

[JOE DAVIS, "SHOW UP"] We here, baby. My answers is as wide as dreams. We were each called to this place, this time in the season. You may not yet know the rhyme or the reason. You may not feel, think, or believe in the same things I believe in. But we've been asked to show up. Show up from wherever you are from. You can come here to be free. Bring your fool self--

INTERVIEWER: This is our *Minnesota Music Minute* for today and this is artist Joe Davis. The song started as a poem called *Show Up*. But then Joe collaborated with local musicians to create different musical versions of the song, gospel, rock, acoustic, and this is the hip hop version of *Show Up*. Joe Davis is coming up in just a moment.

[JOE DAVIS, "SHOW UP"] --you, there is no we. I need you not just to survive, but to thrive, to come fully awake and alive with potential and possibility. I need you to show up.

You may be hurting or afraid. Show up. We'll gather healing on the way. Show up. We will be strong, we will be brave. Show up. Dream of the world we will create.

INTERVIEWER: As a matter of fact, Minneapolis-based artist speaker, and educator, Joe Davis, is with us right now. He's showing up. He's having a breakout year. He tours nationally.

He's about to release his second book of poetry. He's got a concert at Orchestra Hall coming up this weekend. And he just took home a prestigious award for his work with youth. And Joe is on the line. Hey, congratulations. How are you?

JOE DAVIS: Hey, thanks so much for having me. I'm stupendous. Stupendous. So thankful to be here.

INTERVIEWER: I'm glad to hear that. You've been working hard as an artist and educator for so many years. And now, Joe, the universe is opened up to you and you're really taking off. What shifted?

JOE DAVIS: I don't know. To be honest, I just try to be consistent and try to be intentional. You know, I really believe in trying to squash that artist myth, the myth of the starving artist. I believe in the abundant artist or the flourishing artist.

I try to create that space not only for myself, but for everyone else. And I really think that spirit of collectivism, and collaboration, and just learning, and growing with other folks have really contributed to what I'm able to experience now.

INTERVIEWER: How do you sustain life as an artist? It's tough. I mean, obviously, there are financial considerations. But also the creative spark that you got you've got to keep feeding?

JOE DAVIS: Yeah. I think, it's been twofold. One way has been kind of training my creative brain to always find inspiration throughout my life, like just my experiences, my relationships, just everything. Everything that I consume is feeding my soul and feeding my creativity.

And then secondly, it's definitely the work I do with youth. Because every single time I step foot in a space where there's youth, I leave more filled and more inspired than when I came in. I get hired to teach them but I feel like they're teaching me. And so I think that's a big part of how I've just cultivated so much joy and beauty in my work is, is working with youth.

INTERVIEWER: I love that. Be curious, playful, joyful, exploratory, that's nice. How did you get started? For folks who are not familiar with your work, how did you get started? What was the calling for this work?

JOE DAVIS: Yeah. So it started from when I was a little kid. I was already one of those spirited children where I had a big imagination. I was always getting into mischief. Really playful and curious.

And then a shift happened when I was in elementary school. I actually got really sick. I was so sick that I actually passed out on the bathroom floor, was rushed to the emergency room. And then for several years, I was plagued with illness.

And during that time, I reached for the nearest thing I had, which was my pen and my notebook. And I could pour my heart, my soul into my writings. And I just created poems, and stories, and songs.

And I didn't realize this at the time, but in retrospect, looking back I see how art helped save my life. How it helped me gain this deeper sense of self, this deeper sense of connection and healing, and able to process some really tough things.

And so at first I thought it was just about me and kind of this healing journey that I was on. And then I had teachers, and mentors, and influential people in my life who said you know what, this is beautiful, this is powerful, you should share this.

And it took a while because I was nervous. I didn't want to share my innermost vulnerable feelings with other people. I didn't know how they would respond. But once I did finally start coming out of my shell and sharing, I realized that other people were also on their healing journeys. And that what I had to offer could encourage and inspire and motivate them. And they would in, turn offer me things that would help me in my healing journey.

And so I developed this kind of communal sense of what art can create for us. Art is this powerful catalyst for transformation and for opening up our hearts and our minds to new possibilities. And that's when it became a calling for me when I was awakened to that with other people throughout my life.

