

Robin Roberts

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We all have things we want to accomplish, but things take time, persistence, and effort. Good Morning America's Robin Roberts shares many helpful lessons and ways to succeed in whatever you want in her new inspiring book *From the Heart: Seven Rules to Live By*. The longtime national broadcaster and journalist discussed many topics as well as her experiences through her entire life that is in the book in this lengthy interview.

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{audio}http://thesportsinterview.com/mp3/RobinRoberts.mp3{/audio}

Chris Yandek: I have been in the media for six years, and I realized if you are serious about wanting to be successful in broadcasting and journalism then I would recommend this book because you share so many experiences about what you went through, and there are numerous situations media people deal with that you share as well.

Robin Roberts: "Well, thank you. I really wanted people to understand sometimes they see someone at a certain point in their career and a certain success level and they think oh, well, that must've been easy. They're having trouble, and they are like why isn't it working for me? Then when you share your experiences and tell everyone about all the rejections that you've faced along the way and how just being patient and persistent pays off in the end. I think it's very important for people who are starting off on their journey or are reinventing themselves and wanting to change the course or what not. I think that success leaves clues and that you can glean something from other people's experience."

CY: You mentioned talking to kids that aspired to start at the top of the business hopefully hosting a national TV show for example. One of the most important points in your book is positioning yourself, which I can relate to still being 21. Is there too much talk and not enough efforts by people to position themselves?

RR: "I really feel bad especially for a lot of young people because they look at American Idol and I am not trying to trash that, it's a fun show to watch and I watch it like everybody else. You see instant success, instant fame, and, it just feeds that feeling of oh well, I want it now...I want it now. You have to put yourself in position for good things to happen to you. It's great those American Idol type shows are out there, and America's Top Model, and all these things, but that's not the real world for the majority of us. It's an old adage, but if you have to work for something, you appreciate it more, and I think you tend to have more staying power Chris once you get there. I think if you really had to put in the work and you've really improved yourself, it's like when I turned down originally an offer to go to ESPN when I was four years out of school because I was like I am not ready. This is where I want to be, but I know I haven't put in the work so I am gonna say no, get more experience. Thankfully they came calling again and then a couple years later, and then I was ready, and I stayed there for 15 years. I don't know if I had gone earlier if I would've had what it takes to be able to stay there."

CY: The conversation you were having with the ESPN intern where she was writing down everything you were telling her about how to be successful I thought was a great example of how there are so many different paths and ways to get to where you want to be in the media business any job in life. That there is not one set way.

RR: "Yeah. I appreciate you saying that and that's so true. I appreciate especially when young kids, I shouldn't call them kids, but as you get older everyone is a kid to you. I appreciate when somebody younger calls and says, 'Hey! How'd you

do it?' You can just hear them on the other end taking down ever morsel, every word you are saying. That's great to get examples, but you have to personalize it. It's not a one size fits all world. I worked at a country music radio station. I was a sports director at a station where I was doing paddle boat races and outhouse races. I wouldn't say that was the path that most people would take to get to where I am, but it worked for me. It's very important to look for advice, to seek advice from people who are doing what is you want to do, but then also to have taken the time to get to know yourself, and to kind of understand and figure out what's going to work best for your situation."

CY: Covering sports locally and then nationally for ESPN for many years, why do you think you took so long to consider covering other things that weren't sports related?

RR: "You know what, I was having a blast. I wanted to be a pro athlete, didn't have something called ability that you must have to be. You can have heart and passion and all that, but you gotta be good too. I was ok. I went to college on a scholarship, an athletic scholarship and did well. Had 1000 plus points and rebounds and enjoyed myself. I wanted to stay in the sports world and when people especially right out of school were offering me positions. I had a communications degree and they wanted me to be in news and it wasn't right for me. Then there does come a time that you have to. I found myself when people later on were asking me to go into news that it was almost automatic that I was saying no. It just became a reflex. Then I started saying to myself, well, why am I saying no? I do want to do this. I don't want to limit myself anymore. It took some nerve on my part because I was comfortable and there is nothing wrong with being comfortable, but it can get a little dangerous. I loved that I stepped out and not knowing what was going to happen if I would be well received in the news world, but journalism is journalism. The subject matter may be different, but how you go about, the work that goes into it, is basically the same. It's just the subject matter that you are covering is different."

CY: The publicity people are the same, the management people, there is the same kind of research, and efforts that go into every interview, every story, etc...etc.

