

## Filmmaker a success, despite geographical odds

Written by Alaina L. Lewis

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For any other city kid growing up in a single parent home amidst the allure of the mean streets of New York City, the end result from looming in the shadows of continual chaos, could've easily led to a journey ending in demise. However, for author and filmmaker Nelson George, an ability to supersede the statistical guidelines attributed to living life in the ghetto is not only a testimony of his determinate will, but also a notation of the strength that rests at his core.

*City Kid: A Writer's Memoir of Ghetto Life and Post-Soul Success*, is the latest literary offering to escape the mind of this incredible author. It's his chronological journey from the whisper within an idea towards his discovery of a tangible dream as a writer. Apart from giving the reader a storefront view of his personal trip to the top, it also masquerades as a *love letter* to New York, and tells an intimate account of the evolution and influence of African American culture and the Arts.

From his early days of reciting the usual, "I'm with him," when clubbing with a pre-Def Jam Russell Simmons, to taking risks with a young Spike Lee and investing in his vision for, *She's Gotta Have It*, he paints a portrait of determination, not just within himself, but also within some major counterparts, who were also poised in their attempt to excel in their every endeavor.

For George, growing up and maintaining a personal identity in the Tilden Projects of Brooklyn, NY in the 60s was seemingly an implausible fete for a "nerdy" kid obsessed with Marvel comics and Hemingway. While others were succumbing to street life, George was exercising his mind and indulging in the world within literary classics. "My interest in reading did, over time, separate me from a lot of my peers. By adolescence I was spending more time with my books and my imaginary life, than in the streets," he said.

Early life in New York for the George family was rich in possibility, but not always as smooth as the soulful spins the family grooved to on his mothers Motorola high fidelity stereo. For a single parent raising two children alone, her goal to get them out of the Brownsville Projects could've easily been lost to any turbulent turn, but through will and perseverance she stayed the distance. Accrediting his mother as both his hero and a visionary, for a family rich *harmony*, her actions and determination

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as slick as the “liner notes” in a compilation CD towards attaining personal success.

“What I got from my mother was a work ethic. When my father and her broke up she was working as a checkout counter girl at A&P Supermarket and she was also doing some work at a bank as a clerk. When I was in the first grade, she was doing that kind of stuff. By the time I graduated in the 6th grade, she was a teacher,” he said. “That’s the model I still use to this day. If you’re going to do something it is in *your* power to control your destiny.”

Opting to not become a drug dealer like his estranged father, and believing in himself as a potential writer, George carried that paradigm of promise in his heart like a personal manifesto. It afforded him the formula for garnering his own set of wings and eventually over time he was able to fly his way out of the ghetto life for good.

George defied his own odds and conquered his own set of stakes and went from a career as a journalist, to a novelist, and later on made a name for himself as a screenwriter. He’s the filmmaker behind *Strictly Business*, *CB-4*, and the award-winning movie *Life Support*, which is based on the life of his sister.

As an author he’s made an impact in the writing world with a library of fiction and nonfiction works that highlight his love for Hip Hop and music and his ability to draw in a reader through his knack for story telling. *Hip Hop America*, *Blackface*, *One Woman Short*, and *Show & Tell*, are just a few notable mentions in his catalog of literary achievements.

Currently as the host of VH-1 Soul’s travel show, “Soul Cities,” and having come full circle in a vast array of accomplishments considering the circumstances in his rocky adolescence, George provides the perfect outline to dispel discouragement in the next person that comes along and feels that, “*they* can’t do it.”

His story of success is very clear. Whether it’s penning a story for *Billboard* or *The Village Voice*, sipping fresh squeezed apple juice at the home of Quincy Jones, or hanging with Chris Rock on the set of *The Chris Rock Show*,

*City Kid* is an exciting frame-by-frame account of a boy transitioning from chasing rainbows to being the man at the center of his own Pot of Gold.