From the moment he was born, Jimmy Briggs had a lot going for him. A solid family, faith rooted in the Southern Baptist tradition, and powerful women who loved him and expected him to be good, and to be successful.

“My mother, my grandmother and great-grandmother challenged me to carry myself with dignity and love.”

He was also one of the few African-American students in his predominantly white Missouri community. Because of that, he endured a lot of taunting and racial epithets that would influence his work years later.

“It wasn’t an easy time growing up but I found strength in my family and community. A lot of my upbringing was tied to the church. It was not a wealthy church; most members were working class people from the Deep South. They were very proud people.”

And they wanted Jimmie to succeed.

“It was an environment of affirmation. When I would do well in school...I remember members of the church discreetly handing me a five-dollar bill, slipping it to me as a token of their support.”

Their goal, Jimmie says, was to get him to go to college and he didn’t disappoint them. He followed in the footsteps of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and filmmaker Spike Lee, earning a seat at the historically black, all-male Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Studying on a fellowship in Europe his junior year during a time of political upheaval and revolution, Jimmie was an eyewitness to dramatic historic events. He was energized by his immersion in new cultures and languages and writing firsthand accounts of what he experienced. His long held plan to become a doctor went out the window.

“I recognized where my heart was focused--on the lives of the voiceless and people who are not always respected.” After graduation, he worked at various news outlets, eventually landing at Life Magazine writing stories on children in crisis, gang culture and the impact of urban violence on innocent children.
Over the past two decades, Jimmie Briggs has earned a reputation as a respected human rights advocate in the field of journalism, lecturer, and educator. For his work with Man Up Campaign and the issue of violence against women, Briggs was selected as the winner of the 2010 GQ Magazine “Better Men Better World” Search, as well as one of Women's eNews’ 21 Leaders for the 21st Century in 2011.

“Boys and girls, eight, nine, and ten years old, were wearing camouflage uniforms and carrying automatic rifles. They were killing other kids, killing adults, and risking their lives for a cause they didn’t understand.

“I internalized some of the worst stories imaginable. It had taken a toll on my soul.”

It also compelled Jimmy to ask himself “What can I do with my life?” The answer that came to him was Man Up Worldwide, the leading cause of death and disability for women between fifteen and forty-four is violence. Jimmie co-founded the Man Up Campaign in 2009 as a global initiative to engage young people around the world stop violence against girls and women.

Man Up uses technology, sports and arts to enlighten and educate young people about the issue of gender violence and empower them to return to their communities and change lives.

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