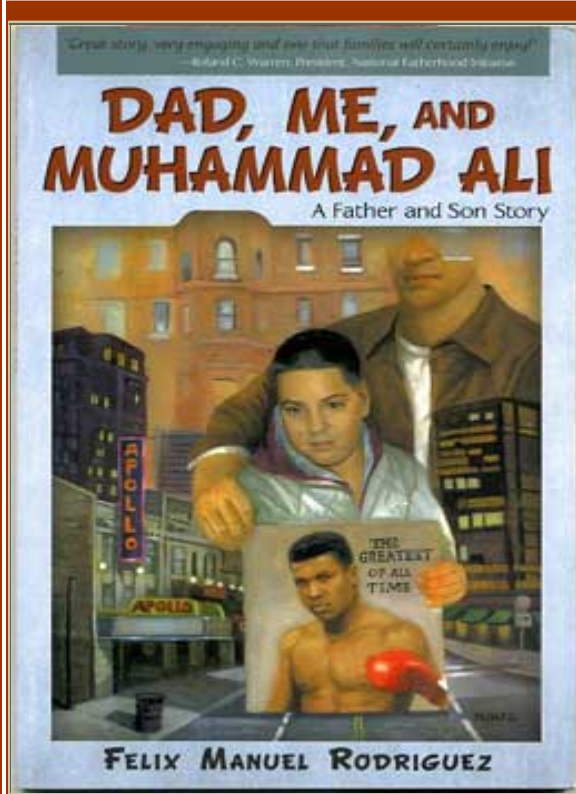


FELIX MANUEL RODRIGUEZ

DAD ME, and MUHAMMAD ALI



Dad, Me and Muhammad Ali is a truly inspirational book written by Felix Rodriguez. Felix draws on own his own life experience of growing up in a single parent family. Felix narrates a story about breaking his Father's signed photograph of Muhammad Ali. It shows the emotion that is felt when his Father discovered about the broken picture and how persistent he was in making up to his father with a visit to a bookstore to see Muhammad Ali. Throughout this powerful and emotional book you cannot help feel a part of every chapter. However, most importantly, his book carries a message to all Fathers and Sons. It's a story of a father/son relationship that is truly inspirational and must for all families to read and enjoy.

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- Que Pasa Magazine



Photo credit: Kiemo Miller

¿Que Pasa?: Who is Felix Manuel Rodriguez?

Felix: First, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my personal journey with ¿Que Pasa?. I am a writer, state child welfare employee, acting president of a non-profit organization, police commissioner, but more importantly, a proud father of two. I also like to consider myself a student of life because I am always eager to learn.

¿Que Pasa?: You've grown up without a father figure, yet you've achieved far more than most children would achieve in a stable parental relationship. This is an enormous achievement, which you should be proud of yourself for. Do you think it was Ali's inspiration that kept you on track? Or was it a combination of your own determination to succeed where others have failed?

Felix: It was definitely a combination of both, but I also have to credit my wife. She has been a huge inspiration to me. My wife is smart, beautiful and ambitious. We both come from humble beginnings and just like every caring family...we want what's best for our children. Growing up, I was surrounded by drugs, violence, and saw too many of my friends incarcerated. Having those experiences have allowed me to become the person I am today. I am more open-minded and driven to succeed.

¿Que Pasa?: If you had not been inspired by Ali, where do you think you would be now?

Felix: I really don't know. I know that I had a lot of anger built inside me because of my childhood experiences. I've been through a lot as a young man and I didn't have a positive male role-model to look up to, so I looked up to Ali. I watched a lot of old boxing fight films, read and studied books about Ali. Ali taught me to be more humble and caring for people. It may be difficult to believe because as a fighter, Ali was considered cocky and a show-off. But what a lot of critics failed to realize was this was Ali's way of promoting his fights. Ali was a genius, and we are lucky to have witnessed this great humanitarian in and out of the ring.

