



Meet Author and Motivational Speaker Rob Johnson



Rob Johnson



Rob Johnson with his wife, Mea, and son, Markezz.

Fathers' Voices The New Young Fathers.com Newsletter

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Introducing NYF's Future Fathers' Program



NYF Founder & National Director Andre' Dandridge (c) with youth from the Future Fathers program.

The Future Fathers is a new program that started this fall in Miami, Florida. This dynamic program works with young men between the ages of 9 and 15 giving them standards of fatherhood that they can grow up with and focus on as they develop into men. Our goal is to equip the young men with the tools necessary to be effective caring supportive fathers that produce children who contribute positively to the community. Look for more about Future Fathers' in upcoming issues.

The Inspiring Life of Rob Johnson by Rob Johnson

Fathers' Voices is very pleased to share with our readers an inspiring story and interview concerning the life of Rob Johnson (of Milwaukee, WI, a motivational speaker and author who is a survivor sexual abuse and mental illness). He wrote the following article about his life, and the article was featured in the February 2012 issue of Ebony Magazine titled, "The Destroyer of Men" (pg 152), where they featured outstanding black men who have survived sexual abuse. Please note that this article contains some graphic content, but Fathers' Voices feels that it needs to be shared with our readers to help inspire the millions of people who have been victims of sexual abuse and mental illness. We hope that those of you who have experienced any related issues to Mr. Johnson's life will be inspired by his story to find healing and self determination to rise above your circumstances.

Ebony Magazine - Author/entrepreneur Rob Johnson had a series of one-night stands in his early adult years. While he may have appeared to be just another heartless lady-killer, the behavior was actually the result of his being violated at an early age by a woman. Today, the husband and father has emerged from depression and three suicide attempts to become a motivational speaker, encouraging men to respect the ladies and see the bigger picture.

I was 9, and the babysitter was 19. She was a close family friend. One day, I was at her

house and she told me to come in the room. She instructed me on what to do. She made me perform oral sex on her. I never told anyone.

There was another incident involving a trusted family male friend. One day I walked to the store with him. On the way back, we went into this shed. He pulled down his pants. I blacked out. I don't remember anything after that. I was 11.

Because I was acting out at home, it was decided that I should live someplace else. I didn't know my father, so at age 15, I was sent to live with my aunt in Los Angeles, which was infested with gangs. Eventually, I joined them and was hanging out with some fellow gang members in Huntington Beach, a suburb of Orange County. We saw some white kids coming from the beach and robbed them. I got locked up in a juvenile detention center. My mother flew from Milwaukee to see me. She took a cab from Los Angeles to Santa Ana; they only allowed me to see her for 10 minutes. I felt I had let her down. That was the only time I remember crying in my whole life.

(The Inspiring Life - Cont. Page 2)




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(The Inspiring Life – Cont. from Page 1)

As a young adult, I would go out with a woman once [have sex] and never call her back. The women were usually older. I met Mea, who is now my wife, when she was 17. I thought she was smart because she was a high school graduate. I had dropped out of school. We have been together for 13 years.

When Mea came into my life, I was still promiscuous. Now I'm not. A lot of that has to do with my wife and respect that I have for her. She was the first person I told about being molested. I guess you could say that she was my healing.

In 2004, Mea and I separated. I couldn't be with my family, so I swallowed 30 pills that I had been given after being diagnosed as bipolar. I was taken to the hospital and survived. I made two more attempts – both failures.

I started writing my memoir, *Choosing Sides*, which goes from age 7 to 25. Now that I'm a father, I teach my son, Markezz, 11, morals and principles, and I instruct him. That's my way of protecting him. Molestation is something that is not talked about in the African-American community. Even



Rob Johnson with his son, Markezz.

though you may be a victim, don't be a victimizer. You are stealing innocence and purity and tragically affecting a child for the rest of his or her life.

For more on Rob Johnson's life and his advice that he offers to other men who have shared these experiences, please see Fathers' Voices interview with him on page 3.

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Fathers' Voices Interviews Rob Johnson

What was your turning point, or what was it that made you finally decide that you needed to make a permanent change for good to better your life?

I was at a point where I lost all the money I had and I was out of options at the time. I had stolen money from two of my so-called friends. I was either going to get killed, kill somebody, or go to jail. I prayed to God to send me a guardian angel to save me. Then my wife told me she was pregnant and that turned my life around.

