

#1: You Matter: The Intro:

What do you get when you combine equal parts boredom, well wishes and some social media inspiration?

Well, honestly, it could be a lot of different things.

But in my particular case, it was holding some signs that say You Matter.

Because it's true!

You do matter.

But obvious facts aside, it all started back when I was waiting for a cousin's wedding near the epically cute Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Hence the boredom part.

So, I made a sign that said how I felt because I saw something similar on social media and I wanted to spread some smiles.

Hence the other two parts.

And... ummm... I held it in public. Obvio.

Hence the sign holding part.

Then, I held that sign again, or "Número Uno" as it was affectionately referred as, in other places. With friends and family. Forming my first successful tour in 2015ish.

Then, we took that sh*t to the radio, parties, malls, dates, pizza, tacos, news, social media and beyond.

It continued on like this for a year or two but then something truly awful happened.

A few mistakes were made and some famous lives were lost in my home EEUU state so to not take light away from other "Matter" movements and the ensuing protests, I pivoted.

Leaving it all behind in the name of letting those aforementioned protests for equality take the spotlight.

I could say this was the reason I stopped sign holding but it wasn't actually.

It really would have been so super duper convenient and simple if it was the reason but nah. It wasn't.

I wasn't actually worried about my "mental health" Matter focus movement being associated and wrapped up in the "social battleground" of the "social health" Matter focus movements.

Both the ones I agreed or didn't agree with. I do include both sides because when it comes to my movement, let the words of 2 Chainz sum it up well, "I'm different."

It was different and always was.

But regardless of this truth, I still left it behind. It was a slow and drawn out process of leaving it but still effectively and emotionally happening at this time.

Why?

It's actually even far more simple than a moderate annoyance for the people who thought we were the same as everyone else doing their own "brand of Matter thang" (despite the fact that our particular brand of You Matter sign was written in singular and not plural. Literally defining one person mattering. You. Then, you can use the context to infer it's meant to be a positive self-help).

:)

Believe it or not, the two reasons were literally even more simple than the difference between plural and singular word conjugations.

So, are you ready?

Do you think you can handle it?

I don't know...

Well... they are:

1. I wanted too
2. I had a really good idea

“Neat. Wait, I have a question, MC! Why is this the introduction to your DM 2.0/3.0 journal?”

Well... my wonderful reader, two reasons.

One, that really good idea was to do another DM Tour and return to some places and complete what I missed.

Basically, upstage my only real competitor, myself

Then upon knowing I could either do both things but both a little worse since my attention was divided or I focus in on one, and I decided to do that second one.



So, You Matter (the replacement for something else too ironically) was replaced with DM Touring. Ultimately, I just would eventually leave the suicide prevention to the experts and focus on something new.

The other reason I brought it up now in this particular journal is because it really was the precursor to DM 2.0 and beyond.

Lessons were learned as I went and it was built up from the bottom too, all based upon a gut feeling.

NOW, let's get into the real reason we are here.

Let's tell the real story of Tours 2.0 & 3.0.

#2: OttoTHON 2.0 & 3.0

Well, it only took like one year(ish) but I found myself back in Syracuse for my beloved OttoThon a second year and you know how you just sometimes randomly end up in places where you are meant to be?

Yeah, that's OttoThon for me.

If the original plan would have "popped off," I would have been returning to Indiana for the 2nd year but due to a small technicality of me not being Hosier, I was unable to attend that event in 1.0.

Setting off the epic chain reaction that brought me through Chicago to New York and what I mentioned in the last journal.

Schwarma.

Cubs winning.

Beer showers.

Etc.

Then, feeling like I had unfinished business in 'Cuse (which I will highlight later in this entry), I returned to the Upstate New York powerhouse for a few more epic events.

Starting off the beautiful 2.0 with a journey throughout airports and hotels this time, the 2nd tour already had a different vibe.

One of those "fancy professional vibes."

Yet, ironically, I felt more grounded and far less egotistical this time around.

Why?

Well, have you noticed the tone is different in this?

