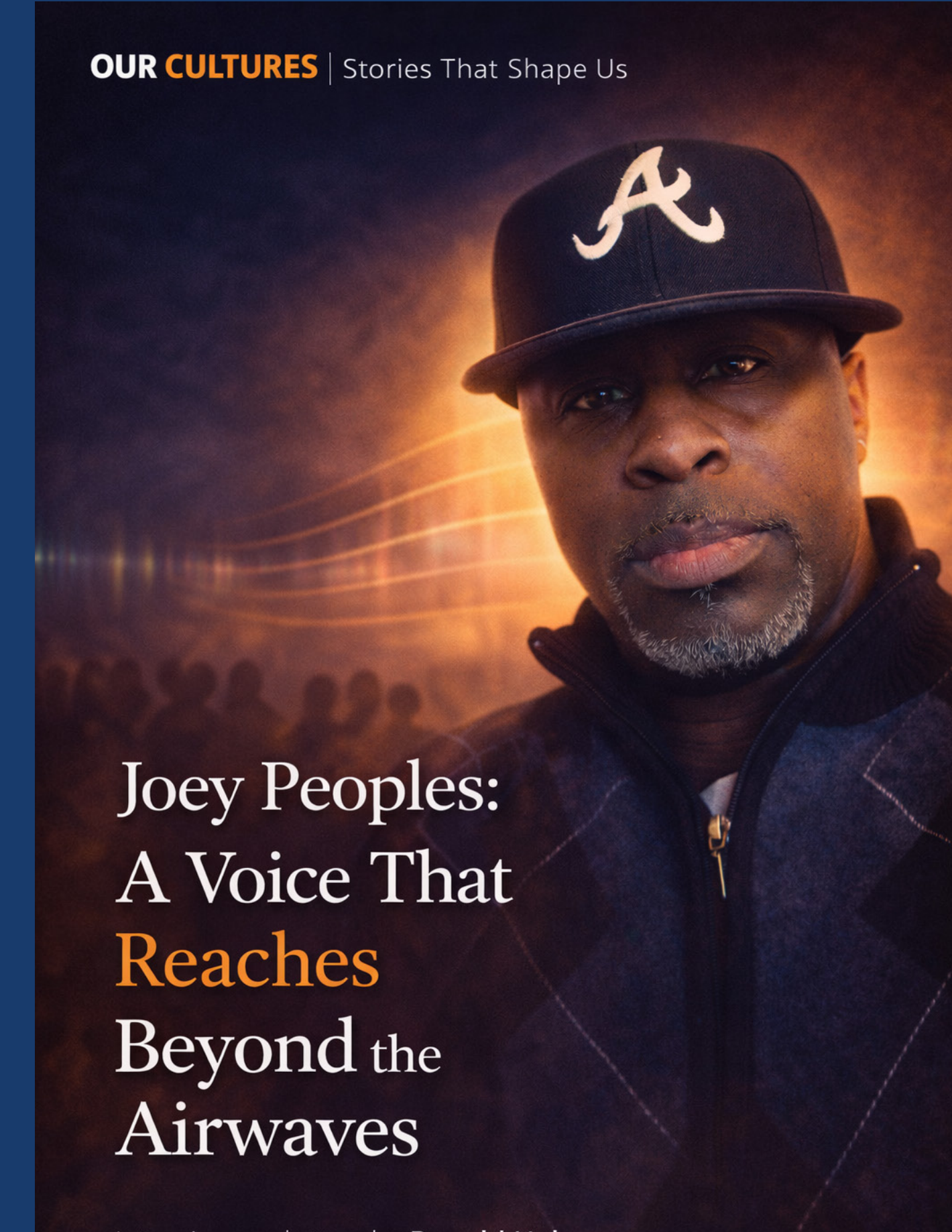


OUR CULTURES | Stories That Shape Us



Joey Peoples:
A Voice That
Reaches
Beyond the
Airwaves

Interview and story by **Ronald Hale**

Joey Peoples didn't plan to become a voice people would recognize.

Back in the sixth grade, around ten or eleven years old, he started experimenting with sound, playing around with melodies and trying to turn what he heard in his head into something real. There was no big plan behind it. It just felt natural, like something he was meant to explore.

"It was always a passion of mine," he says. "I just started making sounds."

That curiosity quickly turned into something more. With a couple of friends... one of them new to the school from New York, Joey helped form a group. What started in a classroom moved onto a stage, and before long, they were performing at talent shows and winning. Not just once, but consistently enough to get noticed beyond the school walls.

As their confidence grew, so did the opportunities. Joey and his group began performing around the city, eventually opening for well-known artists. One early experience stood out, not because everything went smoothly, but because it didn't.

