
Spotlight on Que: Brother Jeffrey Young

By Jeffrey T. Smith

Brother Young is a husband, father, son, brother, musician, mentor, educator, friend, and a Christian who holds the fraternity's principles, motto, and purpose near and dear. His effervescent personality, empathic soul, and engaging smile are qualities that attract you to learn more about this quintessential man. Young's selfless service to the youth are both influential and intentional and has been long standing without great fanfare to all except those in his sphere.

Brother Young and I met approximately 35 years ago at my parent's home in Montbello; his prophete, Miguel Henry (Lambda Beta '81) introduced us and our friendship has been unbroken since that day. Incidentally, I went to college with his older brother, Larry and I know his sister, Cynthia, very well; plus, our parents were best of friends over the years until the passing of my mother. Furthermore, Young was my son's music teacher, helping with life skills and keeping a watchful eye while he was in middle school. During the process of preparing this article, we enjoyed a brief time reflecting on the passage of time and the joys, sorrows therein. Brother Young's activities of life and his experiences are framed using the four cardinal principles of Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance and Uplift.

Manhood: Brother Young is youngest of three born to Milton and Lovie Young and has been a Denverite since birth. Young and his wife, Tracy, have been married 32 years and blessed with four children (three boys and a daughter) and four grandchildren (three grandsons and a granddaughter).

Brother Young was initiated as a 'Solo' on July 9, 1983 through the Lambda Beta Chapter, University of Northern Colorado (UNC) – Greeley. He has worked intermittently with Chi Phi Chapter throughout the years, serving mostly as a judge for Talent Hunt programs and supporting community service projects such as the annual BRI Paint-a-Thon.

Scholarship: Brother Young navigated an interesting collegian journey, matriculating at three colleges before graduating with a Bachelor of Music from Berklee College of Music (the world's most renowned music school). He started at FAMU with a music scholarship before transferring to UNC for one year and then onto Berklee College where he befriended a pair of Marsalis brothers, Branford and Delfeayo. Young has been playing the trombone since age seven as part of the Denver Junior Police Band. He continued playing in the band at Thomas Jefferson High School and Montbello High School, graduating from the latter as the second class of the new school. Young played football at both schools too. Lastly, Brother Young has a Master of Music from the University of Colorado – Boulder.

Perseverance: Professionally, Brother Young has been a K-12 Music Educator in the Metro Denver area, teaching in the Aurora and Denver Public Schools for 30+ years. He is a professional trombonist and jazz clinician, a guest artist hired to work intensive rehearsals with top bands or music groups. Young has been repeatedly called to play with some of the most legendary and revolutionary musicians in the world. His performances include working with: Ray Charles, Natalie Cole, Peaches and Herb, Bobby Vinton, Maria Schneider, The Delfonics, The Manhattans, and recently, Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra. Locally, Young performs with Ron Ivory and the Miles Apart Band and is a member of the Denver based band, Jakarta. Brother Young has shared his musical talents with the famous while playing the following venues: Aspen Jazz Festival (with Natalie Cole), The Broadmoor, Red Rocks Amphitheatre (with Denver Jazz All-stars and Easter Sunrise services), El Chapultepec – Downtown Denver, Paramount Theater – Downtown Denver, Dazzle (old & new locations in Denver), and at Bush 43 presidential inauguration – Colorado Ball. NOTE: I pulled several molars from Young while getting this list which is not inclusive. Brother Young was selected as the Denver Mile High Teacher of the Year under Mayor John Hickenlooper's administration.

Uplift: Brother Young is known in the music and education communities for a number of endeavors. Over the past five years, Young and others started a non-profit (501c3) music program – Music Leadership Institute (MLI) – for students in grades 6-12 in the Far North East Denver and Aurora communities. The program involves nurturing and developing potential leaders. MLI is an organization that provides students with an avenue to grow creatively through music education and leadership development. Students are engage in experiences that enhance their ingenuity, thinking, and collaboration skills through the delivery of a comprehensive, professional-level instruction in jazz education. MLI supports 25 young people by helping them learn leadership skills and academic preparation while cultivating a 'thrive' mindset to advance their musicianship and career path options.

In closing, Brother Young's aspiration and hope for Chi Phi Chapter is to empower and engage the youth in the Metro Denver, which consistent with his word and deed over the years. Brother Young and Brother Hugh Ragin (jazz trumpeter) played countless jazz sessions at Cleatz Bar & Grill (now closed) to a bevy of people including fraternity members; great sounds and camaraderie were abound to everyone's delight. Brother Young is imbued with a desire and determination to serve the youth of the community all the while demonstrating his musical acumen, leadership and friendship for others to see and emulate. His rich experience of playing with music celebrities and in signature venues are stories that could fill several pages or even a book. Young is a good brother with great qualities. May God's grace, mercy, peace, and love be with him and family continually.

