written by EMILY STERN

“I want to infiltrate” is not a surprising statement to hear from one of the many up-and-coming entrepreneurs in New York City. What is surprising is this young entrepreneur’s age; at 22 years old, Genesis Be (also known as Lo-Key) has already released three rap albums, performed live at sold out shows, and created her own record label. Her rap has what most modern hip-hop lacks—clean, swear-free lyrics, content that promotes education and social awareness—rather than violence, sex, and the objectification of women. She has returned rap to its origin as a source of information and opinion becoming “the CNN of the ghetto.” Her newest album “19 in America,” containing tracks such as “I don’t discriminate,” proves that rap can send positive and poetic messages while still being catchy, clever, and rhythmic.

Genesis Be does not only talk about social reformation: she lives it. As a woman in the rap business, Genesis hopes to “infiltrate” a male-dominated field and to change it from the inside. At only 22 years old, she has strong morals that have not been corrupted by her success in the entertainment industry. Genesis models herself after Alicia Keys, who stays out of gossip magazines, by selling her music, not her body.

As the granddaughter of activist Reverend Clyde Briggs—who sought to empower African Americans and overturn the Jim Crow Laws during the 1960s—Genesis grew up politically driven, turning her feelings into poems, which later became raps. When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, interrupting Genesis’ freshman year at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Genesis took a break from her music to restore her community. She worked with Yates Construction Company to rebuild casinos, generating tourism in her hometown of Biloxi, MS. In conjunction with South Mississippi AIDS Task Force, she also created a video to educate children about AIDS prevention.

Continuing her education, Genesis Be transferred to New York University’s Clive Davis Department of Recorded Music, enabling her to get a degree directly related to her career. This year she was awarded the Catherine B. Reynolds Scholarship, a $40,000 grant given to only six undergraduate entrepreneurs at NYU. To help launch her record label “Open Sky Artworks,” the first album produced by “Open Sky Artworks” will be a children’s album showcasing local talent, which Genesis hopes to use as an educational tool in public schools. Although still up and coming, “Open Sky Artworks” already promotes and manages a wide array of student talents, including poets, musicians, composers, painters, and writers.

When Genesis is not mixing beats, writing lyrics, or simply attending classes, she volunteers at elementary schools in Harlem and the Lower East Side. She is already planning to work with Harlem Children’s Zone in the summer of 2010. As someone who considers education a fundamental part of success, Genesis’ promotion of youth education is much in the same vein as supporting their talents. When prompted for tips for those looking to follow in her footsteps, Genesis advises simply to “educate yourself and learn all you can.”

Undoubtedly, Genesis has an entrepreneurial spirit, passion, and strength of character that few others can claim. She serves as proof that a student with few resources and a creative mind can turn their talents into not only a lucrative profession, but also one that serves their community.

For more information on Genesis Be, go to genesisbe.com