

The Relationship Guidebook: An Interview with Will Foskey and Jamela Kidd By: Michelle Cuttino

I must admit, when I received *The Relationship Guidebook*, the title alone had me intrigued, but the book's content was just as interesting. Will "Deshair" Foskey and Jamala "Alamaj" Kidd have teamed up to bring an inspiring guide to navigating relationships that is not biased by gender.

Black Literature Magazine had an opportunity to talk with the authors to grasp a better understanding of what their intentions were when they released *The Relationship Guidebook*. Here is what they had to say.

Michelle: Why did you feel the need to write *The Relationship Guidebook*? Did it stem from a personal experience for either of you?

Will: The Relationship Guidebook was inevitable for Jamala and myself to write. We've put in hours we didn't realize we put in by giving relationship advice during the darkest hours for our friends and family. We've known each other for 14 years. The conversations we've shared began to click together. Jamala would give me advice, I'd give him advice, and the advice never failed. It really never failed whether the situation worked out or crashed and burned.

Jamala: We wanted to put together a product that was more than just "our" experiences, but the experiences of others as well. Our stories and advice that we would give to each other would pull other people's attention into our conversations. So after asking ourselves how can we further this conversation about relationships, The Relationship Guidebook was created.

Michelle: How did you conduct your research for the guidebook, or is it mainly based on your own knowledge and situations?

Will: The researching part was an amazing experience. We'd go to local barbershops and salons and trade off on information. The best was the all-in-one shops where men and women chimed in openly. At one shop, every barber was married, but all the beauticians were in relationships. For instance, single men and married men share differently. You'd never hear a married man talk specifically about his sex life with his wife. He protects her image in every way. They may have children, but you won't know her favorite position. If single men are comfortable enough, they'll share naked pictures of the women they're having relations with.

Jamala: In addition to asking women I dated at the time, I would ask strangers simple questions that would lead into many of the topics. Most of the time people, not knowing we were writing a book, would just tell me things about their relationships. I would compare and contrast these stories to my life and bring what I learned back to the table with Will to discuss.

Michelle: What is each of your relationship statuses, and are these statuses defined or assumed?

Will: I'm single at the time. I honestly believed my ex was the ONE. Just didn't work out that way. My emotional detoxification process is complete though. People can read about that concept in the chapter "The Art of Breaking-Up".

Jamala: My relationship status is different. The easiest way of saying is I'm in a polyamorous relationship. We decided to wait on putting my status in the book and just deal with the basics.

Michelle: What made you begin with breaking down relationships into equations in the first chapter?

Will: For me, simple math is key to relationships because simple math is the most logical. $1+1=2$. My dating plus your commitment equals misunderstandings. People say, "You've made your bed now sleep in it." I say a bed isn't the right analogy for relationships; beds get messed up every night to be fixed in the morning. Who wants that type of relationship? Sadly, too many do.

Jamala: I think it is easier when you break it down to concepts that are easy to see. We put too many unnecessary factors in that cloud easy decision making when it comes to relationships.

Michelle: Did you look for female insight when writing the guidebook, or is it only from the male perspective?

Will: We've definitely sought out female insight. Then we broke the insight down into traits. Gender shouldn't be the only factor in guiding people because traits span across gender lines. We've received feedback from homosexuals saying they didn't feel left out by our concepts. Relationships are just that... Relationships.

Jamala: In order to cover the entire scope of the relationships we had to talk to both sexes. We are so much alike and different, that we could not just get everything from one sex.

Michelle: In your opinion, what is the biggest mistake made when entering into a relationship?

Will: The biggest mistakes being made right now is the fusing of texting and social networking getting in the way of verbal communication. People are talking to Siri more than the person they're dating. The movie date is top heavy on silence and trying to physically get closer. We're doing everything but talking and its out of fear. No one wants to make mistakes these days; just one very large mistake.

Jamala: I would say there are three major mistakes. Those mistakes would be not knowing exactly what you want for yourself or from the other person and not telling the other person what it is you want.

Michelle: Have either of you ever experienced a break up? If so, what did you learn from it?

Will: Break-ups are painful. You have to tell yourself you've done all you can do. Some tell themselves it had to be done. Some of us haven't gotten over our teenaged break-ups all while going through a mid-life crisis. Recovery from a breakup normally takes me 12 months to accomplish. I'm not the type to parachute through relationships.

Jamala: I have experience many break ups and I can tell you I learned enough to write another book or two. The most important lesson I have learned would be that break up are just stepping stones helping us get to the next level.