Don't worry, it's still me and always been the same person writing this all (and to my knowledge, there hasn't been some crazy ritual of ancient magic placed upon me which forced me to slide through time and space), but the tone definitely changed.

That's because when I was at Seattle U last year in 1.0, I had someone ask if I wanted to write an article about my tour and the experiences I was doing.

Graciously, I accepted but the article wasn't accepted as life happens.

So, I took what I wrote about 1.0 and repurposed it in this journal series to highlight this as the introduction to my SECRET PROJECT but the reason I bring this all up is because that “article that didn’t happen” got a weird grip on my ego and didn’t let go until the end of the tour.

I felt different than the other attendees and the other dancers there for the last 6ish events of the first tour.

I wasn’t the highest fundraiser, oldest or youngest but “I was the one with the article.”

Dumb. Jajajaja

Who cares if I was writing an article?

If it was really actually not about me, it doesn’t matter if I was doing it or not.

So, I shook off the ego just in time for 2.0 to happen and these new feelings were one of the main reasons why I wanted a new tour.

Give it all one more chance.

So, I delayed a full time job and financial security even longer to “settle something in my soul.” (To those who supported me during this, thanks. Your tangible/ visible thank you gift is still in the works. Love you always <3).

With that new mentality shift, 2.0 began on an epic level with \$156,165 raised for the kiddos and with moments of being reconnected with my random friends once more, I felt truly blessed to be given a second chance to balance it out.

A chance to write more journals like this, where I bring you behind the scenes and move on beyond the surface level of it all.

Because unlike a popular superhero, we don’t need more origin stories about how a DM functions or how I started it off with a metro ride to an airport.

You can just attend an event virtually or in-person yourself, you winner!

:)

Then, as fate would progress on, I did one more smaller tour after. Feeling that more was still missing.

As it brought me back to 'Cuse for DM Tour 3.0, we ended up raising another \$195,758 for those amazing kiddos once more. Each time I went there, it was bringing me closer to this new era of DMing (dance marathoning) to me.

The SECRET PROJECT era.

How DM could just join the rest of my life and become like breathing or the wind to me.

Perfectly natural.

So, let's take some more breaths and feel the winds of change even more on our faces.

#3: SMU 2.0

I'm going to be honest with you, I don't even remember how I found SMU DM in Dallas, Texas.

It just kind of happened but I'm so glad it did.

With 2.0 already having those newer vibes, I could almost feel like people could feel that "energy change" too.

Or maybe it was because I was much better at sending out an email or message to reach out. Who knows.

Either way, I was showing up to events with contacts now and people who were donating with nice messages included. But few did it like SMU. Thanks y'all.

This special group of awesome people gave me two things I'll never forget.

First, a few members of their planning team gave me some donations and reached out to me before I came saying how they were excited to have me join them there (which is just so sweet!) but they also introduced me to one of the strongest motivations that I've ever felt.

It was at this event that a young kiddo named Ace and his family spoke.

It's very common that "Miracle Kids" and their families will come and speak at the event, play games with us, dance with us, be on our morale teams (like the future ISU), etc.

It's basically on the "DM Bingo Card."

But when Ace's family came, they played a video for us all that his father made and there will never be a day that I forget how it made me feel.

A video that still makes me tear up like 8 years later and feel something in every part of my "DM Soul" when I see it.

"Ace on ECMO" by Tony Shelton.

It was a father's voice talking to his beloved son in the hospital. Showing him the situation because he truly believed that one day, they could see that video together and be reminded just how precious his life really is.

Through amazing strength and support from all involved, Ace got through his ECMO treatment and was able to join us in-person at the event that day and even played some sports with us (as one does in Texas, obvio).

So, that was pretty lit.

Throughout the day, I met more and more amazing people who I still connect with on occasion and as we ended up raising \$51,352 there, SMU left an imprint on my heart.

Did I possibly choose the marathon because of a quote in 42 where Branch Rickey tells Jackie Robinson that "God's a Methodist" and that's what the M stands for in SMU?

