



Kevin Joshua "Rowdy" Rowsey II.

July 30, 1991 - April 17, 2024

Kevin Joshua "Rowdy" Rowsey II (affectionately known as "Joshua") passed away unexpectedly on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, at the age of thirty-two. He leaves behind to celebrate his legacy, his immediate family, including his parents, Kevin Rowsey and Dr. Pamela Johnson Rowsey and younger sister, Jessica Noel Rowsey, aunts and uncles, a robust extended family, godparents, Drs. John and Cynthia Wallace; three god sisters, Dr. Lauren Wallace Wright (Brian), Dr. Linnea Wallace Hill (Nathan), Lydia Wallace, and Arielle Donelan, one god brother, John Wallace, III, his childhood/best friend, Amanda Rudd, his brothers of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity incorporated, countless friends, classrooms full of changed lives, and genuine adoring fans who knew him as "Rowdy."

Born July 30, 1991, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Joshua was a national recording artist, writer, actor, and educator. He graduated from the prestigious Cary Academy and earned his Bachelor of Business Administration from UNC Kenan-Flagler School of Business. He also attended the University of North Carolina Greensboro where he completed his Master of Arts in Teaching. He was fluent in Chinese, a talented violinist, and an accomplished swimmer. While his life was too short for those he left behind, he made a bigger impact on the world than most would make in many more years.

After pivoting from a corporate career in New York City, Joshua felt a calling to

embrace his talents as a hip-hop artist, and to honor his voice, hometown, and heritage to create an infrastructure that would benefit his community. His work and impact did not go unnoticed. Joshua was selected as a U.S. Hip-Hop Ambassador through the Next Level initiative of the U.S. Department of State. He has been featured on BET, NPR, PBS Kids, and TEDx Talks. On stage, he was part of the national collective, No9to5 Music, and played with a live Jazz Band, (J) Rowdy & the Night Shift, which was nominated for a 2017 Carolina music award.

As an artist, “Rowdy” shared the stage with notable national recording acts including Rakim, Busta Rhymes, 2 Chainz, Petey Pablo, and Juicy J. His friends, family, and community will never forget the deep impact he made on the North Carolina Triangle. Joshua felt the authentic language of hip-hop could teach, redress injustice, and heal. Moving his vision beyond words, he founded two cyphers that allowed students to embrace their gifts and express their talents through music. He also served as the Executive Director of Blackspace Durham, a safe space for teens to engage across the spectrum of the arts. Through his commitment to speaking their language, Joshua could always connect with those others found “hard to reach.” His belief in the power of words went beyond hip-hop, as he helped students of all backgrounds find their voices through serving as an English as a Second Language Teacher at Guilford County Schools and as an Artist in Residence at his high school alma mater, Cary Academy.

A loyal friend, a wonderful son, and an amazing brother, Joshua used his voice beyond the stage, workshops, and the classroom. He always had words of affirmation to share and there was no limit to his encouragement. He could be counted upon for an opinion or feedback (whether solicited or not). He made firm declarations about how life should be lived (we all began to question our nine to five gigs), and with no words at all, he expressed his feelings with that laugh we will never forget.

Joshua recently said of his life, “Everything seems to be right in front of me. Right now, I am living my truth, finding my authentic voice. That can be scary—but it is a beautiful thing—just to be in the moment, figuring it out.” He found his truth, he found his voice, and he made the world a better place.

Joshua, we are abundantly grateful you embraced your calling and shared your life on earth with us. We look forward to the day we see (and hear) you again!

In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Blackspace, an art and music space for Black and Brown Youth. The donation link to Blackspace is <https://www.paypal.me/theblackspace>.

Celebration of Life

Heaven gains Hip Hop: Celebration of Life for Joshua "Rowdy" Rowsey will be Saturday, April 27, 2024, at Kings Park International Church, 1305 Odyssey Drive, Durham, NC 27713.

Family meet and greet at 12 noon, celebration service at 1 pm.

