

# JUJ speaks on “Mood” and the long road to realizing her dream

By **Murjani Rawls** - Nov 7, 2019



*Photo Credit: Doryn Fine*

It's one thing to have an outline of a dream. I think we all have instances where we have these visions of reaching the top of the mountain. What that victory entails changes from person to person. It's another thing to leave all you know in pursuit of a dream. A dream is a chance at something, but not necessarily a promise. You have to be willing to withstand all the storms and rocky waters in order to make it a reality.

17-year old JUJ moved to Los Angeles in hopes of making the singing career that she saw for herself concrete.

It's the small victories that keep us going and for her, just the movement towards what she knew was destined for her was within her grasp. In amidst of all this, she was diagnosed with Lyme Disease and a return home to Philadelphia was in the cards. Still, JUJ did not give up, got better, and went back to Los Angeles. Her song "Mood" chronicles the battles that she faced during her move and her never-give-up attitude towards it.

Her EP *JUJ, it's U* serves as a celebration pit stop on her journey. Everybody who dares to chase something greater than themselves can take something from it. I spoke to JUJ briefly about her journey to this point and how she uses it to be an inspiration for others.

**A lot of artists I have talked to mention the creative energy that's within LA. It seems to be a place where your dreams really materialize as you move towards them. What did you learn initially going to LA and venturing back there after your bout with Lyme Disease? I like that you have that spirit that nothing could deter you from what you know you deserve and it shows in your music.**

I touched on this in my song "Hollywood". It is very easy to become disillusioned with a city as great as LA. many artists do, because I believe even though the city holds a ton of opportunities, it doesn't hold the answer for anyone's success. That you have to find on your own. So I did come into LA with a healthy, realistic idea of what the city could do for me and what I had to do for myself. Being sick did shatter some hope of mine for a short time but also it made me stronger and more motivated.

**When I listened to a song like "Hollywood" is your personal fight song in the sense that you are being transparent that LA is not what everybody thinks it is. There's a lot of hard work and struggle that comes along with it. Were there times where you felt like this dream wasn't going to happen for you?**

I'd be lying to you if I said there wasn't. Moving at age 17 by myself, there were a ton of people who told me I couldn't do it and I never let that shake me. With my sickness that occurred shortly after moving, I thought maybe it was a sign and I got all in my head thinking. What if they were right after all? Those thoughts were real.

**Also, there's "Mood." It speaks to the dream killing aspect that could come from naysayers. You are speaking affirmations for yourself and your career. Do you feel some sense of accomplishment in everything you've done so far?**

Of course. I think it's important to recognize your progress and also recognize and be appreciative of the people you've met along the way and all the hard work they've put in as well. I'm very blessed with the people around me right now.

**You draw a lot of strength from your mother's story. She immigrated to the U.S. from Brazil when she was 18. I feel like it wouldn't be right to ask you how much your heritage and her story means to you now given the state of the U.S. and how things have changed since Trump has gotten elected.**

My mom and her story are super important to me. I loved how I was able to collaborate with Vic Mensa during a time he was releasing "Camp America." Vic also comes from a father who is an immigrant, making him first generation as well. I'll just say I wouldn't be here if my mom didn't have the opportunity to live here.

**That goes into "Black Mirrors." Young people have gotten dealt a shitty hand with a lot of things. A lyric that stuck out to me was "No, we can't afford houses. But we put our money where our mouth is." K.O.A. hints at that same spirit as well. How do you feel about the state of younger people and your place within it all?**

The main thing I want to get across with my music is empowerment to the younger generation to strive for more and not necessarily settle for what they see and to challenge my peers to dare to do more. I see so much potential in my generation. I'm not anywhere near perfect, but I want us to come together to be the change we wish to see in the world.

**With all the hopelessness and bad news that seemly comes down on us daily, your music is a bright spot to a lot of people. What's the best message that you've received from a fan that has been uplifted by your music?**

Man, these past couple of months have been really touching after releasing music. I think out of all the different kinds of messages, the ones that have really filled my heart were the ones of younger kids. They felt that my music really made them feel they could pursue music or

whatever true passion they were scared about going forth with. The music industry can be scary at times. Being able to inspire people, especially kids that it can be possible and that they can do it is so fulfilling.

**I love the way you ended the EP with “Risk It All” and how it highlights your voice with the pianos. Do you plan to do more stripped-down tracks like that?**

Absolutely. Thank you by the way! Yes, “Risk It All” is one of my favorites on the EP. I want my next release of music to showcase more of my voice that I’ve been waiting to be heard.

**How was it working with Vic Mensa on the remix of “Mood”? I know you both come from similar backgrounds. I feel like this is the perfect collaboration for this particular song because it’s two people that really resonate with the message.**

Working with Vic as mentioned before, was great. It was the perfect fit for the song especially, considering how similar our stories were. There’s just something about people in cities like Chicago, NY or Philly for me. Their spirit and attitude towards life is like no other. No bs, and they are born fighters. I’ve always gravitated towards these people. Vic’s dad was also an immigrant like my mother. So I see in him the utmost appreciation and humble beginnings that show through him even with most success.

### **Murjani Rawls**

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Journalist, Self-published author of five books, and photographer since 2014, Murjani "MJ" Rawls has been stretching his capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has as a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 600 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.



