



WINCIBLER

“IT’S IN  
HIS BLOOD.”

LOOKING  
BEYOND THE LENS

A LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHER  
CHALLENGES OTHERS TO DIG  
DEEPER...

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE QUIET STORM  
HUMANITARIAN JAMES “J.J.” McQUEEN.





# LOOKING BEYOND THE LENS

*with*

# JAMES “J.J.” MCQUEEN

---

“ALONG YOUR PATHWAY OF LIFE YOU WILL OBSERVE THAT YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY TRAVELER. THERE ARE OTHERS WHO NEED YOUR HELP. THERE ARE FEET TO STEADY, HANDS TO GRASP, MINDS TO ENCOURAGE, HEARTS TO INSPIRE, AND SOULS TO SAVE”

**-THOMAS MONSON**

**James McQueen Jr.** (respectfully known as “J.J.”) has always designed and walked his own pathway. A pathway that has led him to understand the dynamics of being an athlete, the fundamentals of being a CEO, the humility of being a distinguished photographer and videographer, courage as a blogger, patience as a mentor, hard work as an Alpha man, dedication as a husband,

sacrifice as a father, and consistency as a humanitarian.

Many have always wondered the story of this High Point, North Carolina native, but only InvinciblePR was granted the one-time exclusive. We get up close and personal about the humanitarian’s power moves, how this year challenged him most, and how he charged others to dig deeper.



Sitting in James's greenroom located in the basement of his conventional home church in Baltimore, MD.

JM: Welcome to my home away from home [smiles]

IPR: Thank you. Finally, I get to sit down with Mr. James McQueen Jr., CEO of Goal line Media Production and Vision Beyond the Lens. I must say you are a very hard person to catch up with, a very busy man [smiled]. Thank you for agreeing to do the interview.

**So tell me what a typical day looks like for you?**

JM: I wake up, go through the normal routine (shower etc.), have breakfast, look over my schedule, and make sure the kids get off to school, then I get into the thick of it. Whether its meetings, editing, phone calls, planning, mentoring, or sometimes fraternal things as it relates to Alpha might come up. I am also on the Joppatowne Council (in Harford County) sometimes I have go over things such as policies and procedures; making sure the country is adhering to the things that are happening.

IPR: "Councilman McQueen" has a nice ring to it [laughs]. Maybe in the future?

JM: Maybe, only time will tell.



**IPR: You've had a busy year, tell me a little about that.**

JM: (he unpretentiously pauses) In March, I was chosen to have images from two of my series: "The Sun Still Rises in the Ghetto" and "I am More Than an Athlete" to be displayed within the halls of University of Maryland (Baltimore); very humbling experience for me. In June, I was one of the designated photographers for the Football 52 Fundamentalz Camp in Greensboro, NC.

IPR: Yes, I heard about that. The images were breathtaking. Thank you for the exclusive photographs [smile].

JM: [grins]. In August, I won the Outstanding Service Award for the Harford County chapter of my organization, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and we, Goal line Media Production had our annual Back-to-School drive. This is the 8th year we've provided school supplies to various schools around Harford County such as Edgewood, Joppatowne, Havre de Grace, and Riverside Elementary School.



IPR: You really have been busy this year. Congrats on all of your hard work and success. Now let's back up a bit.

**Let's talk about Football 52 Fundamentalz. Tell me more about that because you described it as "one of the best training camps ever," but I never heard of it until you mentioned it to me last year that you were attending.**

JM: (his face begins to light up as he grins from ear to ear) I'm a little biased because a lot of my former teammates are the coordinators of the camp. It's the camp's 4th year operating and I do believe it's one of the best training camps ever. (McQueen leans to the edge of his seat as he begins to describe his awe-inspiring trip to Football 52 Fundamentalz).

I used to be these kids and so did the ones who now run the camp, therefore it's easier for us to identify the needs of those kids and our community for that matter. When the coaches walk into the arena and see kids with the same accents, body languages, or mannerisms they know

immediately what those kids need and have an opportunity to provide it to them through this camp because they were once them.

I'll never forget the moment when I saw coaches on their hands and knees with the players pushing and encouraging those young men as they had tears in their eyes. Those were character building moments for me! I've never seen that happen at major brand camps. I've never seen coaches really connect with their players. Those moments resonated with the coaches just as much as they did with the players. Which is why the name of my blog is "Vision Beyond the Lens" it's because it's bigger for me than just the images I take. I really want to make impactful moments.

