

From JENSEN Drive 2 PENNSYLVANIA Avenue

Joie Rasberry's Story of Struggle, Strength and Survival



The story of *From JENSEN Drive 2 PENNSYLVANIA Avenue* began in the back of a Goodwill store on Jensen Drive in Houston, Texas. For its founder, Joie Rasberry, half-price Sundays meant shopping for 10-cent books while her mother bought \$1 shirts and \$3 jeans for the family.

In the back, near the musty dressing rooms and dusty glass candy dishes, run over shoes and purses wreaking of disinfectant became Rasberry's audience. There, more than 20 years ago among the discarded remnants, a gallery of second-hand merchandise shaped her company into the powerhouse that it is today, one that is built on the premise of hope, promise and a desire to want more and do better.

That pursuit of excellence is what prompted Rasberry to take her talents as a speaker, author, television writer, radio news personality and educator to another level. It was to be a means to an end, but has turned out to be her life's calling. Rasberry knew she wanted to go back to college, but faced with family obligations and financial limitations, she was forced to choose between the better life she sought, or maintain the one that had become so familiar, so comfortable.

Leaving behind lucrative jobs in Corporate America, she went back to school at Texas Southern University and turned years of speaking engagements and keynote presentations into money for tuition and books.

"It was the hardest decision I've ever made," said Rasberry. "But that is what separates the unwilling from the risk takers. Whether I sank or swam, it was up to me."

Within months of starting the company, Rasberry started receiving invitations to speak from around the country and the world. What has set Rasberry apart from the pool of other powerful sought after speakers is her genuine testimonies of struggles, and how she rose valiantly to every occasion, surviving some of life's most painful moments. Her honest, no-nonsense approach has propelled her into the boardrooms of companies such as Halliburton, United States Department of Interior and Anheuser Busch to college classrooms at Julliard, University of California and New York University. Rasberry's speaking engagements include international appearances in Madrid, Spain, Paris, France, Prague, Czechoslovakia, Rome, Italy, Johannesburg, South Africa and abroad.

Rasberry donned the red carpet at the White House and performed for President George W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice, Dr. Rod Paige and Coretta Scott King, widow of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The same people who laughed at me when I told them I was quitting Xerox to go back to school were the same ones who had to welcome me back when I was invited as the featured speaker for a board meeting," said Rasberry. "Sometimes, you have to be willing to face failure in order to make your dreams come true. You have to see yourself at the finish line even before you get there. You have to see yourself as successful, well accomplished and highly favored. Anything else just won't do."

Rasberry is a graduate of Houston's famed High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. What is so amazing is how she took her years of study in theatre at HSPVA and carved out her own unique niche. It was her training honed at this specialized school that led her to be labeled by Ebony Magazine as one of the greatest young speakers of our time. In addition, Rasberry has covered just about every area in the communications industry, proving that when used well, skills are transferrable. As Rasberry continues to be a powerful force on the lecture speaking circuit, she has also worked as a television writer for KRIV Fox 26 News, served as an on-air news radio host and producer at KTSU 90.9 FM Radio Station, served as Editor-in-Chief for several magazines, and is author of two books, *From Jensen Drive to Pennsylvania Avenue* and *More Than Half a Century*.

Drawing on her experience as a Speech and Debate educator, Rasberry coaches and trains executives, celebrities, professional athletes, aspiring politicians and pastors in the area of Professional Communication, Public Address and Presentational Effectiveness.

Her work has captured national attention as she continues to write compelling, intriguing and strategic content which is noticed by the media. She uses her literary prowess to create captivating, beckoning and spellbinding content that delivers results.

Her breadth of knowledge also extends to the arena of education. Rasberry has taught Speech, Debate and Theatre in the public school system for years, being recognized as one of the greatest Speech and Debate educators in America.

Rasberry is a highly sought-after Women's Ministry leader, speaking to women all over the world, offering hope and grace in such trying times.

Rasberry shares that while she was exceling, life was derailing. Her oldest sister passed away at the hands of domestic violence, her other sister fell to a life of drugs and alcohol, and her only brother was sentenced to prison. She shares, 'We were from a Christian family and life just fell apart. I don't know how I made it. I truly believe there were angels watching over me.'

Rasberry states her rigorous study at HSPVA took her mind off of the plight of her family. And the Texas Southern University Speech & Debate Program where she excelled and won globally did the same. These two combined experiences were the catalyst that changed the trajectory of her life.

Moreover, Rasberry went on to establish Rasberry's House of Hope. Birthed from her own pain, she founded a home for troubled girls and got them off the street. It was a residential facility for homeless abused, abandoned and neglected females, licensed by the State of Texas. The mission was to love the lives of young females without judgement or criticism, and to guide them to a life of right living, right choices, right decisions, a right self-image, and a right relationship with God.

"Success has not been instant, but rather, a gradual process. There is no magical formula for succeeding. For me, success has meant doing what others refuse to do and going where others would not go. I remember as a child, being asked to speak for all kinds of church programs, school events, civic meetings, special-interest groups, family reunions, retirement celebrations, birthday parties, and even funerals. It was these hundreds of speaking engagements that gave me not only experience, but exposure. The networking opportunities created from my speaking at the request of others as a child, has taken me from a once free speaker to an adult who is able to command lucrative speaking fees. There are no shortcuts to glory, you just have to be willing to pay your dues," said Rasberry.

Her smile is quite serene as she reflects back. “Of course, I was embarrassed like most kids my age having to shop at Goodwill, the neighborhood thrift store right in the heart of the ghetto, rather than having a chance to shop at Foleys or Macys. “It wasn’t that we were poor. My parents made good money. They were just misers,” states Rasberry. “The most amazing part of it all is, I would have never thought that those old second-hand books from Goodwill would have catapulted me on to life’s top shelf. I remember filling my mother’s shopping cart with the readings of Shakespeare, Robert Frost, Edgar Allen Poe, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Leo Buscaglia, Les Brown, Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey, Zig Ziglar and others. I loved reading because reading introduced me to a whole new world. I can laugh now because what appeared to be a curse, turned out to be a blessing in disguise,” she interjects.

Rasberry's ability to connect with all people, regardless of environment or age, has made her one of the most sought after speakers among business, educational, social and non-profit groups. It has also enabled her to hold in high regard the sacrifices made by her family, the unpleasantness of life, those old glass candy dishes, shoes and purses that served as her audience when she was a young girl shopping with her mother at Goodwill, and the absolute beauty there is in struggle. "Struggle builds character," she said. "And every detour I had to take along the way helped me get from *JENSEN Drive 2 PENNSYLVANIA Avenue*."

Rasberry continues to serve as keynote speaker for universities, businesses, organizations faith-based institutions and gala affairs. Rasberry's customized, honest, compelling, no-nonsense speeches continue to leave audiences spellbound. Rasberry's inaugural CD and book, From JENSEN Drive 2 PENNSYLVANIA Avenue, speaks to the heart of every man, woman and student. It is a compilation of speeches set to music that delve deep into the human spirit, as it deals with some of life's most pressing issues.

FOR A MEDIA KIT, REQUEST FOR KEYNOTE SPEAKER, GUEST APPEARANCES, LECTURES, BOOKS & CD'S, EXECUTIVE TRAINING & COACHING, CONTACT:

Joie Rasberry

Professional Speaker, Author/Writer, Women's Ministry, Educator of Speech, Debate & Theatre

(832) 577-2558

E-mail: joie_rasberry@yahoo.com

Website: www.joierasberry.com