Previous Events

Family and Friends

APR 27. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Kings Park International Church
1305 Odyssey Drive
Durham, NC 27713

Celebration of Life

APR 27. 1:00 PM (ET)

Kings Park International Church
1305 Odyssey Drive
Durham, NC 27713

Tribute Wall

MF

“ Man... 😞 I'm still trying to process this.. Me and Josh have been doing shows together and friends since 2012. From throwing shows together in Chapel Hill (Jack Sprat, Chapel Hill Underground, etc) to the "Chillin' In The Driveway" shows that him and No9to5 used to put together. We formed a friendship/brotherhood and even formed the short-lived "CrewCrew" that combined his crew and my crew (2StepsAboveTheStars). We used to go to Carson (Cayso's) house over the summers in Fuquay-Varina for weeks at a time for "Band Camp," which consisted of making music, playing video games, Bojangles & Cook-Out 😊 Good times man.. We almost got into a wreck on late night on a dark road heading back to Chapel Hill, but it seemed as if we were protected because we were definitely supposed to run into a HUGE tree.. Only few people knew this.. As time went by, and everyone branched off to do their own thing, we started to see each other less and less.. We remained friends, but not as close as we used to be. Something we never intended, but it just happened. We kept up with each other via social media and ran across each other at certain local events, etc.. I'm truly sorry for that bro. You used to come to my house, kick it with us in "The Basement," until Logan would tell us we gotta go because we're too loud and too many people were in the crib 😭 I'm also upset we never released that "Tuxedo Mask" posse cut 🤝 But we did get a chance to release our "Stand Alone Complex" song/collab at least, and I'm grateful for that 😊🙏 You are a great man who did wonderful things in this world, which truly made an impact and will continue to for years to come. You had an infectious spirit and an energy that was unmatched! Appreciate EVERY MOMENT, and cherish your friends/family. Josh, I'll never forget you my friend, may you rest in everlasting peace brother 🙏🤝💎✨ I Love you ☐🙌🎨☁️



Mario SkyBlew Farrow - July 01, 2024 at 01:16 PM

SH

“ Josh was the host of the African American Theater Preview at the Raleigh Little Theatre in 2023 and 2024. When he saw that I was nervous before my intro, he asked if he could pray with me. I felt calm and uplifted. He had such a wonderful spirit. He did a phenomenal job as host. His ability to engage the audience helped to provide theater companies with the supported that they need to promote their performances. His willingness to share his talent was amazing. I cannot believe that he is gone. It is heartbreaking.



Sherri Holmes - April 29, 2024 at 10:37 PM

PR

Thank you for sharing

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - May 07, 2024 at 02:18 PM

CS

“ I look back on my being raised in Parkwood fondly. The community, the camaraderie, the goofiness, the personality...so many qualities in so many people surrounded me that I took for granted, and it saddens me deeply that a person who embodied all of these traits better than anybody leaves us well before his time. Josh was an undeniable presence that lit up any room. My sincere condolences to Pamela, to Kevin, and to Jess. He will be forever remembered and sorely missed.

Collin Sturmer - April 27, 2024 at 12:58 PM

PR

Thank you Collin!

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - April 29, 2024 at 07:13 PM

OP

“ I met Josh in the summer of 2007 when we traveled to China, we were 16 years old. We were in different groups, but I was drawn to him and his friends as soon as I saw them in the cafeteria, they were laughing, Josh, of course, the center of it all. An infectious, larger-than-life energy. We became close friends after that trip and over the span of the next three years spent countless hours on the phone, talking about our hopes and dreams for the future. Josh and I kept in touch over the years, he was always rooting for me, and I him. I still marvel at the fact that so much of what we talked about at 16, 17 years old, he was accomplishing - and yet doing so much more than he imagined - though he was always so humble about it. Josh was a gift to so many people, and I feel eternally grateful to have had the chance to know him, be part of his life, and watch him become an incredible man. Thank you for bringing such a beautiful human into our lives. I will always carry him with me.

