

KEVIN POWELL BIO

“I love people, all people. Few things give me the joy I get from helping others, as a servant, and from telling the stories of all kinds of people, especially people who have been ignored, hurt, or forgotten.”—Kevin on his life calling

Kevin Powell is one of the most celebrated political, cultural, literary, and hip-hop voices in America. He is a prolific writer and a GRAMMY-nominated poet; Kevin is a heavily sought-after public speaker who has lectured in all 50 states and on five continents. A native son of Jersey City, New Jersey, the human and civil rights activist has been engaged with nearly every democratic movement of the latter 20th and early 21st centuries, either as a servant-leader, a behind-the-scenes advocate, or in a leadership position with fellow writers, artists, and change agents. In 2008 and 2010, Kevin ran for the United States Congress in his adopted hometown of Brooklyn, New York.

Kevin was raised by a single mother in abject poverty. At the tender age of three, his mom introduced him to the importance of reading and that persistent encouragement propelled Kevin beyond his violent and impoverished surroundings. He enrolled at Rutgers University through the Educational Opportunity Fund, an initiative created during the Civil Rights Movement to benefit youth who otherwise lacked access to higher learning. At Rutgers, Kevin’s political education and activism blossomed. He reflects: “Just to be able to get to college, to be exposed to a new world, a new way, changed my life forever, and I am forever grateful.” It was at Rutgers that Kevin found his voice and his purpose, and since then Kevin’s writings, ranging from interviews, celebrity features, social commentary, poems, and blogs, have been published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *New York Amsterdam News*, CNN, NPR, ESPN, *Essence*, *Ebony*, *Rolling Stone*, *Esquire*, *HuffPost*, *Utne Reader*, *The Guardian*, *Politico*, *The Progressive*, *Complex*, *British GQ*, and other outlets.

As an author, Kevin has written 16 books, including *Grocery Shopping with My Mother*, his third volume of poetry; *The Education of Kevin Powell*, his critically acclaimed autobiography, which is being adapted for the screen; and his most recent title, *The Kevin Powell Reader*, which collects over 30 years of Kevin’s literary output. Currently, he is working on a biography of the iconic rapper and actor Tupac Shakur, who he interviewed several times as a founding senior writer for Quincy Jones’ groundbreaking *Vibe* magazine.

As a truth-seeker, bridge-builder, hip-hop authority, and pop culture curator Kevin has been at the center of several watershed moments. He was a cast member on the very first season of MTV’s “*The Real World*,” which launched the reality TV genre. He produced, in partnership with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Brooklyn Museum, the very first history of hip-hop exhibit in America. And he has worked with, or interviewed, or both, pioneering icons such as Chris Rock, Tommy Hilfiger, Stacey Abrams, Gloria Steinem, bell hooks, V (formerly Eve Ensler), Chadwick Boseman, Samuel L. Jackson, Lauryn Hill, Marlon Wayans, Common, and Kerry Washington.

In the worlds of film and theater, Kevin has directed, co-written, and co-produced his debut feature-length documentary, *When We Free The World*. It is a never-before-seen deep dive about healthy manhood versus toxic manhood, inclusive of Black males of all kinds—straight,

gay, transgender, disabled, short-statured, formerly incarcerated, college-educated, while also representing five generations of Black men and boys. Kevin is also creating a stage play that will be based on Grocery Shopping with My Mother, his moving collection of poems that he transformed into a musical project. That music project was GRAMMY-nominated in 2024 for Best Spoken Word Poetry Album.

And Kevin has long been focused on using his talents, resources, and network of friends and business partners to improve the lives of people everywhere. Through the years he established a highly successful annual clothing drive for youth who are un-housed in New York City; he spearheaded many national and international relief efforts including for survivors of Hurricane Katrina, the earthquake in Haiti, and the storm that devastated Puerto Rico. Equally important, Kevin, a visionary thought leader, has played an invaluable role in the movement to re-define manhood away from sexism and violence; he maintains a selfless focus on mentoring people of all ages, and he is passionately committed to uplifting justice in multiple arenas, be it the fields of education, the #MeToo movement, immigrant rights, gun violence, intimate partner violence, marriage equality, mental health, voting rights, or quality healthcare for all.

A vegan, two-time New York City Marathon runner, bicyclist, skateboarder, student of yoga, avid hiker, and member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Kevin is a proud and long-time resident of Brooklyn, New York, and happily married to Evangeline Lawson, photographer, filmmaker, writer, and his equal partner in every way.