***"I knew for sure what when I was taking those images I wanted to make sure I painted athletes, my peers, and African American men in a way that society says we don't exist. When you have a camera in your hand and you are a true photographer -- a true journalist-- I've always been of the belief that you have a responsibility to tell stories in ways that nobody else will tell them, you have to take risk that nobody else will take, take risks or otherwise those images won't portray the truth behind the story and the people that lie within them."***

**- J.J. McQueen**







IPR: The reasons why I chose to interview you had nothing to do with how popular you are or how many titles you hold, but it is your drive and what you do that made me look further into your story.

You are mentoring other inspiring photographers and athletes, working within the community as a Joppatowne councilman, and formulating annual back to school drives for unfortunate families. **Where does that drive come from, that willingness to help and to serve others?**

JM: I think it's an earlier childhood DNA thing. During my childhood, I was 1 of 20 African-American kids in my rural town (roughly) so I was overlooked when it came to my individual needs and I believe that played a part in who I am today. Because I was overlooked and lacked what I needed it helps me to relate to kids and adults within my community because I once had the same need(s). I want to make sure that my energy and efforts always point back to being able to pay attention, highlight, and impact everything that points to advancement for under-privileged down-trodden communities. In addition, my grandfather was a pastor and my mom worked in an elementary school.

IPR: **Would you then say it comes from your mom because she was in education which then inspired you to help other scholars and inspiring athletes or did it come from your grandfather who has compassion for others through pastoring?**

JM: I think it's kind of a holistic thing. My dad is a heavy volunteer in our community and one of my grandmothers' ran an assisted living home so I think from a family perspective I had a great level of exposure.

IPR: **Oh it's just in your blood?** [laughs]

JM: Yea you could say that. [smiles]



***“Make a career of humanity, commit yourself to the noble struggle of equal rights, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”***

**– District of Columbia, 1959**

**IPR: Let's talk about your last major project, "The Sun Rises in the Ghetto". Tell me about that and how you came up with that series.**

JM: Last year I made up in my mind to go to a completely different level in photography. One day I decided to go to various parts of Baltimore and just start taking pictures. One of my first stops was on the East side of Baltimore and as I looked around I noticed the sun rising (on the east of course) and it was literally facing these dilapidated home and at that moment it came to me:- "The Sun Still Rises in the Ghetto." I wanted to show others that it doesn't matter whether your black or white, it doesn't matter where the county lines versus the city lines lie-- whether it's Greenmount or Greenspring Valley there are good people and good things happening in the "hood" as well. The ghetto isn't this gruesome place where there is no hope, no possibilities, or no dreams. The sun rises in these places so why wouldn't great people arise as well.

IPR: It's funny you say "gruesome" because that's really what people think, right? And it's not.

JM: It's not!

**IPR: Why is that? Why is the ghetto labeled as this "gruesome" place?**

JM: It is difficult for people that live outside of the ghetto to see the beauty that's taking place within the ghetto. Its viewed such a "gruesome" place because the beautiful things are seldom highlighted on a regular basis.

**IPR: How did you come up with Vision Beyond the Lens and what does it mean exactly?**

JM: Looking at moments way beyond what's happening in the eye view of my camera. I made a decision a long time ago that I did not want to be a conflict photographer, but I want to be a resolution photographer. I want to be one of those people who looks at images in some of the worst places in the world and be able to find the best moments in those pictures. Even as a kid I made up in my mind that I wanted to tell stories on my terms; the way I want to tell them.

IPR: **no fake news, right?** [laughs]

JM: [laughs]

IPR: Not only do I think it's remarkable, but I also think it's important to do things on our own terms. If someone told you every day what to capture (who, what, when, where, and why) you aren't telling or creating your own story, but you're painting the picture they want you to. Good stuff, good stuff.





IPR: **Do you think you've arrived?**

JM: No. I have a long way to go.

IPR: **Why not?**

JM: Financially there's another place I need to get to, to make the type of impact I would like to make especially in the community, within my fraternity, and in my hometown. People say you cannot serve two masters, but I whole heartily believe that I can do work where I live, but never disconnect from where I am from. So any opportunity that I get I try to get back home and give the same energy and efforts that I do when I am here in Baltimore

IPR: It's interesting you feel that way because I know many people who have accomplished much less but believe they have arrived, but you just see it as theirs still more work to be done; interesting.