Olivia Plotnick - April 27, 2024 at 09:37 AM

DC

“ Pam, Kevin, Jess, family and dear friends- I always thought that as I grew older, my understanding of life would become more clear. The loss of someone so young, vibrant and inspiring makes the world less than it should be. We are wrapping you in a warm blanket of love and squeezing tightly. Oh gosh this hurts. I know your faith will pull you through.
Coglaiti's

Dean Coglaiti - April 26, 2024 at 03:51 PM

PR

Thank you Dean. Your sweet son made it to the celebration of life and gave me a great big hug. We definitely feel the love of our community.

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - April 29, 2024 at 07:15 PM

YH

“ I have learned so much from Joshua since I first met him, and truly respect his passion and commitment to education. I enjoyed every conversation we had about teaching, not only in North Carolina, but also internationally. It was a real gift having him in our TESOL program. We are so proud of all his accomplishments and his contributions to the educational community! He will forever be remembered and greatly missed. -Ye He

Ye He - April 26, 2024 at 02:44 PM

RM

“ I met Josh when he interned in my classroom at the Newcomers school. We quickly realized a soul connection and maintained a close friendship over the years. We could go months without talking and catch up in an instant with a look or a word or a laugh. We just met for breakfast a few weeks ago, and I got to hear about the current and upcoming projects in his life. He was the most accomplished person I know, and his opportunities and adventures always exceeded the bounds of normal. I think he was, literally, larger than life, and we just couldn't hold him here with us. I am awed by the demonstration of faith I've seen from his family, and I extend my deepest sympathies for their loss. He will be forever my soul friend... Rachel McGoldrick

Rachel McGoldrick - April 26, 2024 at 12:12 PM

PR

Thank you for sharing your love and friendship of Joshua

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - June 19, 2024 at 08:26 AM

MZ

“ I am so profoundly saddened by this immeasurable loss for your family, the community, and all the lives Josh touched. I had the pleasure of teaching Josh in our MAT program. It did not take much to know right away that he was an exceptional person--talented and transformative. Please know you are in my thoughts. ~Melody Zoch

Melody Zoch - April 26, 2024 at 09:06 AM

PR

Thank you

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - May 07, 2024 at 02:20 PM

IP

“ The Jackie Robinson Foundation and the Jackie Robinson Foundation alumni extend our deepest condolences to the Rowsey family on the passing of Josh. May you find solace in the cherished memories shared and the impact he had on so many. Josh will forever remain in our hearts as a beloved member of our JRF family.

Ivo Philbert - April 25, 2024 at 03:07 PM

PR

Thank you! Josh loved the JRF family.

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - April 29, 2024 at 07:17 PM

NC

“ To know Rowsey as he was called by his co-workers at Rankin Elementary School was a blessing. He was so energetic and supportive of us all. You could lean on his positive advice and expect a few laughs as he spoke. The students enjoyed the way he brought Hip Hop into the building and looked forward to the days that he would put on a small performance for everyone. He was our own Hip Hop Star! We all loved Mr. Rowsey!



Rowsey's absence is definitely being felt at Rankin. I know he will forever be remembered and greatly missed.

*Ms. Nicole Calloway, M. Ed.
Fourth Grade Teacher
Rankin Elementary School*

Nicole Calloway - April 24, 2024 at 07:39 PM

DR

Thank you for your kind words. Joshua loved Rankin elementary!

Dr. Pamela Johnson Rowsey - April 24, 2024 at 10:31 PM

MW

“ Pam, we send sincere condolences to you and the family. We remember Josh and Jessica during the Cary Academy days when our Maya was there. You all were always a kind family and as so many have shared during this time, you all raised an amazing son. We are so sorry for your loss, but his memory and impact on the lives of others will live on forever. Praying for you all. Pat, Mia, and Maya Wilson

Mia Wilson - April 23, 2024 at 03:05 PM

PR

Thank you for your prayers and praying with Jessica.

