

Audio Transcript: Beatrice Joyner

Photographer & TV Producer, *In Search of Knowledge*

BEATRICE JOYNER:

My name is Beatrice Joyner. I was born in Philly, but raised in Camden and then eventually moved back to Philadelphia. I grew up watching Gordon Parks or seeing Gordon Parks in Life Magazine as a child, and I fell in love with photography. And so I began taking pictures from a young age. I had gone to school for English, in my undergrad, met a lot of famous Black writers and started snatching your pictures whenever I could. But it was when I went to an elementary school one day for a career day and I asked the children typical question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" And one little boy got very excited. He said, "I want to be a drug dealer." And I thought about it, I said it, that's the only occupation that he knows, we as adults are at fault. And we have to show him there's another way to earn his living. So I decided to use the photos that I had been taking to show our children role models, other people who had succeeded who had come often from the same neighborhoods, but had been successful, just that they knew that they didn't have to have an illegal career in order to be successful.

So I began using the photos and just doing PowerPoint presentations with kids to talk to them about that. My first major presentation was at the American Library Association's national conference. And what I did is I took photos of notable Blacks, and just put them on a table and said, "Do you know who this is?" Because a lot of times, we in the Black community know who these individuals are, but outside of that people don't know. So I wanted to give exposure. And that's what I look for, I look for the people who are not as well known, in order to show our children that there's all kinds of ways that they can earn a living.

ANTOINE HAYWOOD:

And what's your program called?

BEATRICE JOYNER:

In Search of Knowledge, and I call it *In Search of Knowledge* because I actually went to see the people because of some knowledge that they had. Either because they were world famous, or I discovered that because a lot of individuals, I've discovered just being out in the community, finding people say, "Oh, okay, I need to interview you for my project." The "why I do it" is because I didn't want our children going through the school to prison pipeline, I wanted to show them that there were alternatives to careers that they could have. And it didn't require it- Not all of them require college. Some of the individuals in my collection have high school diplomas, all the way up to doctorates. But I wanted to show them that if they really were interested in something, they could create a career out of it. I mean, I came to PhillyCAM, not knowing what to expect, and found a community of people who were willing to support me. I mean, I've met people in the hallways who say, "Hey, if you need any help, just let me know." I've had other people say, I'll volunteer. You know, I had no budget for those four years. And people were generous enough to participate because I think we all believe in the fact that our stories need to be told. And there's a wide variety of ways to tell those stories. And so I believe that by telling and sharing the stories of these individuals, I'm going to help children. I'm going to help somebody; I'm going to help somebody say, "You know what, maybe I need to take another look at this. Or maybe I should change what I'm doing. Or maybe I am more intelligent than I thought."