JM: Yup, definitely more work.

IPR: I recently watched the interview with Charlamagne Tha God and Pastor Steven Furtick and Furtick asked the same question and Charlamagne stated, "I don't look at it as I've arrived or I've come to the stage where you can go no further, but I believe I am where I'm supposed to be." **Would you agree that you are at least where you are**

**supposed to be, or do you feel that you have more work to do because you are so behind in meeting the mark?**

JM: I believe I am where I'm supposed to be. I think the timing is right for this stage and this platform to get out the kind of messages that need to be seen and heard. But I will never get comfortable with what I did yesterday, there's always more; that's what helps me to get up in the morning. I say to myself "we've got more work to do" there's never a content moment where I believe there's never more to do.

IPR: "We've got more work to do." I like that, speaking of more work, **what do you want to leave as your legacy?**

JM: I want the children I have encounters with to understand that they matter because not every kid that walks in a room understands that they matter. I want them to know that it does not matter what their circumstances were or currently are, it does not matter what their households have or did not have. All of the men in my family made sure my siblings and I understood we mattered and anything we brought to the table was important so that is the one thing I have to leave my legacy.



IPR: **You have to?**

JM: Absolutely. I think your funeral should be the most observed day of your life. The line in between your birth and your death is how much work you did in between that time; so I have to make sure that every encounter is an impactful moment and they understand that our relationship is unique and authentic, and it matters.

IPR: **Why aren't you an athlete, besides the fact that your 41 years old?** [laughs]

JM: I just answered this question the other day while speaking to a group of kids. From 2007-2008, I was playing arena football also began to have a family, and children when I realized that this was bigger than me. I didn't want to be away from my children; I didn't want to be an absentee father because I know what it was like to have a dad at home every day regardless of what was our economic status.

While in training camp one of my children stayed sick the entire time and I walked into my coach's office ( we were in Oklahoma City at the time) and said "Coach, thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate you putting me in front of all these fans and NFL scouts but it's time for me to walk away. As an athlete you get to the point where you have to err on the side of wisdom. You have to think about your future, but also understand that the game doesn't love you as much as you love it, and at certain points you have to think about those things. If you don't, that means you're missing things developmentally along the way prior to strapping on that helmet or stepping on that basketball court whether you're in the Euro league or NBA. At some point all of us come to that conclusion; whether you're 40 still trying to play or 23 coming out of college.

IPR: **Are they accepting of it when you say it or is it moreso "I'm going to try anyways"?**

JM: Every athlete is in denial about that statement until it happens to them.

IPR: **Do you believe in order to be extremely successful that you have to give up something?**

JM: A whole lot! [laughs]  
You have to give up a lot.

IPR: **Yeah? Name something that you've given up.**

JM: Yourself, your time, you sacrifice a lot.

IPR: **If you could boil your principles down into three words what would they be?**

JM: Hope, possibility, and expectation.

IPR: Hope and possibility are so close.

JM: [shakes his head in agreement] Hope because if you don't believe it or if you can't see it 9 times out of 10 you won't try it; possibility runs along the same lines of potential. I've seen potential be people's greatest enemy if they don't believe it's possible. So for me possibility means potential; to live up to who you truly can be, but if you don't have a vision you can't live up the expectation.

IPR: 19 years of marriage; correct?

JM: Yeah.

IPR: That's a long time, congratulations. **Based upon some of the characteristics that others say you have; would you say that your wife played a part in molding you into the man that you are today?**

JM: Fortunately for her my parents and my family did a really good job of investing in me, because I was a lot more polished coming into marriage than guys at my age (23) would have been. I can say she definitely played a role, but she didn't have to do as much as a lot of women have to do at a young age

IPR: **What's the love story?**

JM: There isn't one [grins from ear to ear].

IPR: [laughs] Everyone has a love story.

JM: We met in the weight room in college. She played basketball as well. We actually didn't like each other at first. It was not love at first sight. It was something we had to work at and I think that's why it works because we had to work and a lot of times I think when it comes easy it doesn't work; it won't last.

IPR: And that's the love story folks! See you have one [laughs]. Thank you for the interview.

JM: Thank you for asking, it was definitely a pleasure.