What lessons have you learned so far in life that you think are most important to share with others?

To always do what you feel and think is right with yourself and God. Be a servant to righteousness and good so you don't fall for bad behaviors.

What effect did becoming a father have on your life?

It was the best thing that happened because it made me a new person spiritually, and

mentally. I developed a conscious and finally seen a part of me that was not wicked.

What have been the biggest challenges in becoming a father?

The wanting to give my child everything I didn't have from a father. It's also a challenge to resist the tendency of being easy and relaxed when I know I have much work to do to make a future for my child.

What type of work do you do in serving fathers?

Providing words of encouragement and giving love. Making them feel that they are appreciated and that they need to show love and time to their children.

What advice do you give to those who have been victims of sexual abuse? Do you believe that it is more difficult for men who have suffered this to seek help, counseling, or to in general open up to those whom they trust? If so, why is that?

I would tell anyone that has suffered from sexual abuse, to find an outlet to release

the hurt and embarrassment. Don't become victimizers! It is more difficult for men to deal than women because of the bravado especially if they are abused by a man.

What advice do you give to those who have been the victims of mental illness or who are contemplating suicide? In your opinion as someone who has experienced this, are there any true cures to help the mentally ill?

For those with mental illness there is not a true cure, only management through support, therapy, and proper medication. Suicide is not the answer. If you are contemplating suicide fight that thought with thoughts of things that have made you feel happy and worthy. Know that the pain and possible domino effect a successful suicide would have on your loved ones would be devastating, especially for your children.

In reading about your life, we as readers clearly see that you've come a long way to bounce back from these serious obstacles that many find it hard to move past. Can you please share with our readers what you have been able to accomplish for your life to bounce back from this adversity and what you are

(Rob Johnson – Cont. on Page 4)

NYF Debuts its First Workshop in Flint, Michigan by Rahman Shareef

After many years of working diligently within the cities of Lansing and Detroit, Michigan, NYF was very happy to have an opportunity to provide a workshop to youth in Flint, Michigan on August 6th. NYF has desired to work in Flint, as well as several other urban cities throughout Michigan for a long time, however funding and resources to connect with the young men in these new cities for our organization had not yet manifested.

We were grateful for this opportunity to serve young men in one of Michigan's largest cities thanks to an invitation by **Pastor Duane Thomas**, Assistant Pastor of **Calvary Missionary Methodist Church**; who invited us to hold this workshop with the youth at his summer camp held at the church. Pastor Thomas became familiar with the work of NYF years ago as a result of becoming an acquaintance of NYF Founder, Andre' Dandridge. Providing youth in Flint with fun recreational activities (basketball and crafts), food, and also mentoring/life coaching is one of Pastor Thomas's passions. Since NYF believes in these same values, we gladly accepted his invitation.

The workshop topic that I personally had the pleasure of presenting to the youth on that day was *Young Men and Responsible Behavior*. However, upon my arrival I discovered to my



Photo of some of the youth participants in the workshop from Pastor Thomas's Summer Camp.

my surprise that not only was this group of youth diverse in age and race, but they were also diverse by gender because some of the younger children were actually girls. The youth that were present ranged in age from 5 to 18 years of age.

Consequently, this workshop was like no other workshop that I had previously done and my topic switched to *Young People and Responsible Behavior*. It certainly required for me to make some adjustments to some of our discussions topics, as well as my delivery on some of those topics. The two biggest challenges for the day were adjusting the workshop to address the subject matter in a way that the young females could relate, and also to keep the attention of all of the very young children that were present.

Highlights of our workshop that day were a brief discussion about hip hop music, which so many of the youth enjoy listening to, as well as to talk about what makes someone a good father or mother and how critically important it is for youth to make intelligent decisions that can impact them for the rest of their lives. I thoroughly enjoyed holding this workshop with them as much as many of them enjoyed being a part of it. A lot of the older guys seemed to appreciate that I encouraged them to be truly honest about what they were going to do with their life regarding the present and the future. Even though they could tell that I frowned upon negative things that they said they may do, I think that they appreciated having a discussion on the negative consequences that come along with that type of decision making. The workshop really ended on a great note and Pastor Thomas graciously extended to us the invitation to come back and hold more workshops with the youth his program. We were able to leave all of the youth with free NYF information packets filled with materials to help guide them into adulthood.

