

RM of BTS' Speech

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My name is Kim Nam-joon, also known as RM, the leader of the group BTS. It's an incredible honor to be invited to an occasion with such significance for today's young generation. Last November, BTS launched the Love Myself campaign with UNICEF, building on our belief that true love first begins with loving myself. We have been partnering with UNICEF's #ENDviolence program to protect children and young people all over the world from violence. Our fans have become a major part of this campaign with their action and with their enthusiasm. We truly have the best fans in the world.

I would like to begin by talking about myself. I was born in Ilsan, a city near Seoul, South Korea. It's a really beautiful place, with a lake, hills, and even an annual flower festival. I spent a very happy childhood there, and I was just an ordinary boy. I used to look up at the night sky in wonder, and I used to dream the dreams of a boy. I used to imagine that I was a superhero who could save the world.

In an intro to one of our early albums, there is a line that says, my heart stopped when I was maybe nine or ten. Looking back, I think that's when I began to worry about what other people thought of me and started seeing myself through their eyes. I stopped looking up at the night skies, the stars. I stopped daydreaming. Instead, I just tried to jam myself into the moulds that other people made. Soon, I began to shut out my own voice and started to listen to the voices of others. No one called out my name, and neither did I. My heart stopped and my eyes closed shut. So, like this, I, we, all lost our names. We became like ghosts.

But I had one sanctuary, and that was music. There was a small voice in me that said, "Wake up, man, and listen to yourself." But it took me quite a long time to hear music calling my real name. Even after making the decision to join BTS, there were a lot hurdles. Some people might not believe, but most people thought we were hopeless. And sometimes, I just wanted to quit. But I think I was very lucky that I didn't give it all up. And I'm sure that I, and we, will keep stumbling and falling like this.

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Maybe I made a mistake yesterday, but yesterday's me is still me. Today, I am who I am with all my faults and my mistakes. Tomorrow, I might be a tiny bit wiser, and that'll be me too. These faults and mistakes are what I am, making up the brightest stars in the constellation of my life. I have come to love myself for who I am, for who I was, and for who I hope to become.

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I'd like to ask all of you, what is your name? What excites you and makes your heart beat? Tell me your story. I want to hear your voice, and I want to hear your conviction. No matter who you are, where you're from, your skin color, your gender identity, just speak yourself. Find your name and find your voice by speaking yourself.

I'm Kim Nam-joon, and also RM of BTS. I'm an idol and I'm an artist from a small town in Korea. Like most people, I've made many and plenty mistakes in my life. I have many faults and I have many more fears, but I am going to embrace myself as hard as I can, and I'm starting to love myself gradually, just little by little. What is your name? Speak yourself. Thank you very much.

RM of BTS. Speech at United Nation, 24 Sep. 2018, New York. Unicef.org, transcript, 13 Jun. 2024.
<<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/we-have-learned-love-ourselves-so-now-i-urge-you-speak-yourself>>.