

Restoring Resilience for Black Men

The ReManned Project helps build men able to deal with challenges and adversity.

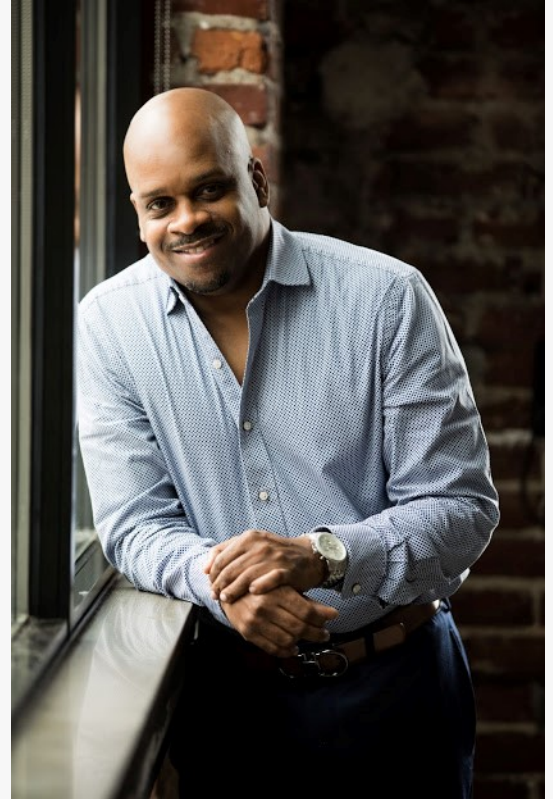
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE, UNITED STATES, May 25, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For Wilmington's Donald Morton, founder and CEO of The ReManned Project, the label of "man" isn't something acquired by virtue of gender. It's a title that's earned.

And for far too many Black men, the absence of a father or father figure means they have no one in their lives from whom to earn the title.

Morton knows their experience from his own life. "My dad, I like to say, left me three times," he says. "My father was in the house until I was 9 or 10 years old, but he was emotionally absent, and he and my mother had a very volatile, dysfunctional relationship." That, Morton says, was the first abandonment. He then left the family to move to the West Coast, a physical separation that was difficult for the young Morton to comprehend. Then, just before a planned reunion with the family when Morton was in middle school, his father died. "He leaves me eternally, right?"

Later, when he was an adult, Morton's grandmother passed along a letter to him from his father. "And in the letter, my dad wrote, 'Please tell my son I loved him. I simply did not know how to be a father,'" he says.

Society has seen versions of this story played out again and again – the generational trauma of repeated fatherlessness. Throughout his 25 years as a pastor and in his own life, Morton has seen this as well. As a result, he says, too many young African American men suffer from the consequences of decisions made based on flawed concepts of manhood, that, he says, they never would have made if they were truly versed in the challenges of responsibilities of being men. The results of these decisions can include suicide, violent crime, dropping out of school and incarceration.



Wilmington's Donald Morton, founder and CEO of The ReManned Project

Recent data confirms that 75% of African American households in the United States are without a male head-of-household, compared to 35% of white homes. "Men are missing or malfunctioning," Morton says. "They are not present in the lives of their relationships, their families. We have outsourced raising our men to schools, gangs and prisons. There are so many single mothers raising sons, and these men grow up to view manhood through the lens of a single mom, fused with whatever experiences they have captured by just being a Black male in this country."

He designed The ReManned Project specifically to help young men 25 and older connect with the obligations, responsibilities, attitudes and behaviors that he says will earn them the designation of "man."

"No one's taught him how to manage and negotiate the obstacle course of life," Morton says. "And when he's taught that, when he's taught to face the adversity that has happened in his life, he's an incredible cat. That's what we're seeing inside The ReManned Project."

Much of the problem isn't that men don't know what to do in situations of adversity, they just don't know how to do them, he says. "They know there is a level of responsibility and accountability they have as a father. They get it. What they don't understand is the level of difficulty that they would have to endure in order to be what they know they should be."

The ReManned Project reaches members through a peer-to-peer process that requires participants to be accountable to each other for their changed behaviors and progress.

"I may have an answer because I'm a little further along, I've had to face more, I've had to overcome more. But the truth of the matter is we hold one another accountable from the time a guy walks in the door. He has as much right as everybody else inside The ReManned Project, including me," Morton says. "When a guy comes into The ReManned Project, we strip him of the title of a man. We tell him he is a male until he graduates. And the reason we do that is because we create a sacredness around the term manhood. That is something to be earned. That is not something that you just automatically get because you were born."

In addition to helping men grow internally, The ReManned Project strives to help men who are fathers repair and rebuild relationships with their children, from whom they've often been pulled by divorce, separation or the social services system. Part of that involves teaching participants that they must work within the family welfare system as it exists.

"We tell them from the door that this system is not going to change any time soon," he says. "While there are people doing great work trying to change the system, changing the system is not my focus. I'm going to change you so that you can navigate the system, so that no matter what circumstance you find yourself in, you show up as a grown-behind man, ready to do the work and do all the stuff that you're supposed to do in spite of the kind of circumstances you

find yourself in.”

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