



WHENEVER UP BECOMES DOWN,
I WILL ALWAYS BE HERE
HOLDING
YOUR CROWN

founded by 

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OUR STORY

Hold Your Crown was founded by King Youngblood's front man Cameron Lavi-Jones when he was 18 years old fresh out of high school and newly enrolled at the University of Washington as a communications major.

As early as elementary school, Lavi-Jones was the victim of bullying as other kids made fun of his weight, his mixed-race identity and the fact that he was American, then attending elementary school in Toronto during the period when his family temporarily re-located to Toronto, Ontario Canada. Lavi-Jones was ashamed of this bullying and hid it from his parents and suppressed the emotional pain because he thought addressing it showed weakness. In his mind, he had nowhere to go with the mental pain the bullying caused.

When he returned to Washington State for high school, Lavi-Jones observed that many of his peers suffered from untreated mental illness. While attending Shorecrest High School in the Shoreline School district of Washington, six students died by suicide and countless others were cutting, self-medicating, and suffering from depression, anxiety, eating disorders and other mental illnesses. These issues hit very close to home for Lavi-Jones as his other two founding members of his original band Gypsy Temple, though brilliant musicians, struggled with depression, cutting, confused sexual identity and orientation, all giving Lavi-Jones a first-hand look at what untreated youth mental illness is.

Coupled with the fact that school presentations by older adults about mental health failed to resonate with him or his classmates, Lavi-Jones realized there was a great need to understand why youth mental illness was so rampant within his peer group and what to do about it.

Lavi-Jones himself had always been a high achiever in academics, music and youth sports. He made it to second-chair cello in the school symphony. He was a solid student in school. Playing youth soccer at the elite club level from age 3 to 18 leading his team two years in a row as mid center fielder to state championships. He observed first-hand the pressure young people experience trying to be the best of the best and the premium placed on winning, sometimes at the cost of their mental health while dealing with peer, parental and coach pressure. Lavi-Jones was always seen as the successful "winner" but privately he grappled with depression and anxiety. Still, he never wanted to reveal weakness.

In response to what he himself experienced and observed in others, Lavi-Jones started studying the statistics and the theories on causation related to youth mental illness. He put himself in therapy and focused on healing, overcoming his own mental illness stigmas, and learned to talk about his issues in a healthy way. Hold Your Crown was founded to bring Lavi-Jones' epiphanies of how to address youth mental illness to his peers and help his peers onto a path of mental health and healing. His motto is "the bravest thing you can ever do is get help."

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I had to ask myself why is all this happening?

The answer is clear. The stigma about youth mental illness is real and it is life threatening. So I decided that youth mental illness would be the cause I focus on as my band received more public attention. The bravest thing any of us can do is get help. Through youth helping youth — peer-to-peer we can change perception and dismantle stigma.

Cameron Lavi-Jones

· Hold Your Crown Founder

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Lavi-Jones through Hold Your Crown has attracted a professional team of grant writers, health care providers, educators, youth leaders and like-minded peers to create a movement to change the way young people think about mental illness, provide a unique model for testimonial sharing through music and public speaking and a clear and concise path to getting the resources a young person need to finally get help in a way that resonates with them. Through it all Lavi-Jones and everyone at Hold Your Crown have sought to unite young people, facilitate the de-stigmatization conversation that must occur if youth are to get well and lift them up while making them feel they are not alone and there are safe ways to get help.

Hold Your Crown is acutely aware that black, indigenous people of color (BIPOC) are especially unlikely to seek help for mental illness due to cultural stigmas about therapy and mental illness. The result is a disproportionate number of BIPOC young people do not get help and go on to be acutely disadvantaged as they move through life. Untreated mental illness can be a killer. Hold Your Crown is focused on connected young people, including and especially BIPOC youth with each other through the power of music, testimonial and storytelling to focus on paths towards healing — and it is working. All of this ties into the values of inclusion, diversity and racial equity and empowering youth to heal and rise beyond stigma and cultural barriers.

Hold Your Crown stands out because there is nothing like it in the United States and certainly not in the State of Washington. Lavi-Jones and the entire Hold Your Crown community recognize that there are some excellent organizations including NAMI, King County Mental Health Court, SMASH, and JED but none of them bring the power of music, and the personal testimonials that only young songwriters can share with their young audience to focus on dismantling youth mental illness stigma. Now 23, Lavi-Jones has recruited many of his young musical peers as a musical youth advisory board to receive mental health awareness training from proper mental health professionals, NAMI leaders, mental health court judges and educators. The result is Hold Your Crown offers an effective curriculum and presentation program that achieves tangible results letting youth peer to peer communication heal the young and provide models for future programs. When young people first see other young people perform songs that speak to them and then are allowed to speak with these trained performers themselves in deep personal conversation, the results are groundbreaking and deeply moving.

Hold Your Crown seeks to take its programs to youth sports communities next. This will involve music presentations and will also involve Hold Your Crown sponsored youth sport events in the youth sports communities that allow the discussion to continue off the field, the ice, and the court. Youth mental illness has touched young athletes in serious ways because the stigma of mental illness or even simply mental unwellness among young athletes is overwhelming. Hold Your Crown is determined to reach all the places in youth sports that young people are impacted by youth mental illness and provide a model for lifting stigma and healing for the betterment of youth and youth sports programs.

The greatest barrier that Hold Your Crown faced and had to overcome was that when the Pandemic lock down hit, Hold Your Crown Had to suspend its in-school and youth program presentations

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As a person of color, my family doesn't believe in therapy, so I have been kind of stuck.

King Youngblood is different than most bands. They are trying to do something.

I SEE THEM.
THEY SEE ME.

My depression is real, and it is treatable — I hear that from them.

Madhu

- Ingraham High School
- Pronouns: She/Her

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and pivot to online social media messaging. The silver lining was that Hold Your Team was then able to expand its reach and better target sectors of youth demographics through online video messaging, targeted ads and analyzing metrics. Now that schools and youth sports organizations are fully back in action and open to Hold Your Crown presentations, we Hold Your Crown can integrate its online success with its in-person work and be even more effective in reaching its core demographic.

On a personal level, Lavi-Jones, as Hold Your Crown's founder and leader, has had several break-throughs that led him to where he and Hold Your Crown are now. There was a point in high school where Lavi-Jones through a grant from MoPop attended the Crown of the Continent Guitar Residency and Festival in Montana. There he met and experienced dozens of virtuoso guitar players from all over the world. He didn't believe he belonged there and panicked. The experience initially caused him acute anxiety to the point of extreme suicidal thoughts. Lavi-Jones managed to find a way to bring himself back to a place of mental safety, but the experience stayed with him with on numerous levels to this day. He wrote a successful song and produced a related music video called TODAY that embodied the entire experience and celebrates music as a healing tool. It was the making of this song and music video that first got Lavi-Jones really thinking about the power of music and supportive peer-to-peer relationships as a means for mental health healing.

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