¿Que Pasa?: You say that you were inspired by Ali, did you ever think about taking up boxing as a career?

Felix: No. Ever since I was little, I loved boxing. Does shadow boxing counts? Just kidding I love the sport, but I am a fan - that's it! However, as a professional boxing inspector, I escort the boxers into the ring and I monitor the ringside corner throughout the fight. That's the best seat in the house. And to be honest, we are all somewhat boxers in life. I always use my motto especially when I speak to kids... "Life is like boxing, it doesn't matter how many times you get knocked down. What matters most is how many times you get back up."

¿Que Pasa?: While I was reading the book, I felt the emotion of that day you went to meet Ali. Were you excited or nervous?

Felix: I was both...excited and nervous. Excited because I was finally going to meet my hero, Muhammad Ali. Nervous because my son and I were verbally warned that Ali will not be signing autographs or posing for any photos. Well, I guess it was our lucky day because Ali not only signed for us, he also posed for a photo with my son.

¿Que Pasa?: In your book, you said that at games, you would always look for your dad, but he was never there. You also said that it showed you how not to be and that you promised your children, that you would try your best to support them at their activities. Do you think in today's society where parents have to work to maintain a decent home for their family and put food on the table, this can be at times difficult to show support this way and that the only way some parents can make up for this is to buy their children things to make it up to them? Isn't this a sad reflection on family life today?

Felix: Every family's circumstance is unique. I understand that being a parent is demanding, but as parents we have the responsibility to be there for our kids. For me, it's the most significant part of my life, and as a dad, I know that I have to find the time to spend with my children. Material things can never replace the priceless moments spent with your children. I know there are many parents that believe buying material things makes it up to their children, however they are sadly mistaken. I can relate to this because my dad left our home when I was about 5 years old and when he did show up, it was to give me and my brother some money. Now as a grown-up, I wished my dad would have taken me fishing, to a baseball game or simply played catch with me. The moments spent together are the most important, and all the money in the world can't buy precious time back.

¿Que Pasa?: Do you think children today are more under pressure to do better than their friends, and that to achieve this, it comes at a price? Do you feel children need to have more materialistic things to show they are better than other children rather than being part of a stable home background?

Felix: I don't know the answer to that. I would hope not. Let me put it this way. I never tried to compare myself to the next man or my friends because I know there will always be people doing better than me. Therefore, my goal is not to compete, but to find the common purpose of our existence and to try and make a positive difference in the lives of others. If you measure your success by how much materialistic things you have, then you're not living life to its fullest potential.

¿Que Pasa?: Why do you think children prefer to hang around streets and commit juvenile disorder?

Felix: A lot of children prefer to hang around streets for various reasons. It could be that they are not happy at home. It could be that there is no positive male role-model in the child's life. According to the National Fatherhood Initiative in the United States, there are nearly 25 million fatherless children in America. Seventy percent of juveniles in state operated institutions are from fatherless homes. Eight five percent of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes. Seventy one percent of high school dropouts are from fatherless homes. Father absence is a major problem in the United States. It's my mission to try and help spread the word, so that we can save our young brothers and sisters. I want to inspire and empower the fatherless youth in the world to dream big and learn more, to believe they can achieve anything in life they choose to pursue. President Barack Obama is a fatherless child. What a remarkable example he is for our children. I admire President Obama and can't thank him enough for being the husband and father he is to his two beautiful children and wife.

¿Que Pasa?: Do you think Fathers may feel guilty for not supporting their children?

Felix: This is a tough question. Here's the truth. There are some dads that I am sure would love to support their children, but are unable to do so due to the lack of employment or can't find a well-paying job because of the lack of education. And then there are a lot of dads who are not involved in their children's lives that can afford to financially support their children and think it's the answer to everything. The reality is that a lot of children prefer moral support than financial support. My message to those fathers that may feel guilty for not supporting their children is they should man-up and take responsibility for their children. Being a Dad is the greatest title a man can earn.

