three. I did ballet until I was seven then I tried Hip Hop and I loved it. I dance at The Company NZ. A year after I started, I saw a video of a crew from The Company called STELLAR who went to internationals in the Netherlands in 2019, they came second in the world!

When I found out about this essay I knew that Parris Goebel would be perfect to write about.

Childhood

Parris Renee Goebel was born in Auckland on 29 October 1991. Parris has three siblings, Kendal, Narelle and Jarek. Her parents are LeeAnn Goebel and Brett Goebel. Parris is afakasi which is half Polynesian and half caucasian. Parris's life was full of colour, music and most of all, dance.

“ We kids fell in love with music at an early age and that was probably a big part of why I started dancing as soon as I could walk”

- Parris

As a kid, Parris only wanted to dance. Parris' mum put Narelle and Parris in dance classes when Parris was eleven. Parris jumped at the chance, so long as she could dance she was happy. The dance school taught ballet, tap, jazz and drama. Parris felt torn at the dance school. As much as she loved to dance, ballet, jazz and tap were “just so strict. You are being told exactly how to move,” Parris said.

Soon Parris left the dance school because she didn't feel at home. Parris' Mum saw advertising for a hip hop class and she signed Parris up for it. Parris went along and after that first hip hop class she knew that Hip Hop was what she wanted to do.

School

Parris felt about school the way vampires feel about sunshine. She didn't even go to school that much. When she did go she was two or three hours late, and when she was in class she was barely listening, or dozing behind a book. The teachers didn't seem to like her very much either.

When Parris was thirteen she went to high school. She was basically the only Polynesian girl so she felt uncomfortable and out of place most of the time. Parris always tried so hard to fit in so that people would like her. She did things like straightening her hair for hours every day just so she would look like all the other kids. Imagine feeling out of place for fifteen years, how would you feel doing things that took ages, just so you would look like everyone else? Parris was teased through primary school. When she went to high school she didn't feel much better. By the time she was thirteen she was feeling depressed and she even had suicidal thoughts.

Parris' Mum asked her if she wanted to change schools and Parris obviously said yes. Her new school was Auckland Girls Grammar. Parris felt less pressure as the school had more Polynesian girls that she felt comfortable with. She still wasn't so keen on lessons. Parris' Dad went in for her parent teacher conference. He talked to Parris' teachers and they all said the same thing, that Parris wasn't trying hard enough and she never paid attention. When he got home he had made a hard decision. He decided to pull Parris out of school. It wasn't working for her. After quitting school Parris felt unsure but happy.

ReQuest Dance Crew

When Parris was fourteen, just before she dropped out of school, she saw an advert to go to America to learn from famous choreographers. Parris desperately wanted to go. Her dad booked her tickets and off she went! When Parris got back, she was in the zone. Parris was so focused and she had learned how to be a better dancer. Parris knew she wanted to join a dance crew. "Why don't you start your own crew?" said Parris' dad. At the time Parris didn't really want to! She was so nervous and she was asking things like who is going to do the costumes, makeup and the choreography! Each time her dad had the same answer, "You." When Parris was fifteen she started a crew, called ReQuest Dance Crew.

Competitions

A year later Request entered the New Zealand hip hop championships. They trained like their lives depended on it, and got an amazing result, placing second in the varsity category! The place meant that they could go to the World Championships a year later, but they decided not to go.

Parris knew she needed her own dance studio, so when she was seventeen she opened The Palace Dance Studio. The studio started small but it grew very fast. That same year ReQuest competed in the 2009 world championship. They got on that stage and they gave it their all. They came off feeling amazing, when they went to the prize giving something incredible happened, ReQuest won their category! In 2010 they went back again, killed it, and took first place again!

Parris decided that she would make more crews, all of which were a huge success, winning a lot of competitions.

Sorry

“The phone call that changed my life...”

Justin Bieber called Parris with an unexpected challenge; he wanted her to choreograph a dance to his new album Purpose, but she had only three weeks to complete twelve videos! Parris got cracking right away. She listened to her first song ‘ Sorry’ and she immediately knew what vibe she wanted and some choreography she wanted to do. She got a group of girls and they were looking clean and sharp in record time. The video looks amazing and it is incredible that Parris came up with the choreography in one day!

Trailblazer

When Parris was growing up, Hip Hop was dominated by boys and men but Parris didn’t like that. She was determined to prove that girls are just as good as boys and that girls can do anything. When she started ReQuest many thought that it was going to be a failure because the crew was made up of girls only. So when they won everyone was in shock! Parris has been the driving force and inspiration behind Hip Hop dancing in New Zealand, inspiring so many people to give it a go. It is now one of the fastest growing after school programs, sending a message to the classical styles of dance, that the new kid has definitely grown up! Parris has inspired me to always try my hardest and when things are tough, push through it. You can do anything you put your mind to!

Connection

This year I auditioned for STELLAR and I got in! So far we have done two competitions. Our first one was Hip Hop Unite. We trained so hard but we got there. We won our category and we qualified for worlds in Portugal! Unfortunately we turned down this offer, just like Parris did many years ago. Our second competition was in Nelson and we won that one as well!

References

Parris Goebel, Young Queen: The Story Of The Girl Who Conquered The World (Mary Egan Publishing, 2018)

Margie Thomson, Woman Kind: New Zealand Women Making a Difference (Penguin Books, 2019)