*"If it wasn't for him...
I wouldn't have done radio."*

Backstage, preparing for a show, they tried to greet the artist they were opening for. It didn't take long to realize there was a language barrier.

"We were like... she doesn't speak English," Joey says, laughing. "She said something in Spanish, and I just nodded and smiled. Then we walked away like, 'If she doesn't speak English, who's doing all the rapping on the album?'"

Even without a shared language, the performance connected. That moment stayed with him. It showed him that sound alone can reach people in ways words sometimes cannot.

By his mid-teens, Joey had built a name for himself in his community. He performed with family members, competed in events, and gained recognition through programs like *Mothers Against Drunk Driving*. That work later connected him to the "Just Say No" campaign, where he and his group used music to speak directly to young people.

"We got a call," Joey says. "They told us to come to the phone... and it was *Nancy Reagan*."

At the time, he was still just a teenager from Rocky Mount, North Carolina. But on the other end of the line was the First Lady of the United States, reaching out because she had heard about what they were doing.

"She said she was proud of us and wanted to support it," he recalls.

That moment opened new doors. Joey and his group began traveling, performing at schools, and becoming part of a national movement. It was the first time he fully understood that his voice could do more than entertain... it could influence and encourage.

Soon after, another opportunity appeared: a potential deal with Motown Records.

It didn't come together.

“Different personalities, different directions,” he says. “The group split.”

Instead of seeing it as an ending, Joey treated it as a shift. He stayed connected to music, stepping into DJing and building his presence in clubs. Night after night, he learned how to read a room, how to connect with people, and how to create an experience without needing direct interaction.

Then came another turning point.

One night, *DJ 2wenty*, who is *DJ Kool's* DJ, saw Joey in the club while he was playing music and asked a simple question: “Have you ever thought about doing radio?”

Joey hadn't.

“If it wasn't for him,” he says, “I wouldn't have done radio.”

That encounter did more than shift his path. It started a connection that has lasted for years.

Today, Joey, DJ Kool, and DJ 2wenty share a bond that goes beyond music. What began as a single question grew into a friendship and brotherhood that has lasted more than two decades.

For Joey, radio has never been just about playing songs. It's about connection: reaching people he may never meet, in moments he may never fully see.

“I like talking to people. I like entertaining,” he says.

His day begins early. Before anything else, he checks the station to make sure everything is working. If something is off, he handles it. From there, the day moves into programming music, recording commercials, and going live on air.

Later in the morning, his focus shifts in a more personal direction.

Around 11 o'clock, he begins calling local funeral homes. He reads obituaries on the air.

It's not the part of the job most people think about, but it's one of the most meaningful. For families, hearing a loved one's name spoken publicly is a form of recognition. Joey understands that, and he approaches it with care.

Over the years, he has met celebrities, and created a career many people would admire. But one experience, far removed from the studio, showed him what his voice truly meant.

After a period in his life that led to incarceration, Joey found himself in a place he never expected. He kept to himself, trying not to draw attention.

Then someone recognized him.

The man told Joey that he used to listen to him on the radio during difficult times. The music Joey played and the energy he brought helped him get through it.

In that instance, Joey heard the words, but it was hard to take them in.

“I appreciated it,” he says. “But personally, I didn't want to hear that.”



Still, the message never left him. It reminded him that impact isn't always visible, and that the work he does reaches further than he may ever fully understand.

That belief guides how he shows up, even on the days when motivation is low.

"There are days I don't want to get up," he admits. "I don't want to do anything."

But he moves forward anyway.

"It's all God," he says. "I pray, I get up, and once I get moving, everything shifts."

His faith keeps him grounded, and his children give his life direction.

"They're a big part of it," he says.

As a father, he is intentional about being present. He wants his daughters to understand what love and respect look like, and he wants his sons to stay focused and disciplined.

When young people ask for advice, he keeps it real.

"Ask questions," he says. "There's no dumb question except the one you don't ask."

That mindset has followed him through every stage of his life: from a kid experimenting with music to a voice people rely on without ever meeting him. And he's still building.

After more than 30 years away from school, Joey returned in 2021. He earned his undergraduate degree, and now he's working toward his master's.

It's another step forward in a journey that continues to grow.



A voice that reaches people...

When asked how he wants to be remembered, his answer is simple.

"Loyal, humble, respectful... a God-fearing, loving family man. Just an all-around good person."

It's a straightforward answer, but it reflects everything he's lived through.

Because for Joey Peoples, it was never just about being heard. It was about reaching people... especially in times when they needed it most.