INTERVIEWER: That's quite a story. And aren't we all just walking each other home in terms of our healing journeys in a way when you think about it? So with your background, a lot of this came to the fore publicly with your first book of poetry, which was released, gosh, just last year, February of 2022. It's called *We Rise Higher*. What is that about? You've got some beautiful poems and prayers in there.

JOE DAVIS: Yes. So for me, this is really a collective of poems, and prayers, and practices for people going through different transitions in life, different chapters, and phases, and seasons.

And for me, it's always helpful to come back to this rhythm of practices, or prayers, or something in our lives that can keep us grounded and centered. And so that's what I wanted to offer folks through these poems.

And so it kind of touches on different seasons in our lives. Like seasons where we may be experiencing a time of joy and celebration, but also seasons in our life where we may be experiencing sorrow, and grief, and having to work through and release those emotions.

So I wanted to offer people poems that can help guide them through those times in my life because that's what's always been a solace and a refuge for me. And hopefully, it can be that for other people as well.

INTERVIEWER: Now you have a second book of poetry just coming out. It's called *Remind Me Again, Poems and Practices for Remembering Who We Are*. And I know people have been pre-ordering it already on Amazon. It comes out April 3, I understand. And you have a selection that you can share with us today. I'd be honored if you would please. Can you tell us about it and read a little bit?

JOE DAVIS: Yeah, absolutely. So I'm actually super, super, super excited for this particular release of poetry because I mean, the first one was such a joy but this one is even-- because after having gone through the process, I learned what I could do even better and how I can offer something that I feel is even more deeply impactful.

And this book is meant to be a source and a resource for people to come back to that wellspring of wellbeing. And this particular poem that I want to share is called Love Always.

And I wrote it with the intention of people to enter into the poem from multiple perspectives. They can experience this poem from the perspective of a love letter from their higher power, from god. Or they can see it as a love letter from that significant other. Or what I've been needing most recently is to see it as a love letter from my body to myself.

And so however you need to experience this poem, I invite you into that. It's called Love Always. It's the type of love that I want to cultivate more of in my life and in our world together. Love Always.

I love you. I love you at your best. I love you at your worst. I love you in a dress or sweat pants and T-shirt. I love you when you gain weight. I love you when you stay in shape. I love everything about you that you love and even everything you say you hate.

I love you. I love you when you wake up. I love you without makeup. I love you any time of day in any way because I mean it when I say love. I love you. I love you from start to finish, from head to toe.

I love you every spot, wrinkle, and blemish, every freckle and mole. I love both your dimples and your pimples. Your mind, body, spirit, and soul. I will love you before and after the here and now. And I'm here to let you know, I love you.

I love the way you walk, you talk, you smile, you laugh, you sing. I could cut this poem in half and say I love your everything. Because if you ever think that you're not loved, that just isn't so. No matter what, my love for you is unconditional.

I will love you forever and a day. And today is the day I will forever say, I will love you just the same when your hair turns dusty gray. I will love you just because I love you always.

INTERVIEWER: Nice. Oh, Joe. That's beautiful. Thank you. Thank you for that. That was an honor. I don't want to let you go without really quickly talking about the concert coming up here with my friend Philip Schultz who I love, VocalEssence. Tell me a little bit about, is this the birthday concert that you were talking about last November?

JOE DAVIS: Well, yeah. So I had a birthday concert every year for my birthday since this is my 30th birthday. I was like, hey, I want to do something big. And so I started doing these concert series.

And so my most recent birthday last November, I invited VocalEssence to perform with me. And it was absolutely phenomenal. We shut the house down. Everybody was vibing and just having such a beautiful time. And we're like, hey, we got to do this again.

And so this time we're collaborating at even a higher level, where we're doing more songs, bigger choir. It's not just the youth choir but the adult choir is coming as well. And so we're doing some of my songs.

My full band is invited as well. We're going to have horns, and violin, and all the instrumentation. And it's definitely an experience you're not going want to miss. So I'm super looking forward to it.

INTERVIEWER: All right. This is this Saturday, February 26 at Orchestra Hall.

JOE DAVIS: Sunday, Sunday.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, excuse me. Oh.

JOE DAVIS: Yeah, no. It's all good.

INTERVIEWER: Sunday. Sunday. Sunday, February 26, Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. I am a huge fan, Joe. Thank you for being on the program.

JOE DAVIS: Hey, thank you so much for having me. Such an honor and a joy.

INTERVIEWER: We've been talking to Minneapolis-based artist, speaker, and educator, Joe Davis.