Possibly. Like I said, I can't remember.

But I'm so glad I did choose it.

Now, let's talk about some of that Ames life.

Remember in the last entry where I mentioned Ames and how “Miracle Kids” sometimes join our morale teams?

Well... hello ISU DM.

A place where both of these concepts meet and greet amongst the swaying corn of Iowa.

:)

Now, I went to ISU twice like a few other marathons and in the 2nd year, I felt like I was really able to capitalize on all of those feelings that I mentioned before.

The incredibly strong motivator that “redemption” is.

It wasn't that my first ISU marathon was that horrendously bad.

It was a perfectly fine way to raise \$332,763 for some awesome people but there was a small part that did feel a little forced with it all. It was just a personal problem where I felt like I was trying a bit too hard to “fit in” at the event and wasn't just doing “my thing.”

I wasn't talking to anybody long enough to make strong connections or connect. I literally had to wait a year to strengthen those connections more.

Almost like I was just kind of “passing through” the time there. Like it was “a way to add more to the overall tour total.”

A tired participant there but still there. But I feel like that's perfectly understandable.

Usually in the middle of the tour, it's common. I'm human after all and being that, I can get tired doing the events. I mean I did like 20 dance marathons in two years. It's a bit intense. Jajaja

Especially in the quick succession that they sometimes have.

But if I didn't do ISU DM 2.0, I wouldn't have 3.0 to return too.

One leads to another naturally.

And wow... 3.0.

A living DM embodiment of “<3”

Not only did we increase the fundraising to \$380,281 but it also introduced me to many more people, connections and it was here that I really felt “the wind of change” officially.

4.0 wouldn't be the same and I knew it then.

But I guess that's what happens when a person is exposed to a “Dillyn Mumme Power Hour” speech.

Where the impassioned words from “a former Miracle Kid turned ISU Dancer and then Space Scientist” resonates in one's soul for all of time itself.

Rebounding all the way to the heavens, that he now studies, themselves.

So, yeah, ISU was definitely worth it.

Don't worry dude, your fire still burns my friend and I hope to see you soon.

F. T. K.

#5: UW 2.0

Go Dawgs!

The Huskies of University of Washington to be accurate.

For it was the end of January now and it was the time.

The time for “Another weekend and another marathon.”

That's how I felt for a few years and as fine and beautiful as it was going from Iowa to Seattle for a round two at a different event in Tour 2.0, it was undeniable that I was a bit tired. Then, including the flu season and the incredible amount of “high fiving” we did at ISU 2.0 the weekend before, it only made sense that I would get the flu.

Powering through and getting to the point where I wasn't contagious with some medicine included, I was still able to attend. Still able to do some modern dance to High School Musical and contributing to raise the \$20,293 for the cause there.

So, yay! 🎉

Thanks fam for the assist. Speaking of family, remember when I mentioned visiting my sick brother in 1.0?

I think I said it was my brother... well... anyways... yeah, I did that.

We played video games and watched movies.

Well, now in 2.0, it was my time to be the sick one in Washington state.

I couldn't even fully make up for the time in the year before where I felt like all I did was talk about my "possible article" when he was just getting out of the hospital.

Oooof.

The "redemption trip" where we would be on the equal footing that I craved would have to wait.

Not even in 4.0 either due to some financial and Covid issues that arose.

So, it has to wait even longer.

Probably to the point that I'm the only one who remembers or even moderately cares (not like losing sleep or something but it would be cool to redeem it. Like all great redemptions!).

So, don't worry, it's still coming.

The SECRET PROJECT era is upon us after all.

But first, onward to the beautiful and irreplaceable California sunshine and air.

#6: Cal Poly 2.0 & Trojan 3.0

Anyone who really knows me knows that I love Los Angeles.

Los Angeles, Chile is cool too :)

But I'm talking about California in this particular case and so when I was planning a 2.0 (and later a 3.0), I knew I had to try to tie in a "yearly adventure to the great chunk of land on the planet" into a DM tour stop.

