

# HEADLINERS

## Richard Shoyemi Profile

**Richard Shoyemi never thought to pursue a career in fashion and never did it cross his mind that he would one day become one of the youngest “semi-established” fashion stylists of his generation at the age of 20. Making him not only what he is today but a role model to follow in the future.**

In life there are many paths young people might choose to follow to get their dream job; an academic route, a more practical one or work placements in pursuit of our desired careers. Some young people aspire to become a fashion designer, a stylist or most popularly, a model. But how to achieve these dreams and which path to choose to get there isn't always apparent and weren't for Richard Shoyemi.



How did you break into the fashion industry?

I used to go to a youth centre called The Crib and they had a fashion workshop, which was basically a whole load of young people customising clothes. I sort of, got a bit bored of the whole customising clothes and I thought that I just wanted to make something from scratch. So I took it upon myself to make something to show that I could. I'm quite rebellious like that. They had seen my talent at this time but I had no interest in fashion at all. I didn't even know that I was gonna become a designer or fashion stylist and they (The Crib) saw my talent, entered me into a competition. The competition was with GMTV and London College of Fashion and I ended up winning that show with both awards: first place and overall winner. I then realised maybe fashion is for me.

What did you design?

For the workshop it was a dress, which took me some time, as I'd never sewed before. It was my first attempt! For the awards it was a pencil dress studded with crystals and it had a built-in necklace attached to it so you could wear it as one.

You said that growing up you attended a youth club called 'The Crib'. In what ways did it help you to be who you are today?

If that workshop wasn't there maybe I would have never known that I had a talent in fashion. A lot of people that came to The Crib were out of prison, on the streets, in trouble with the police, and didn't have parents around. I'm very observant, so it helped me become me, it played a good part.

Do you think their needs to be more things like that for young people?

Yeah, to some extent, if the money is going into a good cause. I know there are a lot of people that run youth centres and take the money for themselves. I definitely feel there should be youth clubs open to a later time instead of like 8 o'clock. After 8 o'clock, people are back on the streets so you're back to square one. I do feel that youth centres are a good thing and I know that they've closed a lot of them down. It helps to keep young people occupied. If there is nothing else to do all you think of is crime, for some people that's all you really know. Only some.

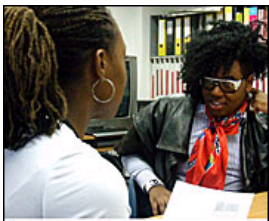
Who is and was your biggest influence in fashion?

My biggest influence, it's not a person, it's something, it's a place, I'd say it's life; walking around, listening to music, conversations with people. Spending time alone inspires me a lot, everyday life is my inspiration and from that I take all different things and use it to create whatever it is that I create within fashion.

Does your choice of style and career have any conflict with your family?

It did at the very beginning before I became semi-established. Some people may say I'm established, I'm just me. My Dad's Nigerian, my mum is Guyanese. My mum was very fine with my dress sense and the idea of me going with it into the fashion industry. My father on the other hand was totally against it and totally didn't understand the logic behind it. Not until I won the award and had loads of features in newspapers and magazines. That's when he realised: "OK, this is the good thing for him." That's when he sort of said: "Yeah, its cool."

How do you deal with peoples day-to-day perceptions of your unique style, especially those that deviate from social norms?



Norm ... I'm gonna address that issue right there. To me norm or normal is whatever you feel is right. So whatever people call normal, I'm totally against. It's whatever you feel within. Me, myself, the way I dress, I just do me. I put on whatever I want to wear at that moment in time. Whether it's a full adidas tracksuit, whether it's my hair dyed pink; it's whatever I feel. How I react to the public that don't understand individuality, I don't really pay attention to it. It doesn't mean anything to me. If I feel that I look good at that moment in time, I look good at that moment in time.

Would you like to see more young people be themselves instead of how they think they should be?

I would say not even just young people; anybody in general should be themselves. It's the best way to be and I'm not talking about even in your fashion - just in what you do, whether it's in your career or your personality. Be yourself and it will lead on to many different things. I always find that people respect you more when you are yourself. When you try to be something you're not you'll always get caught out and then the respect is lost.

So what do you think about the Size 0 debate?

Size 0 models; it is what it is really. On a runway you're trying to sell the clothes to the buyers, who then go and put the clothes in a high street. People that are buying them are not Size 0 so I don't think the models themselves on the runway have to be stick thin. But I have no qualms at all with any fashion issue or politics.

What do you feel is your biggest achievement so far?

BBC News did a feature on me on the 6 o'clock prime time news. So me being on that is my biggest achievement to date.

So what would you say is your ultimate goal?

To be successful in what I do, so to achieve all my goals. Michael Jackson, he's one of the people that I'd love to work with and be a part of the whole costume team.

Do you have any advice for young people today trying to get into the fashion industry?

Number one rule; know yourself before you throw yourself into an industry that can crush you, change your views and change you. Make you forget who you are as a person. Number two; try to get as much experience as possible whether it's assisting on a photo shoot, whether it's going to shops and buying fashion magazines to keep up-to-date.

For a fashion stylist you would need a portfolio, which shows the different styles and techniques you have in terms of styling. The best way to start off is to get a friend to model or find someone on the street to ask them if they'd model for you. Organise a little photo shoot. Source clothes, you can source clothes from your friends. Put the outfit together, do the shoot then you'd have a semi portfolio.

If you wanted to become a fashion designer get as much sketches and ideas down in a book and show where you got those ideas and sketches from so you can have back up. Try to approach fashion houses. Experience is the key, you can't really buy experience.

Richard Shoyemi has maintained a well grounded and down to earth character. He has always stayed true to himself which is expressed through his strong opinions. With his vibrant personality and edgy style he provides a role model for other young people to be themselves.

Richard's path in life so far can be seen as an inspiration for young people to not only follow their goals but to rise to their full potential. As he says: "it started from a youth club to me being rebellious to going onto realising that I do have 'it'." All it takes is determination and hard work. If you have a dream never give up on it, no matter how you may be discouraged or discriminated against because of your individuality.

### About this article

This article was written by Chika Ekemezie, 18, Tajha Myer-Ferreira, 17 and contributed to by Orrel Lawrence, 20 and Pamwan Osemwenhkae, 20.

### 2 comments

Keep doing you

Your an inspiration for real!!!

Nneoma (age 25) from North London, 03 February 2010 20:54

good bro

thought like ur dad at 1st, but realised that when someone has a vision, it is always hard to change it, especially if he/she is a great dreamer like JOSEPH.

Richard Shoyemi is a Joseph of his generation. All the best cousin

Alli Pelumi from Nigeria, 22 July 2009 14:11

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