NYF would like to extend another thank you to Pastor Duane Thomas of Calvary Missionary Methodist Church for inviting us. This entire workshop was made possible by Advance America, an official NYF sponsor. NYF would like to thank Advance America, and all of our previous

(NYF Debuts – Cont. Page 4)



Calling all supporters and potential supporters. New Young Fathers.com is seeking sponsors and donations to support our final events for 2015, as well as to support our upcoming fatherhood events to begin a strong 2016 year. Sponsoring and supporting the programs of NYF not only supports a valuable community service, but it also provides an advertising tool for your company. Please join us in our fundraising efforts for the remainder of 2015 and into 2016.

Although it is not often recognized, supporting the cause of responsible fatherhood is one of the most important causes that you can support because so many social problems can be traced back to children whose fathers weren't involved in their lives. In fact, there is an abundance of published research that illustrates how critical the role of a father is to his children.

To assist NYF in our efforts to help young men become responsible fathers, you may support us by: becoming an official sponsor of our workshops; making a tax deductible donation of any kind; purchasing an NYF membership; or purchasing from our series of NYF responsible fatherhood DVD's at:

www.newyoungfathers.com (and select from Donate Now, Membership, and DVD's and Handbooks options)

NYF also invites you to become a supporter by registering us as your charitable organization to support through Kroger Community Rewards. Kroger will donate a proceed from every dollar that you spend as a Kroger Shopper while you can continue to receive your same savings and fuel points. To become a Kroger Community Rewards supporter please visit www.krogercommunityrewards.com and select our organization's legal name, NBI Bryans Inc.(NPO number 65647) as your nonprofit of choice.

Thank you in advance for your support!

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(Rob Johnson – Cont. from Page 3)

doing with your career now?

I have since graduated from college, half way done with my Master's Degree in Business. I work in the corporate American banking industry. I have a wonderful wife and son. I volunteer and speak. I have also written a book called, *The Epitome of Defeat*.

Is there any final advice that you would like to share with fathers to inspire them to their potential to be great fathers?

Always talk and listen to your children. Give them boundaries and principles to make them better individuals. Break the cycle of absenteeism. Be a better father to your children than your father or mother was to you.

Fathers' Voices would like to thank Rob Johnson very much for sharing his story and giving an interview to us. **Mr. Johnson's book, *The Epitome of Defeat* is available for purchase at www.barnesandnoble.com. For speaking engagements you may contact him at jrobertml@gmail.com.**



Workshop Presenter and NYF CEO, Rahman Shareef

(NYF Debuts – Cont. from Page 3)

sponsors and supporters who have made it possible for us to do the work that we do for young men and fathers.

NYF desires to continue providing our workshop services to young men and fathers in Flint, Michigan, as well as in other urban cities throughout Michigan and Florida. In order to continue providing these services that are so desperately needed, we are in need of sponsors and supporters! If you're interested in becoming an NYF sponsor or supporter, please feel free to contact Rahman Shareef at 517-574-9879, or by email at RahmanShareef@newyoungfathers.com. You may also become a sponsor or donate online at <http://www.newyoungfathers.com/Donate-today--.html>. Thank you in advance for your support!



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Reach thousands of our readers throughout the state and even nationally by advertising your business in "Fathers' Voices". Your placing an ad with our publication will not only benefit your business, but the proceeds will aid NYF to continue this publication and fund needed fatherhood workshops and educational resources that we provide to fathers free of charge. Ad sizes are inexpensively available to be placed in our newsletter from business card size to full page ads.

For information on advertising in *Fathers' Voices*, or to become a sponsor of our workshops, please contact Rahman Shareef at (517) 574-9879.



What is New Young Fathers.com?

New Young Fathers.com is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that is committed to helping young fathers under the age of 25 to become responsible parents to their children through community outreach and education. Our dedicated team is comprised of education, business, community service, technology, and media professionals that are passionate about helping young fathers overcome their challenges. In fact, many members of our team have shared the same experience of becoming a father at a young age and overcoming the challenges of fatherhood.

In addition to providing our interactive website and educational literature/DVDs on an international level, we also provide practical educational workshops that educate young fathers in subjects of parenting skills, responsible behavior, relationships, child support, financial planning, job preparation, employment acquisition, fatherhood after incarceration, and many more subjects. NYF currently conducts workshops throughout the states of Michigan and Florida.

For more information about NYF or to make a tax deductible contribution, please visit our website at www.newyoungfathers.com or call us at (313) 288-0537.

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