Luckily for me, I could do it twice.

So, when 2.0 came around and I rented my car from LAX, I got the vibe then. Driving up to San Luis Obispo for the Cal Poly Dance Marathon then later to Los Angeles itself, I was able to hit two marathons in two years there.

The first in Cal Poly raised \$65,432 in an all-nighter style party while the second did \$31,325 at USC in a fun evening.

Both events were done for those awesome and amazing kiddos in California. Securing them an ability to further chase their dreams near the "City of Angels."

"But why is LA your favorite city, MC?"

Then, some people follow it up with a sarcastic answer like I must love high prices, guns, drugs, smog, traffic, danger, etc.

(When the "funny" reality is that most California cities don't even crack the Top 10 most dangerous U.S. cities per capita. Cough cough... Midwest... ;))

But like I said, there are a whole plenty of "moderately xenophobic" answers that can be found when you mention liking Los Angeles.

Because as much as I love 1980 and 1990's West Coast Hip-Hop, they didn't paint too great of a picture.

So, the popular culture of the time and the media warped the view of where the mountains and the sea meet.

But in their defense of these content creators, it wasn't too pretty to start. At least back then.

A whole collection of real problems were shown in the videos and art ranging from guns, drugs, violence, sexism, racism, etc.

As I mentioned above.

But what those critics fail to see is that some of these are better. Some aren't but some are. So, I will spend every day fighting for the "public image of my beautiful LA."

Because what people failed to see when they made those "answers" about why I love it is that California (specifically the southern half in this entry) has a special magic to it.

You can walk and find food from just about anywhere.

You can be at the oceans or the beach within a few hours.

Sure, there is traffic.

But there is a reason people want to live there.

It's because it's a truly amazing place where two random people can bond over a liking of Ice Cube at a train station or tattoos at a Starbucks.

And in my case, some amazing family members reside there too.

Love you Pomona.

So, if I can do an event there or a couple hours nearby to help kiddos reach their dreams maybe they too can someday contribute more to what makes Los Angeles truly "the greatest chunk of land on the planet."

Los Angeles, tu eres siempre en mi corazón.

LA. <3.

#7: Mankato 2.0 & 3.0

MSU Mankato's Mavathon, a random event in which I attended based upon merely a whim and a "gimmick of a back-to-back" but little did I know when I did that, I would be going into one of those "life changing events."

From the amazing 1.0 to the incredible 2.0 and epic 3.0, each time really brought something great to my life.

An adventure I never would forget. Seriously ridiculous every time.

I fought through snowstorms, tiredness and poverty (born from poor budgeting issues) just to be there. I saw similar people each year and we forged bonds while recreating photos throughout.

Oh, and if you ever think bingo is boring, attend a bingo session here then tell me that.

Wow.

:)

But regardless, MSU is a place where I began to see the impact of telling my “DM Tour Story.”

From a hype video I was requested to interview about dance marathons and its impact on my life to times when I was able to sleep on a couch with the impending massive snow storm on the horizon.

Minnesota problems :)

So, with the \$30,008 in 2.0 and \$26,499 raised in 3.0, I saw it each time. It is a special place with a special energy.

It was also the marathon that broke the tie with how many tattoos I had at the time (17 or 18?)

A stat that still rings true to this day. 22 tattoos with 50ish marathons.

But from that fun point to many more in years to come, I knew Mankato is a place that would resound in my soul from the very beginning. All from the time when I was the only one on the dance floor prepping and warming up my electro popping moves before 1.0 even started.

But just wait, 4.0 was somehow even better.

Love you Mankato.

#8: UNI 2.0

“Buy the chopper! Buy the chopper!” That’s what they chanted.

As I'm currently literally listening to "The City's Yours" from Annie while writing this, playing on shuffle within a 3 hour and 44 minute playlist.

Destiny.



For anyone who doesn't know the song, it starts off with a helicopter ride noise since Jamie Foxx sings the song from that picturesque location above New York City.