¿**Que Pasa?**: Do you feel that they may not know how to show love and support to their children?

Felix: Expressing your love and support comes in many forms. You can express your love by simply listening to your children when they have something to say. Attend their school functions, sporting activities or play board games with them. It's not hard. It really isn't. And you don't have to be rich to be considered a great dad. You can go for walks together, read a book together, play catch or watch a family movie.

¿**Que Pasa?**: Do you think governments should offer more youth facilities to prevent children getting into the wrong crowd? Or do you think schools should take on more to educate children better in social interaction?

Felix: It starts at home. Parents should be the first line of prevention. Parents need to be involved in their children's lives, so that they are more prepared to take on the world. Talk to your children about the dangers of hanging around the wrong crowds and the serious consequences when children are peer pressured into doing something just to fit in. Going back to governments providing more youth facilities, I agree 100%. We need to invest in our children. After all they are our future. Providing youth facilities, which include recreational and sporting activities, is an investment in our future. It will keep our children out of trouble, keep them physically in shape and provide an opportunity to meet new friends and become more equipped for social interaction.

A lot of teachers are already doing a wonderful job with educating our children. Again, it starts at home. As parents we must lay the foundation.

¿**Que Pasa?**: You do a lot of work with child welfare, youth coaching and police commissioner, do you have a defining moment?

Felix: I am blessed to be healthy enough to be able to do the things I do. My defining moment has to be as a youth coach. When I first started coaching little league, I saw a lot of children that reminded me so much of myself. They looked up to me because we related. I could see it in their eyes that these kids wanted to be something special. They wanted to succeed. As a coach, I didn't just teach them about the rules of the game or sportsmanship. I tried to use the sport to teach them lessons of life.

¿**Que Pasa?**: How do you find time to relax with your family?

Felix: My family has always been my priority. I made a promise to my wife when my children were born that I will try my best to always be there for them. I think I've been good with keeping my promises. I make it a point to spend time with my family. Whether it be going to a restaurant together, watching a movie, or grabbing some ice cream, I always find the time.

¿**Que Pasa?**: Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

Felix: Muhammad Ali has inspired this poor, skinny Puerto Rican kid from the public housing projects to believe that he too can make a positive difference in the world, by simply expressing appreciation, love, and care for people of his race...the human race. I hope that in 10 years, I have inspired others to make a positive difference in the world like Ali inspired me.

© Interview by Angie Parkinson, 12 September, 2009

'DAD ME AND MUHAMMAD ALI' - BOOK REVIEW

Is a truly inspirational book written by Felix Rodriguez.

by Angela Parkinson

Felix draws on own his own life experience of growing up in a single parent family.

Felix narrates a story about breaking his Father's signed photograph of Muhammad Ali. It shows the emotion that is felt when his Father discovered about the broken picture and how persistent he was in making up to his father with a visit to a bookstore to see Muhammad Ali.

The book tells us about a wonderful story of Father/Son relationship. Chapter 3 tells us the emotion that is felt, probably in most households, when you break one of your parent's prized possessions. You can feel the anxiety and tension around the dinner table, in wondering what his Father was going to say or do.

Chapter 4 goes on to the story of how he will make up the damage to his Father. The disappointment in not winning the bid for the tickets to the bookshop, then the constant phone calls to the bookstore, his determination eventually pays off. The next morning he wakes his Father and tells him his surprise.

Throughout this powerful and emotional book you cannot help feel a part of every chapter. However, most importantly, his book carries a message to all Fathers and Sons. It's a story of a father/son relationship that is truly inspirational and must for all families to read and enjoy.

Particularly heart-warming is Felix's special message to the Champ. Additionally, there is Muhammad Ali's Professional Boxing Record. You must take the Aliologist test at the back of the book, even better if you can do this with your family. There's even a certificate for you to sign. This book is an excellent narrative and also interactive. Share this book with your family and make it part of your memories.

Author's web site: <http://www.dadmeandali.com/whats-new.html>

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