

Chet Brown

FINE Mortuary College | Norwood, Massachusetts

Ask Chet Brown why he wants to be a funeral director, and you hear this heartfelt reply: “I want to remake my torn life into a remarkable success story that is an inspiration to others.”

Consider Brown’s story: A Jamaican born inner-city youth, student counselor and graduate of Manchester High School (in Jamaica), struggling with social breakdowns from community violence, disappointments and family disruptions, grabs onto hope in a relative’s contracting business at the age of 18 until moving to the United States in 2014. This hope helped him to realize that if he worked hard he could achieve any dream he wanted, and so he turned the page.

“The United States is the land of opportunity, and when I had the chance to come here, I wanted to make the most of the opportunity I was being given,” Brown explained.

In 2015, Brown attended Boston Public School’s adult education programs and the Xcel Hiset program and finished within a year. He also worked as a paid volunteer for the Tech Goes Home Computer Literacy Program where he encouraged social and educational relationships and developments within the community.

Confident, committed and focused, he began his studies at FINE Mortuary College in the spring of 2016, seeking a two-year associate degree in applied science at the age of 31. He sought to find an apprenticeship in the profession, and within days he was working in the field.

“Chet has possessed a unique personality to be recognized, and his love, compassion and unwavering spirit to deal with any eventuality when his service is called upon in the funeral home is a true embodiment of what an outstanding funeral director should be,” said David Russell Jr., president of Russell and Pica Funeral Home in Brockton, Massachusetts.

Becoming a funeral director, Brown

explained, became a personal dream after so many relatives and close friends died that it began to feel routine.

“I want to meet people and impact the lives around me in more meaningful ways,” he said. “I remember taking care of my grandparents who were dying. They knew that they were dying, and to watch them prepare to depart this world, there was just such a sense of dignity ... I knew that I wanted to provide that same dignity for them – and others – in death.”

It was the death of his grandparents, as well as those of friends, that helped Brown develop sympathy, compassion and the desire to comfort and console those around him.

“It is a privilege to be called to service,” Brown said. “People are coming to you when they are the most vulnerable, and they are looking to you to comfort and console them and care for their loved one.”

The 34-year-old Brown graduated last month with honors, with his wife and six daughters there to cheer him on.

He’s excited about what will come next. Beyond becoming a licensed funeral director, Brown also wants to start a community-based organization that brings together people of all races, classes and genders to support each other, and to develop a practice where sharing a wide diversity of different customs and cultures creates an oasis for success and the development of a friendly community.

The business, he explains, will not be an establishment of death, but rather a symbol of appreciation of the life lived that honors the body and life of the deceased. “We are a collectiveness of different cultures that make up society,” Brown said. “And for all of our differences, we have so much in



common. We are not as different as sometimes we think we are.”

Brown’s plans also include getting his bachelor’s degree in funeral service management to become a mortuary science educator. “To be able to create a platform to develop and contribute back to the system in terms of education, well, that would be an honor,” he said. “To be able to help develop students how others have developed me, I can’t think of anything better.”

With every step he takes, Brown wants to be a positive influence ... for his family and funeral service.

“I want my daughters to understand that whatever your mind sees, whatever your mind is able to imagine, you can bring it to reality with discipline, hard work and tenacity,” he said. “Things aren’t always going to be easy, sometimes they are going to seem impossible, but that’s when you work harder – and never give up.”

Brown plans to put that same positivity into his funeral service career. “You may personally be having a bad day, but when a family walks into the funeral home, they are your priority. You must show the family the best of yourself, be empathetic and help them through the darkest hour in their lives. I am very much humbled to serve, and I will give my best each day ... that’s what families deserve.”