RR: "Yeah. Exactly."

CY: Your deceased father Lawrence was one of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War 2 and your mother I feel is a person that doesn't let much get to her. How much do you feel your parents shaped you into the person you are today?

RR: "Oh, thank you for asking that. When people ask me what was the key to your success? What was the number one thing that led to you reaching your goals? That is being the child of Lawrence and Lucy Marion Roberts. They both were the first in their families to go to college. My father had the nerve in the 1930s as a black man to dream of flying a plane one day and then becomes part of the prestigious Tuskegee Airmen. When you grow up in a household of people that are just constantly achieving and going about in a quiet manner, not getting up on a soapbox and pounding their chest and saying look at me, look at me, look at these barriers I am overcoming. They were just living their lives and just wanting better for themselves and wanting better for their families. When you are in that household it shapes you. It just makes you believe really in your heart that oh I want to be a sportscaster and there aren't many people who look like me that do it, but I can do it. Why not? My mom and dad did this, that, and the other. It was instrumental in forming the person that I am today."

CY: Diane Sawyer and yourself are the only female co-anchor team for a major TV morning show on Good Morning America. Does it mean anything to you personally?

RR: "Oh it means so much to me. First of all, Diane is a dear...dear friend. She is one of the most renowned journalists of our time. She is somebody that I learn from constantly. I think it really sends a powerful message when you see two women on a national broadcast like that and we haven't really done a lot of interviews about it or made a big deal about it. I think what's great is that the audience tunes in and they see us and I think subconsciously people are like wow. Look at two women in a position of authority and influence and power. I think that it does speaks volumes especially to young women who watch in the morning and see that we're respected and that we work very hard, but I give a lot of credit to Diane. She was open and willing to help me in any kind of way and she is a wonderful partner and friend to have."

CY: I think maybe the biggest contribution of your entire broadcasting career is how you were able to go to the Mississippi Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina and how Good Morning America had lengthy coverage of your own hometown Pass Christian, Mississippi and was able to help them through that rebuilding process. Any reflections?

RR: "I was on the Gulf Coast the morning after Hurricane Katrina. Less than 24 hours after Hurricane Katrina blew through. I found my family about an hour before I went on live for the first time. I went about my job and relayed the information to our viewers of what was happening. Then it got personal at the end of my report when my colleague at the time Charlie Gibson started asking me about my family and I broke down and I cried. I was very emotional about that because the sun was coming up and I was really getting a clear vision of my home and the destruction. 90 percent of my hometown, 90 percent of my hometown was destroyed. I would say to people to just close your eyes and remember where you grew up and just think about 90 percent of it just being gone. From that to be able to link our wonderful viewers to people in need in my hometown in other areas of destruction as a journalist, it was just a surreal moment. I felt for the first time that I was truly significantly doing something of value and purpose."

CY: Looking back at your college basketball career, what do you think you lacked that wouldn't have got you to the WNBA level if it would've been around?

RR: "What I lacked to make it the WNBA? First of all, there was not the opportunity. When I was a freshman in college in 1979, there was a pro women's league and there was a team in New Orleans. They came over and they scrimmaged against our freshman team and our freshman team beat these pros. I knew right then and there that there wasn't going to be a pro league by the time I got out of college because they weren't good enough at the time. There weren't enough good. One player on each team would be good, but you didn't have the depth you have right now in the women's game. There wasn't that opportunity. I decided to make it a positive since I didn't have the illusion of possibly playing pro ball. I did the novel thing of getting up and going to my eight o'clock class and making sure that I applied myself, and already starting to look at that second career. For me, being a sports journalist at the time was my way of being a pro athlete,

having the similar type of lifestyle. I was All State and I did really well, but I didn't want to go to Europe. I had an offer to go to Europe and play. I got a part time job, \$5.50 an hour job offer to be a part time sports anchor in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I knew that could lead me to my ultimate goal at the time, which was to be at ESPN."

CY: You played college basketball and are one of the most recognized people in broadcasting. Do you feel you can relate to what those Rutgers women must've felt regarding what Don Imus said?

