

Meeting Ruth Adkins Robinson At The Education Crossroads



Hollywood, CA – Sometimes we cross paths with others that seem pure accident, with others it seems pre-ordained. For Ruth Adkins Robinson, a call in 1976 for writing help on a live awards show from James Brown's manager Charles Bobbitt was the first pavestone in the pathway that led to a New York production studio last week and a new syndicated TV show called "The Education SuperHighway." The host for the show is activist Reverend Al Sharpton. "Imagine" Robinson says, "that day in Las Vegas, I met the superstar James Brown and his 19 year old minister friend, Al Sharpton. So we have known each other since Reverend Sharpton was a very young man. I have watched as he evolved into an important leader. Others talk, but Sharpton always shows up. His Sharpton Media is keenly focused on education." she said "That made doing this show so natural."

The show that long ago day was the "Black Athletes Hall of Fame" hosted by Brown. They'd run into problems when Bobbitt called Mickey Stevenson for help. Stevenson sent Ruth, then his live show producer, to write the show for Brown. "What a show that was -James Brown, Barry White, Aretha Franklin and great athletes from Gale Sayers to Roy Campanella," she remembers. In the years since, Robinson has produced hundreds of live shows and written for and/or produced hundreds of hours of TV, from "Motown 25" to the "Black Movie Awards." For this new show, Robinson is the executive producer and the show's creator. It is produced through Different Mojo, her company with producing partner, Maurice James for ESH Holdings, a New York based media company.

Robinson felt compelled to create the show because of a trip

down another road – to Pennsylvania Avenue. “I had the honor of being the sole writer for the Commander-in-Chief’s Inaugural Ball for President Obama. It was emotional magic for me. A lifetime in Hollywood had not fully prepared me for that galvanizing experience of watching this young Black man assuming the awesome responsibility of world power and leadership.

Ruth Adkins Robinson

“I had written many words to be spoken by some of the greatest Black artists of our time, from that day with James Brown through Morgan Freeman, Sidney Poitier, Oprah Winfrey, Ray Charles, Laurence Fishburne, Ossie Davis and so many others.”

Now she wanted to change directions. Robinson came back to Los Angeles “dedicated to developing work” that would help her fulfill her desire to “help my President” with his priorities “of education, health and mutual respect for cultures of all kinds.”

“The Education SuperHighway” is the first show and seemed a natural fit to the President’s sending Sharpton and Newt Gingrich on a national tour to assess the status of education in America. Sharpton says “If Newt and I can agree on this, everybody can agree. Education is the Civil Right of the 21st Century,” the Civil Rights activist concluded. There are TV shows, various publications, tours and other projects under the ESH banner. Robinson is also involved in the publication aspect of it all as Editor of the Equal Education Chronicles and the Equal Health Chronicles.

She is still euphoric over the production day in New York. “I’ve never seen a show day go smoother. It was amazing.” According to Robinson, Rachel Noerdlinger, the EVP of Sharpton Media, “pulled off an amazing feat” by securing New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg as the very first guest for the show. “It was United Nations week in the City and the Mayor agreed to come for Sharpton, but could only give us 15 taping minutes.”

Robinson described how precision-like the entire thing was. "I met the Mayor in the elevator, as we rode up the 11 floors, I ran the script with him, answered a few questions, he went in the side door of the studio, got patted down by my makeup artist, Rachel Whitehurst, turned to Sharpton and for the next 12 minutes they delved into the problems and solutions of education in America." Fifteen minutes after the Mayor hit the elevator, Robinson notes with a smile, "he was out the door and on his way to the next UN function."

Mojo's team in New York, from production manager Alli Maxwell and the entire staff had worked furiously over the past month to get everything in place for the centerpiece of the show "Al Sharpton's Roundtable." The show's co-host is lovely young British personality Jane Notar and the pairing of Sharpton and Notar introducing the show provides the immediate awareness that this is "'not a show about Black education, it is a show about the Education in America," states the show's producer James.

James explained that top notch contributors to the show include the highly regarded music producer Butter from Bread & Butter Prods. who is the composer for the program. "The brilliant set design from Jack Chandler grounds the show, elegantly and solidly," Robinson added.

Other elements of the show handled by the Los Angeles team of Rail Prods, production coordinators Lindsay Harbert and Nicole Banks "cover the aspects of having segments shot in regions all across the country, plus Tech Talk, What the Kids Think, where a trio of young teens look for input from students, a News Update and even reports from other countries about how American children fare in foreign school systems," James explained.

Robinson concluded, "We are trying to have everyone meet at the Education Crossroads."

Learn something from “The Education Superhighway” at <http://www.theeducationsuperhighway.com>.