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Arts and Culture



Website brings gun violence awareness

by Angelica Ingram

Jerelyn Craden is using her voice in a unique way to spread a message that is close to her heart.

The singer, songwriter, entertainer and all around creative force was sitting at home one day when a song came out of her with a message she wasn't expecting.

Titled Killing You is Killing Me, the song tackles the sensitive issue of gun violence, a topic that Craden feels passionately about. Heavy, rhythmic drums and a raspy, rich voice start off the song, which builds momentum as it hits a powerful chorus.

"I wrote the song about a year and a half ago," she said. "They [Killing You is Killing Me and What Have we Done] came out as such heavy, heavy songs."

Craden wasn't sure what to do with the song at first, eventually deciding to record it. She wrote the musical accompaniment, which was performed by Kris Kadwell, Carl Dixon, Ian Pay and video production by Joe Bringman.

With lyrics such as "we're living at the edge of time, illusionary victory, got to change the game and set it right, cause killing you is killing me," the song is a no-nonsense look at the effects of gun violence in places such as the United States and Canada.

With music videos to accompany, the songs led to the creation of a website to further tackle the issue of gun violence.

Launched a few weeks ago, the website and music video includes staggering statistics, such as that more than 88 people die every day in the U.S.A. from gun violence.

The song and the site were released in the hopes that there will be more public awareness of this hot button issue.

"My son said to me, Mom what are you hoping to accomplish with this video?" she said. "When you write something you don't think that, you just write it ... I wanted to bring people's attention to this ... and that there's got to be some changes made. This is crazy. It's crazy what's going on."

She calls her efforts a grassroots movement and is hoping to educate and inform people, by providing published articles, links to other organizations, such as Everytown for Gun Safety, statistics and more.

"I want to encourage people to go to my links page and find out about all these organizations that they can join or support in one way or another," she said. "The gun lobby in the States is the big problem ... and it's influenced what's going on up here [in Canada]."

The website also includes a blog written by Craden, where she comments on topics and events such as U.S. President Barack Obama's town hall meeting, which was broadcast on CNN last week.

Craden says she is passionate about the issue as a social rights activist and it frustrates her to see politicians such as Obama trying to do something about the issue but being met with resistance.

"It hurts me. It makes me crazy," she said. "You think what are these people thinking? ... do they not have a heart? ... the second amendment was never meant to be about how they've turned it and turned it."

The discussion around gun rights has been making its way into national headlines as of late, no doubt in part to President Obama's recent address.

Last week both the Globe and Mail and Toronto Star newspapers wrote critical examinations of the gun debate, including some staggering statistics.

According to the Star in the article titled "The faces of American gun violence," "in 2010, the gun homicide rate for white people was 1.9 deaths per 100,000 people, far more than any other wealthy country. The rate for black people was 14.6 deaths per 100,000, nearly the rate of South Africa."

Since launching the website, Craden has received a tremendous amount of positive feedback and has been contacted by people all over the world, including a vet from Vietnam.

Craden invited the vet to share his story on the site as a guest blogger, which he has agreed to.

"I want the site to also be a place to post articles and share blog posts about people who are working to improve and safeguard the lives of others," she said.

"The purpose of this is to encourage people to become active and to learn about all these wonderful different grassroots movements, these groups that are actually doing stuff. They're the ones who are putting all this pressure on Obama."

For more information on the website, visit www.killingyouiskillingme.com. The song can be found on the site and can be downloaded on iTunes.

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