RR: "Oh yeah. You know what Chris it's 2007. Women athletes have been fighting this for so long and I thought we were beyond that. So here you have these Rutgers women, I talked to C. Vivian Stringer recently and one of the players Essence Carson. Here they were, they had this incredible season, they lose to Tennessee in the finals, go back to Rutgers and they have the celebration there on campus. Then they were told the things that were said about them, what a blow. It's not just a blow to Rutgers but it's personal because he specifically said them. It was an indictment on all women athletes and it was just so old school thinking that you can't have strong women. It was just inexcusable and so painful for Rutgers women in particular, but for every woman athlete in general. It was very painful."

CY: Candace Parker has definitely taken women basketball to a new level with what she has done. I had a chance to speak with her and I will tell you that she is probably the most popular interview I have ever did and it is amazing how far female sports have definitely come. Women sports have come a long way, but it's when you see comments like this is when we are pushed back somewhat, but this isn't the way women's basketball should be getting the national press for example.

RR: "No, it's not, and you put it so well because here they should be celebrated for the fact they started the year, the Rutgers women were 2-4. They got beat by Duke by 40 points earlier in the season and they come back and have the kind of season and year that they had to play for a National Championship, and not many teams at Rutgers men's or women's have ever vied for a National Championship. Instead the spotlight, the players said it best, here we have this year and no one calls us and now the phone is ringing off the hook because of this incident with Don Imus. I just hope that, I am a big picture kind of person that people will see what the real story is here and we should've been covering and celebrating these women long before this ugly incident happened."

CY: People are just people.

RR: "Yeah. That's right. That's what makes the world go round and we are human and we all make mistakes. We have to recognize that and just move forward with it. I thought Coach Stringer, she moved the dialogue along with the press conference recently and the things that she said and thinking about future generations and such. Just because of how it is now doesn't mean it has to be this way forever."

CY: As a fellow ABC broadcaster, why do you feel other news outlets spend time covering Rosie O'Donnell's thoughts since she is only on an opinion based TV show?

RR: "You know, that's a good question as well. It is called The View so she gives her opinion. She gives her view on things and she brings a lot of attention to those things that she is passionate about. I don't agree wholeheartedly with a lot of the things that she says, but I know that she is on a show and a program that encourages that type of point of view or any point of view. It's amazing to me the attention that receives, but people like controversy, and that's why it's so hard for a lot of young people who just want to do the right thing and they don't want to be flashy. They just want to be a journalist or they just want to be this, that, or the other. It's those people who are outspoken and at times say some really outrageous things that generate the most attention. Again, I think that's a reflection of our society right now."

CY: Finally, there is a lot information in From the Heart, what do you hope people of all ages gain from it?

RR: "My hope Chris is that anyone male or female starting out in their career or changing a path that anyone that picks it up, once they read it and close the book will say to themselves, wow how did Robin know this about me? How did she know this was what I was going through? My hope is that no matter what situation you are in that you'll be able to just, I am not trying to force my principles or my rules. It's just using it as an example and showing life examples. My main hope is that people will feel as I do, abundantly blessed, very grateful, and that they too will wake up in the morning and feel like that they are living the life that they were meant to lead." You can find more information about From the Heart: Seven Rules to Live By and Robin Roberts's book tour at the link below:

<http://www.hyperionbooks.com/titlepage.asp?ISBN=1401303331&SUBJECT=Inspiration> About Robin Roberts

Robin Roberts is the co-anchor of Good Morning America alongside Diane Sawyer. The two are the only female duo that host a major network morning show. Roberts played college basketball at Southeastern Louisiana University where she earned a degree in communications. From 1980-1983, she started her broadcasting career at WHMD/WFPR Radio in Hammond, Louisiana. Her first job in TV was in Hattiesburg, Mississippi at WDAM from 1983-1984. Roberts other local TV stops included WLOX in Biloxi, Mississippi (1984-1986), WSMV in Nashville, Tennessee (1986-1988), and WAGA in Atlanta, Georgia (1988-1990). From 1990-2005, Robin became one of the major faces in the sports media world at ESPN. Her work at ESPN included SportsCenter, NFL Primetime from 1990-1994, and ABC's Wide World of Sports.

Away from the sports world, Robin was on the scene in her hometown the day after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Roberts helped aid the Gulf Coast through a series on Good Morning America during the continued aftermath. Recently, she joined former President Bill Clinton in Africa to report on the AIDS crisis in the world. She has also interviewed newsmakers including Tiger Woods, Shaquille O'Neal, Jackie Robinson's widow Rachel Robinson, Hillary Clinton, and Spike Lee. Her new book is titled From the Heart: Seven Rules to Live By.