Michelle: Do you believe that the roles in relationships have reversed somewhat, and now females are beginning to display traits that were only used to describe male behaviors? Explain.

Will: Roles have changed since the beginning of time and will change even faster as technology advances. All I can say to women is to check their source by the actions this source exhibits. It hurts to see women learning from sex sellers whom only are looking out for themselves. Of course the male trait would want the female trait to be alarmingly sexual. This book is more about concepts than anything else. We want for you to ask yourself the important questions. We want to introduce as many people as possible to their own truths.

Jamala: I would say we are seeing more of what has happen behind closed door for years. Years ago, a strong family atmosphere was pushed so we did not see many of the problems as openly as we do today. Meaning it is not shameful if the wife needs to take a second job today, or if the man is a stay at home dad. Years ago these things would happen but they would be more hidden. Plus with all the teen pregnancy parents are parents sooner, and that just changes everything.

Michelle: Why did you decide to write a manual-type guidebook instead of a full-length book on this subject?

Will: Your life is the only full-length story that matters. A guide may show you all the things you need to see but it is up to you to experience it. These talk show hosts, relationships gurus, etc. would rather you believe that being in a relationship is rocket science. The Relationship Guidebook gets right to the "now" point.

Jamala: Neither one of us wanted to start this book of with saying, "When I was young" or "I was in 3rd grade when". We wanted to give the reader what they picked the book up for, guidance. No sugar coating or fluffing involved, just straight to the point.

Michelle: Since you've written *The Relationship Guidebook*, do either of you feel that you are an authority on the subject? Why or why not?

Will: I never set out to be an authority. All I want is to be right there when that epiphany hits you. I've seen the light bulb cut on numerous times. All I want to do is brighten people's trail beyond their natural scope. But I must say, some aren't ready to live the life after this book.

Jamala: No, but I have learned a lot since writing the book. Remember that many of the topics and answers come from the public, so the authority really are the people who want change and decide to read it.

Michelle: Will, tell us a little about your *Crime Scene Ignited* series. Can we expect more to come?

Will: I had to strap like four chapters because I wasn't satisfied the direction of the characters. So yes, I'm working on it and enjoying because this is a story that must be told.

Michelle: Jamala, will you be releasing any other novels or guidebooks as a follow-up to *The Relationship Guidebook*?

Jamala: Will, has been trying to get me to write a how to do a threesome relationship book, but I'm not sure. We have talked about doing a spin-off to *The Relationship Guidebook*, we will have to see which comes first.

Michelle: What, if anything, do you want people to walk away with once they read *The Relationship Guidebook*?

Will: I want people to walk away asking more questions. I'd love to see a day where people are using our book the way *The 48 Laws of Power* has been used.

Jamala: I hope people can say that they understand how they can improve their relationship since reading our book.

Michelle: Can we expect more collaboration from the two of you in the future?

Will: Yes, you can. We're already in the works of laying down a blueprint for the next book. We can't say anymore about it at this time though, other than a possible Fall 2013 release.

Jamala: I can't give out the title just yet, but I think it will be worth the wait.

Michelle: What advice would you give to someone who feels they have an opinion, advice or insight on either the same or a similar divisive topic?

Will: I'd tell them to share their opinion. Most importantly, realize that any opinion can become a fact one day.

Jamala: Honestly, I would tell them come talk to me and maybe we could write a book about it.

About The Authors

Will "Deshair" Foskey is a Social Activist, born and raised in Trenton, NJ. Mr. Foskey built his name as a Music Industry Journalist. Summer 2010, he decided to retire and ultimately place that time into rebuilding his hometown from a social standpoint.

Today, he volunteers at the Boys and Girls Club on Centre Street. He is the co-founder of the "Trenton Going Global" movement and host of the Trenton Going Global Show on JahYummyRadio.com on Thurs. 6-8pm on LIVE 365. His "Monday Morning Motivation Letters" have made a difference in a few hundred lives. And recently, signed back on as a writer for the Trentonian.

Jamala "Alamaj" Kidd is the Co-Founder of Underworld Entertainment. He's also a NJ based Hip-Hop Artist/Promoter/Writer/Business Management Consultant.

Currently Alamaj's "The Heat Series" is featured on over 1000 websites and has been downloaded well over 100,000 times. The Rapper has been seen on BET, VH1 and various online, print and DVD magazines. Look for Alamaj to make big moves in the years to come.