But as much as the "city belongs to Annie," UNI DM belongs in legends.

From the \$550,713 raised that year in 2018, it wasn't the end of it.

There is a reason I bring up helicopters/ choppers.

:)

At that particular marathon, we were aiming to raise enough money for our beloved local hospital to buy a helicopter to transport patients more safely and quickly.

Remember or seem familiar?

Yes, this is that reference from the 1.0 Journal's Introduction.

And spoiler, we accomplished the goal.

So, from the moments of SUDM discussing the 90+% remission rate they have achieved in Seattle to the "Ace on ECMO" story, it was beginning to feel even more amazing now. Lives were literally being changed but it was a marathon like this that really makes it sink in more.

If I was doing this to give kids a second chance when they were dealt a bad hand in their health, what kind of lesson would I be setting if I wasn't chasing my dreams too?

Couldn't I live For The Kids (FTK) and be a writer (and later a game designer) too?

Why couldn't I?

If I could help achieve these literal miracles, clearly not all magic in this world is lost. Thanks for that irreplaceable lesson, y'all.

Keeping that in mind, I think it's only fair to say that Cedar Falls, Iowa is literally a magical place.

So, go find that magic in the everyday my friends.

It's worth every km traveled.

From those moments and the imprints they leave with us forever.

Onward, I go.

#9: SAU 2.0

2.0 really was just a lot of time in Iowa, huh?

Well, introspections aside, one of those times brought me to the city of Davenport and to a university that most people probably never even heard of but after "Power Hour" like theirs, you'll probably never forget it.

Saint Ambrose or SAU.

If I told you that this fairly small school had one of the craziest Power Hours you could possibly imagine, you maybe wouldn't believe me.

"But MC, you attended RockeTHON with their 1,400 people or ISU, which you literally wrote an article on in university, were they not more insanely ridiculously energetic in the art of raving?"

Yes, they were beautiful and epic times in their own ways too but let me tell you, the energy there at SAU was some of "Directors Cut style next level hype."

Pounding bass, listening to Pitbull and One Direction, glow sticks, black lights, highlighters, FTK chants, Miracle Kids busting a move, etc.

You get the point.

But I think what made that Power Hour better and so "random" too was how the room went from "0 to 100 real quick."

Like Concordia in 1.0, it kind of felt like most of the “energy release” in the event was leading up to the last chunk.

It was that similar style of some dancing, the hourly morale line dance mainly, but mostly games throughout the day. There was a story where a Miracle Family talked about suicide prevention as well which really brought everything full circle to me too. We were serious and quiet then.

But then it. all. Changed.

The sun set. Then, the lights went down.

And the raving began.

Then, we didn’t stop. We raged on. For hope.

All the way to the \$251,084 written across the Executive Board’s shirts as a unique total fundraising reveal.

It kind of felt like one of those amazing dreams that when you wake up, it was nice and sweet but you can’t really remember anything super specific?

Yeah, that.

A Dream DM.

Good dreams, that is.

#10: Mizzou 2.0 & 3.0

One unfortunate part of Dance Marathon touring is you literally can’t do everything.

Obvio.

I couldn’t attend every event that I wanted too and that’s just life.

Sometimes, things change in my plans or budgets are enforced.

Both were big factors and both happened.

Sometimes too, events got moved to the same weekend as others and so when BG 2.0 got moved to the same day as 2.0's newbie, I decided to go for Missouri's Mizzouthon instead.

I would blaze a new birthday trail there and it was a decision that would forever change (and I don't mean this lightly) LITERALLY everything.

Because much like ISU, Mizzou 2.0's \$307,543 set up the stage for Mizzou 3.0.

2.0 introduced me to Claudia and that's where it all changed. It's when I met one of my best friends from a marathon.

Then, that return for 3.0 one year later led to me making it a priority of seeing her again and that led to making even more new friends of mine.

An experience that marks the \$290,561 of 3.0 as infamous to me.

Infamous in the way that it was one of the best days I've ever had.

