

Dyslexic ,Black and Broke My Magic Super Power

Mindset is a superpower, and some might call it magic. I like to think I've created the ultimate magic trick. I've taken what some might consider a triple disadvantage of a learning disability and growing up as a black Puerto Rican in a predominantly white area and turned into an opportunity that led me to a successful career doing what I love.

Since I was a little kid, I've loved to entertain-singing, dancing, and acting. The positive attention I got became a coping mechanism as I struggled with dyslexia in school. I thought that if I entertained people and they saw my talent, they wouldn't think I was stupid.

One of the superpowers dyslexic kids develop is a good memory, which was incredibly helpful to me when memorizing lines for plays. I love movies, and I've been able to memorize entire movies. When performing, it was the norm for me to be the only black person in the room. But I think of that as a position of power. I have the ability to change a person's view about a whole group of people they might not have much contact with. Nobody understands the power of transformation better than a magician.

Most magicians start when they are kids, but I didn't get into magic until I was 19 when I went to work at the Hyperspace Fun Center in Hollywood. I was being trained to entertain at birthday parties. This was a much better fit than my previous job at Walmart. Even a big box store wasn't big enough to contain my playfulness and big personality. But even then, I was a very hard worker. While at HSFC one day, I showed a kid a trick and he was so happy that his dad gave me \$5. It seemed like a fun and easy way to earn money, so the next day I brought two magic tricks.

Gradually, I added more and more magic to birthday parties and created a small show I put on for parties, and later for my coworkers, at HyperSpace.

The owner, Kathy Hollyer, was and still is a big influence in my life as she has always been willing to offer advice and encouragement. In fact, she was the reason why I met my first master magician, Giovanni Livera, at a food show in Ocean City, Maryland. Livera introduced us to the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

Hollyer took a group of us to my first International Brotherhood of Magicians Convention in Cleveland back in 2004. There I met some of the best magicians in the world. Over the years-at the conventions, I met and befriended many of that idols I had that I have grown to love while watching them do magic on tv. I soon realized that it was possible to have a career in magic.

I never focused on the fact that I was a black magician in a predominantly white business. But I always felt I had a responsibility to give everyone I come in contact with a Positive Young Black Male Experience (P.Y.B.M.E).

As Steve Martin says, “Be so good they can’t ignore you.” I wanted that community and my audiences to come to their own conclusions that I am funny and talented. I never tried to be better than anyone else. I just focused on being better than I was the day before, because there are only two things in this world I can control, my thoughts and my actions.

Honestly, the biggest challenge I face is one almost everyone understand-money. If I wrote an autobiography I could call it *Dyslexic ,Black and Broke* Just Kidding. But it has a ring to it. I think I also turned that perceived disadvantage into an advantage. When you start out in magic, you feel like you need expensive toys and big tricks that can cost a lot of money. I think the lack of money forced me to become a better illusionist.

So, I did what my amazing parents and teachers told me. “I can do anything if I put my mind to it”. I began building my own Illusions one at a time.

My high school theater experience and carpentry class and working construction after high school really paid off for me here. The set-building and the attention to detail helped me create better props. The philosophy of “How you do anything is how you do everything” helped me excel.

Necessity is the father of invention, and to save money, or just from lack of, I learned to build pieces for my show out of things I found I could round up from my Dad's favorite store (The Junkyard). I turned things like an old baby crib, a washer & dryer, an old air-conditioning unit, and even a commercial oven into amazing-looking stage props.

My performing experience and mentors taught me that the person telling the story matters more than anything.

It’s so much more complex than just understanding the mechanics of magic. It’s all about how you relate to the audience.

Creating a show out of the visions I’ve had in my head for years is a complicated process. I’ve learned to gather all the right pieces, lighting and music and put them together in a way that effectively tells my story.

I am an actor playing the part of a magician (Jeff McBride). I had to learn creative ways to tell a story with magic as I take the audience along on a journey through my wild imagination. So from “*Illusions of the Eye*” to “*Delusions of Illusions*” to “*Fool of Illusions*”, (Show Titles) I always try to tell a story-mixing my two great passions, movies and magic. I transform the stage as I begin learning how to effectively communicate my storytelling and dramatically build into magic.

Over the years, my illusions have gotten bigger, better, and stronger while still having my audience enjoy taking the trip down the rabbit hole with me!

I believe these problem-solving skills really helped me out when the pandemic hit. When live shows closed down for the foreseeable future, I had to figure out how to adjust

pretty quickly. I decided to offer virtual shows via Zoom. That involved rethinking many tricks and reconceptualizing how audience participation would work. Fortunately, magicians are good at thinking on their feet, so I've adjusted.

I'm offering virtual shows for families, businesses, classrooms, nursing homes, or anyone else that needs a little magic. With all that's going on in the world, I think everyone can appreciate a little laughter and music in their lives.

Meanwhile, I never lose sight of my big goal of traveling the country with my Illusions show. I have used this time to work on and perfect my show. I took a problem and transformed it into a positive.

No one should think they can't achieve their dreams. No kid should think he or she can't be a magician or a mathematician or President just because they are black or dyslexic or poor. I'm blessed to have a wonderful family and friends who have always believed in me. But even if you don't, you can still believe in yourself.

I've been blessed enough to travel the world performing for hundreds of thousands people. I am a three-time DC Comedy Magician of the Year, and even had the pleasure of opening for Jordin Sparks. I have performed for First Lady Michelle Obama five times. I was featured on the Travel Channel, and I've performed for stars like Kevin Hart, Ryan Seacrest, and Shaquille O'Neal.

I think I have accomplished this in my career using this formula I was giving at a young age. S.U.C.C.E.S.S

See your goals!

Understand the obstacles!

Clear your mind of doubt!

Create a positive mental picture!

Embrace the challenge!

Stay on track!

Show the world you can do it!

I hope to have the opportunity to help others like so many of my mentors have helped me along the way. They didn't treat me differently or even see a young BLACK kid. They just saw a young, patient magician with talent. They saw raw potential that could be refined with lots of hard work. Some of them, I only knew briefly and others I've had a long-lasting relationship with. But the effect on me has been profound. In a way, my career is a love letter to everyone who believed in me-My Dad, who passed in 2012, and a list too long to name.

Believing in one another is a magic power that we all have. We can be the one that inspires someone to follow their dream no matter what. We can show them how to turn their disadvantage into a super power. That's real-life magic.

Giovanni Livera, was the first magician that inspired me and he wrote a poem called "It" that has stuck with me for all these years as I believe it sums up my mind set and career perfectly.

IT

You can't beg for it
You can't borrow it
You can't steal it

If you have it
You know you have it
If you don't have it
Look for it

If you have talent for it
You may have it
If you have passion for it
You may have it
If you have talent
and passion for it
You've got it

Everyone has an it
Find it.
Cherish it
Share it
Grow it
That's It

I hope you all find your "it".
I know I have.

HAVE A RICE DAY!