

TIM'M T. WEST

b. July 6, 1972

PERFORMER

“There are aspects of ourselves that we are encouraged never to reveal, but I’m not a unicorn.”

He launched MyWritingProfessor.com and continues to advocate for youth with Teach for America.

Tim'm T. West, born Timothy Terrell West, is a hip-hop performance artist, poet, activist and educator. He has produced nine albums, written extensively about hip-hop culture and has been a spokesperson for a new generation of openly gay musicians.

West was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. He had a speech impediment as a child that caused him to stutter and repeat the “m” in his name, which led him to include it in his moniker. West was a respected student and athlete who became interested in music at a young age. He was interviewed by recruiters from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point while in high school, but was rejected when he told them he was gay.

West was an active Boy Scout and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon). But when he came out to his bishop and was rejected, he struggled with depression and anxiety and even contemplated suicide. He admitted later that the experience influenced his youth outreach as an adult.

West was a serious college student. He attended Duke and Howard Universities and later The New School for Social Research in New York, where he was exposed to the spoken word and poetry scene. While pursuing his master's degree at Stanford University in 1999, West discovered he was HIV positive. The revelation inspired him to begin his youth advocacy work and to join with friends to launch the queer hip-hop group Deep Dickollective. West coined the term “homohop” to describe homophobia in the hip-hop community.

As a solo artist, West has released music and published many books, including “Red Dirt Revival: a Poetic Memoir in 6 Breaths.” He performs, writes poetry and hosts “Front Porch,” a spoken word showcase that travels to colleges and universities. He also created a one-man show called “Ready, Set, Grow: A Coming of Age Story” about his life.

He launched MyWritingProfessor.com and continues to advocate for youth with Teach for America, where he combines education and advocacy to improve the experience of LGBT students in public schools. West's daughter, Shannon Rose Matesky, is also a spoken word artist. They both live in Chicago.



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