



## Australian Teenage Expo

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### Balaclava: Rapper Cyrus Jentzen's journey of hope and inspiration

Chloe Booker | 16:05:PM 14/08/2014

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Cyrus Jentzen. Photo: Ben Brazil

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Guinea-born Cyrus Jentzen has been through more than your average 19-year-old.

At age three his country broke out in war, at nine he was separated from his mother, at 11 he moved to Melbourne as a refugee, at 12 his brother died and at just 15 he was homeless.

But the Balaclava rapper has used a passion for music to get him through and now wants to spread his message of hope to other teens.

"A lot of people here have been through similar things, but they give up on life," Cyrus said.

"You've got to love yourself and believe in what you're doing."

Cyrus was living in a refugee camp with his mother and two younger brothers when she sent him to another camp to be with his father, whom he had never met, believing he would be safer.

He has not seen them since. One of his brothers died of illness three years later.

"Before I came to Australia, things were very hard," he said.

"In a country full of sickness and poverty, it wasn't a great place to live.

"You never knew whether you're going to be able to be alive for the next day."

When Cyrus moved to Dandenong with his father and two half-sisters to join his stepmother, things were exciting at first.

His first impressions of Australia at the airport were how unified it was.

"When a group of people are together in Africa, they are running for their lives but in Australia, everything was peaceful."

However, problems within the newly formed family led him to leave only a few years later.



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Cyrus was forced to eat supermarket discarded food and began busking, freestyling with a soccer ball, to make money.

He couch surfed from place to place, at one stage living in a car.

"It wasn't a childhood," he said.

"I had to look after myself."

Cyrus kept his hardships to himself, finishing high school and even having a successful junior soccer career, which saw him travel to Argentina.

At the death of his brother, he began writing poems and music to make sense of his journey.

After being unable to make money out of soccer, he decided to pursue his talent winning a government grant to go to the JMC Music Academy.

Only a month ago, with \$150 in his pocket, Cyrus travelled to the Gold Coast and began knocking on the doors of studios.

"I was struggling and wanted to get out there and find some opportunities," he said.

"I couldn't even afford a bus ticket so I walked from studio to studio."

He waited for five hours outside one studio, where he met 14-year-old Melbourne musician Frank Dixon.

Dixon, who has a recently released iTunes single, GOLD, asked Cyrus to go on tour with him and rap to his new song.

From there he found a place to live in Balaclava and signed with YoYo Music.

"I felt like I was in the right place at the right time," Cyrus said.

"When you work so hard, you need to see results."

Cyrus, who has no contact with his father, said the thought bringing his mother to Australia was what drove him everyday.

"She's everything I've got," he said.

"Everything I'm doing is to bring her here for her to be safe."

Cyrus has just partnered with the Australian Teenage Expo as a 2014 ambassador.

He will share his story of determination with thousands of teens at the August 28 and 29 Melbourne Showgrounds event.

For more information visit [www.teenageexpo.com.au](http://www.teenageexpo.com.au)