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - May 07, 2024 at 02:21 PM

RC

“ *Sending love, light and condolences to the Rowsey family, the No 9 to 5 family, the Blackspace family as well as the diverse group of people whose lives Josh touched. To the Rowsey family - I know that no one will miss Josh more than you all. I hope you know and I hope Josh knew, while he was here, how much his beautiful spirit, infectious energy, and use of his God-given gifts are appreciated by so many. God is pleased and we are grateful for time spent with you Josh! Rest peacefully Sir. 🙏🙏🙏*

Robin Caldwell - April 21, 2024 at 02:29 PM

EH

“ *Oh my friend. Josh and I weren't close in college but he reached out to me anyways right after college graduation. I hadn't realized that we have crossed paths before with his swimming career in high school. We built and shared knowledge for years and often connected and supported each others milestones. I've always been the peculiar person doing my own thing and I was surprised he was even curious about me despite our rough start. He always encouraged me and I always encouraged him. I made many friends at UNC, but he was one of very few that kept in contact with me over the years. Distance nor time changed how genuine he was - and for a veteran like myself with few connections, that is priceless. Peace to you my friend, I hope you knew how much you were loved and how impactful you were. You left a legacy bigger than life itself. See you later.*

Ebony Hagans - April 21, 2024 at 01:44 PM

LS

“ Our family has the fondest memories of Josh and his entire family spending many countless hours on the pool deck with THAT and Duke Aquatics. Josh and Jess swam with Meghan and Morgan and always made our swim meets so much fun with laughter and a huge smile to pass the time during long weekends of swim meets and daily practices, especially those doubles. Kevin and Pam were great volunteer parents and always fun to hang out with in the bleachers and on the pool deck. We can't imagine what you are going through right now! Josh had a fun energetic personality that lit up every room when he walked in! There is an awesome angel in heaven right now looking over all of us. We love you Josh and are especially praying for Kevin, Pam Jess, and family with our deepest sympathies and thoughts. <3 With much love, Terry, Lyn, Meghan and Morgan Smith

Lyn Smith - April 21, 2024 at 11:02 AM

PR

Thank you Smith family

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - April 23, 2024 at 07:26 PM

AH

“ I have wonderful memories now of the larger than life person that was Joshua Rowsey. I am a nurse serving at Rankin Elementary, his last school. When he entered a room, the energy suddenly changed and was transformed into a simply amazing thing to see. The children flocked to him, so thrilled that Mr. Rowsey was there. Truth be told, we were all smiling. How could you not? In the mornings, he walked up and down halls with his boom box getting everybody pumped for the day. This bright, bright light is now gone, and I am sad. He was an excellent friend, and I am trying to grapple with what seems to me to be impossible- that he is truly gone. I send prayers to his family ; please know that he was loved without measure at our school. In deepest love, Amy Hill

amy hill - April 20, 2024 at 11:39 PM

PR

Joshua loved his Rankin Elementary family and boy did he love the kids. Thank you for your kind words. I hope to visit Rankin in the near future.

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - April 23, 2024 at 07:28 PM

PK

“ Rowdy was one of the first people I really connected with at UNC, through the UNC Cypher. He embraced me. He allowed me to be myself. He put me in positions to build my confidence as an artist and performer and challenged me to have the same faith in myself as he did in me. He showed up for me beyond the music as well, checking in to make sure I was doing alright in school and life. Wednesday nights were always special because of him and the space he made for me and so many others. I'm grateful I knew him. What he built will live forever. RIP.

PK Krentsil - April 20, 2024 at 08:13 PM

LJ

“ I am so grateful to have crossed paths with someone with so much knowledge!! You will truly be missed but the legacy you leave the world with is truly amazing!!



Lakaiya Johnson - April 20, 2024 at 06:58 PM



What a gift to see these pictures. Thank you for sharing them!

Margot Starbuck - April 23, 2024 at 10:02 AM

MM

Dear Pam, my thoughts are with you on your journey of grief over the death of your beloved son. I didn't know Kevin (sorry to say) but I am so aware of the deep grief that follows the death of a child (of any age). I also bring greetings from Sandy Funk who is in our nursing home. I told her about his death. With prayers and love, your colleague from UNC Marge Miles

Marge Miles - April 27, 2024 at 09:12 AM

PR

Thanks Marge!

Pamela Johnson Rowsey - April 29, 2024 at 07:19 PM