Indianapolis-based hip-hop artist Rome Herbert writes music to help people fight fear.

Miguel Naranjo
Reporter

When Rome Herbert was about 8 years old, he frequently attended spoken word performances with his mother in Indianapolis and became inspired by its artistry.

“I knew I wanted to do spoken word because of the way [it] could move audiences and evoke emotion,” Herbert said.

However, he was also influenced by music — more specifically, hip-hop and rap.

“Hip-hop was the perfect merger of [spoken word],” Herbert said, “but also … the music people were more into around me.”

Herbert said mental illness was actively present in his childhood. His mother has schizophrenia — a serious medical condition in which some people interpret reality abnormally, according to the Mayo Clinic. He spent most of his childhood moving between his mother’s and grandmother’s homes.

Herbert’s parents lived in the suburbs of northwest Indianapolis, but he lived most often with his grandmother near the city’s east side, according to his website’s biography.

“As a product of Black America’s schizophrenia, I’m referencing this idea Black people in America have to live two different lives — one that is acceptable and assimilating to white America and then code-switching back to Blackness,” Herbert said.

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