<3

For it was here that I met a few more people that Claudia knew, danced with incredible people and met Zoe and Andi.

One of which whose last name, with the fun common practice of M Monroe Casey, got a character named after her in Crowopolis Falling.

Oh, you know.

Nothing major.

Just the "J" in CJ.

As in the High Goddess herself.

All because Andi, Claudia, Zoe and all the people at Mizzou showed me something.

They showed me that anyone can be a goddess like CJ.

Any person can literally do amazing things when they put their best dancing foot forward and trust the goodness around them.

They too can fight for love, hope, freedom and all that is good and true.

They fall down or can get egotistical but they should never...

Ever...

Ever...

Ever give up.

Also, the Mizzouthon hand signal is just the best. It's literally the same as "I love you" in sign language. So cute!

"Well... wow... MC. Your life literally gets changed every 10 minutes it seems like."

Yeah. Maybe it does.

I do constantly change my favorite movies and music too.

But I don't see it as a bad thing.

To me, it's not so much of that "fickleness," but more of trying to see the signs from the universe and my own experiences that life is so worth living and one of the best ways I can live it is to explore it and appreciate what it's giving me.

Trust me, when I commit, I commit.

But that doesn't mean I can't stop exploring in other ways.

Just make it a priority to always keep my adventurous spirit.

After all, settling down is an adventure in itself.

:)

But in this case and this entry, it gave me Columbia, Missouri.

The land of CJ's J.

Basically the home world of Tadala too then.

So, yeah, a pretty great place.

You should probably go there.

:)

#11: Loras 2.0 & 3.0

Looking back at it, it does kind of seem like the main themes of 2.0 & 3.0 Tour's were situated and revolving around 3 ideas.

#1: Redemption.

I could and should take the time to do it right.

Even if it seems like 99% of people had no idea I felt like I did it wrong at one point.

It didn't matter if they knew or not.

It didn't matter if they felt how I did.

I knew.

Obvio, I can't take myself completely out of the equation (nor should I) but I also don't need to be the center of it either.

The good thing is that I could do something about it so I did.

Knowing I would but even more importantly, it was more becoming a feeling like I should. To prepare myself emotionally for what is to come.

Why?

I'll tell you by the end of this journal :)

Those "wind of changes" were barreling in now at this point of 3.0 in Dubuque.

:)

#2: One event leading to the next.

ISU, Mizzou, Loras (and their \$216,180 in 2.0 and \$200,331 in 3.0), etc.

Each one of those events showed me that sometimes the first exposure or connection to something is merely the introduction to it.

I think people (myself included on occasion) are so quick to judge something as “boring” or “not for us.”

We can be so obsessed with this idea of “knowing it in our soul immediately” but sometimes, some places take some time to grow on us.

Or sometimes, we grow into it.

Learning from each other and becoming stronger and more well-rounded because of it.

Because if I never did 2.0, I would never do 3.0 Mizzou and I would be missing so much of what I know now.

Magic is real and it is truly found in the everyday connections we create, value and share.



#3: This was only the beginning

Much like the whole idea of DM to start, which is to raise money to honor and fight for kiddo's who are fighting diseases that no kid should have to endure, the largest theme of that idea to me is that their journey is only starting.

Being a Miracle Kid is a part of their past but it doesn't define everything about them. It's merely the start of their journey.

Important yes but ultimately, “move-on-able.”

To my personal psyche and adventure, I tried to apply this as well. All throughout 3.0.

Because it was near the beginning of either 2.0 or 3.0, I can't remember specifically, that a friend asked me a very simple question.

“What’s your plan with all of this?”

This started the “light breeze of a new idea” that day.

What is my plan? What is the goal?

I love DM touring but I honestly want to do even more. Take this to the next level even higher and as in classic MC fashion, I wanted to upstage myself even more.

3 tours of 26 dance marathons and raising over 3 million USD was pretty great but I felt like I could do even better. And so, Sports Touring was born.

But that’s the story for the next journal.

Hope to see you there.

