

Hip hop meets health in a campaign against type 2 diabetes

February 14 2018, by Laura Kurtzman

The Center for Vulnerable Populations (CVP), at UC San Francisco, and Youth Speaks, a San Francisco youth development and arts education organization, are releasing four new spoken word videos by young poets from across California as part of a social media-based public health campaign to end type 2 diabetes in youth and young adults.

Once known as "adult-onset [diabetes](#)," type 2 diabetes now affects children, particularly those from low-income families, at alarming rates. A third of all the new cases of diabetes among young people in the US are now Type 2, and among low-income children and children of color, the figure is more like one-half to three-quarters. Until now, however, [public health campaigns](#) have been able to do little to stem this tide.

The new films are part of an award-winning campaign called "[The Bigger Picture](#)," which Youth Speaks co-created with physicians and [public health](#) communications experts at CVP, headquartered at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (ZSFG). The Bay Area American Heart Association, the Boys and Girls Clubs of San Francisco and Bay Area county [health](#) departments have used the campaign's approach to educate the public about the health consequences of sugary drinks. The films are discussed in a Feb. 14, 2018, perspective in JAMA.

"I've lectured on the social determinants of health for 25 years, and I've never been able to compete in terms of effectiveness with any of these poems," said CVP faculty member Dean Schillinger, MD, who is also a

professor of medicine at UCSF, a primary care physician and chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine at ZSFG. "This campaign works, because the youth poets want to defy Big Soda and Big Ag, protect their friends and families and promote fairness and justice."

The Bigger Picture teaches young artists that type 2 diabetes, far from being simply the result of poor lifestyle choices, is symptomatic of broader social and environmental forces that make high-fat, high-sugar foods cheaper than healthier foods and that also make it difficult for many people of color to adopt healthy habits, like exercise, for a variety of reasons, including the lack of safe public parks. In this way, the [youth](#) are changing the conversation about diabetes and demanding change.

"Our young poets are challenging us to take a look at 'the bigger picture' behind statistics that project shorter, more painful lives for young people and demand healthy environments to eliminate this preventable disease," said Natasha Huey, who manages The Bigger Picture Campaign on the Youth Speaks side.

"They are expanding the conversation to include their stories of farmworkers who can't afford the food they cultivate, parents who consume sugar- and caffeine-laden energy drinks to get through double shifts, families who offer sugar and fast food as an affordable act of love, and immigrant mothers who develop diabetes while pregnant by adopting the so-called American lifestyle."

The newest films were created in partnership with spoken word and [youth development](#) organizations across California, including With Our Words in Stockton, Get Lit in Pomona, and Say Word in Los Angeles.

Provided by University of California, San Francisco

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