

Check Out Antoine Joyce-Roach's Story



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Today, we'd like to introduce you to Antoine Joyce-Roach.

Hi Antoine, thanks for sharing your story with us. To start, maybe you can tell our readers some of your backstory.

Briefly, ha! That is always the challenge. But I will try!

I grew up poor in the Bed-Stuy neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. When I first encountered the All Stars Project as a young person, my cousin was involved. Soon afterward, I became a member of the dance group he was a part of, and we performed all over New York City in talent shows with the All Stars Project.

Dancing was my jam! Ha, jam, who says that anymore. Ok, seriously though, I often say performance saved my life. Dancing kept me occupied. And others in the community saw hope in me and would keep me from the dangers I often sought out as a kid. I am forever grateful for those people, some of whom are no longer here with us.

My life continued to grow positively when I was invited to be a youth producer of the program we spent so much time in, the All Stars Talent Show Network. I started to lead talent shows all over New York City and Newark, New Jersey. I was the official emcee for all the shows for eight years, and my confidence grew through performing on stage in a new way, organizing audiences of thousands to support other youth from around the city. It was very powerful for me to build a community in that way.

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My involvement grew to include working with our caring adult partners, donors, and business leaders, who supported the All Stars in becoming bigger in new ways. I also became bigger. I became comfortable in environments very different from where I grew up and wanted to share this with more people as I grew professionally and personally.

Today, that is expressed by having the opportunity to be a founding leader of our efforts here in Dallas!

Would you say it's been a smooth road, and if not, what are some of the biggest challenges you've faced along the way?

I don't believe anyone's path to leadership or life in general is smooth. We all have struggles. Mine was my poverty. And I say my poverty because I think there are different experiences of poverty, even with vast similarities with others.

But I struggled, still do, with the embarrassment of growing up on welfare and seeing my mother struggle to support four boys in a single-parent home. Still, I didn't always subscribe to the thought of being poor. We just didn't have enough. And that all came crashing down with the passing of my mother at the age of 41. That still is the hardest thing I had to go through. Especially knowing today that my mother sacrificed her health to continue to put food on the table.

As the oldest of my brothers, the responsibility of "taking care" of the family was/is a big burden. That was my mother's final ask of me. I do my best. Some days, I feel like I failed. And, my family tells me that the work I do in the All Stars Project inspires them. It continues to allow me to give back to my family and to others. My family, for the most part, is doing good!

Thanks – so, what else should our readers know about your work and what you're currently focused on?

I am proud to be part of the leadership of the All Stars Project. We are a national nonprofit organization founded 40 years ago, offering free outside-of-school development programs built on the pillars of Performance, Building Bridges, and Partnerships with Caring Adults.

My pride comes from my personal life experiences. When I meet youth in communities like West Dallas, South Oak Cliff, Pleasant Grove, South Dallas, and others, I see youth who remind me of myself. They are full of hope and want opportunity but often don't see it or know how to obtain it. So, my main goal in my career is to connect youth to opportunity, and we, the All Stars, do that with thousands of caring adult partners.

I recently had a wonderful moment presenting to the board of the Dallas Regional Chamber with an ambitious ask for us to make Dallas the number one region for effective internships.

I live for opportunities like that because when a company like KPMG, EY, Hunt, or TAC takes on a high school or college intern, a student from an underserved community, it changes lives. The young person who has an internship, in turn, impacts their community. It's so transformative.

I get the chance to build transformative partnerships with educational institutions like Dallas College and UNT Dallas, civic leaders like Senator Royce West, and nonprofit organizational leaders like Big Thought. It's a lot of fun.

I am sharing our Eight Dimensions of Development nationally. These are measurable tools of success that we have identified in collaboration with Southern Methodist University's Center on Research and Evaluation, which supports underserved youth in building 21st-century skills essential for life and the workforce.

Having moved here in September 2013, I would be remiss if I didn't shout out that we are celebrating our 10th anniversary year in Dallas. And I didn't do that alone. The greatest part of my career is finding kindred spirits to work alongside, and my team members are amazing to lead this work with every day.

So, as I have always done in my career, I invite you and anyone who reads this to get involved. Join the All Stars Project. Everyone is welcome. You can volunteer in our community programs, be a Development Coach, provide workforce experiences through corporate workshops or mock interviews at your company, and, best of all, provide a paid summer internship. And, of course, you can support the All Stars Project with financial donations. There is a link on our website where you can sign up to get involved at www.allstars.org.

And, look, if not with us, get involved in the lives of our youth in any way that works for you. It matters.

Can you share something surprising about yourself?

My older cousin, DJ Demo, was the DJ for many of the talent shows I emceed. Later, when he worked in radio, I would go to clubs and parties with him and use my production skills to support him. As I grew my skills and experience, I became his warm-up and closing DJ.

Soon after, I started an internship at WBLS radio station in New York City and emceed events and promotions in NY and NJ. I became increasingly passionate about entertainment as it, too, became a catalyst for growth and self-discovery. Years later, I joined Demo on tour and became the production tour manager for internationally renowned DJ Grandmaster Flash. All of that gave me other skill sets that I can share with the world.

So today, occasionally, as another way to bring joy to the lives of others, I moonlight as a DJ.

Contact Info:

- **Website:** www.allstarsproject.org
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/allstarsprojectinc>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Allstarsproject>
- **Linkedin:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/all-stars-project-inc/>
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