

KING HERITAGE & CULTURAL CENTRE

BLACK HISTORY

MONTH NEWSLETTER

ABEL TESFAYE: STRUGGLE TO SUCCESS

By Yaron Yunaev

Abel Tesfaye, better known by his stage name "The Weeknd," displays perseverance, talent, and determination in the face of challenges. Tesfaye was born on February 16, 1990, in Toronto, Canada, to Ethiopian immigrant parents. His path to success has been one of difficulty, determination, and unwavering pursuit of his objectives.

Growing up in Scarborough, a diverse but economically disadvantaged community, Tesfaye saw firsthand the difficulties that many black adolescents endured in society. Raised by his mother and grandmother after his father abandoned the family, he discovered consolation in music at an early age, immersing himself in genres such as R&B to hip-hop.

Despite his passion for music, Tesfaye's route to stardom was not simple. He dropped out of high school at the age of 17 and found himself homeless, couch-surfing, and struggling to make ends meet. Despite this uncertainty, Tesfaye's musical skill continued to flourish. He began making music with friends and fellow musicians and uploaded it on YouTube under the name "The Weeknd."



Photo: Nina Westervelt, *The New York Times*

Tesfaye's honest, emotionally charged lyrics and hauntingly beautiful melodies piqued the interest of music fans and industry experts alike. In 2011, he released three highly praised mixtapes, "House of Balloons," "Thursday", and "Echoes of Silence", which received global recognition and cemented his status as a rising talent in the R&B industry.

Despite his newfound success, Tesfaye faced obstacles as a black musician in a largely white business. He was frequently disregarded and undervalued, with some observers dismissing him as simply another "internet sensation". Tesfaye, on the other hand, refuses to be confined, always pushing the boundaries with his music and challenging expectations.

Tesfaye has stayed unashamedly real throughout his career, using his platform to raise awareness about issues impacting the black community, ranging from racial inequity to police brutality. He has also

been an outspoken advocate for mental health awareness, freely discussing his difficulties with depression and substance abuse.

Today, Abel Tesfaye represents a shining example of the strength of perseverance and the capacity to overcome hardship. Through his music and advocacy, he continues to inspire millions of admirers all around the

world, demonstrating that no ambition is too huge and no hurdle is too great for those who dare to pursue their passion.

As we commemorate Black History Month, let us recognize the success of Abel Tesfaye and the many other black artists who paved the way for future generations, reminding us that greatness knows no borders and success is always within grasp, regardless of where we come from.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yaron is a resident of King City and a volunteer with King Township. He is a 2nd year student at York University.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

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