



ANDRE CHANEY

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THROUGH THEM

A FEATURE BY KAYLA EVERETT

Some Opportunities Open Doors. The Greatest Ones Reveal The Character It Takes to Walk Through Them.

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Before Andre's artwork would become part of Major League Baseball All-Star Week in his hometown of Philadelphia, he was faced with a decision that would reveal far more than his artistic ability.

When his mother became seriously ill, Andre made the difficult decision to leave behind a full scholarship in California and return home. It was a choice that placed family above opportunity and responsibility above success.

While many might have viewed it as walking away from a dream, Andre came to understand a truth that would continue to define his journey. Purpose is not always found in the opportunity in front of you. Sometimes, it is found in the responsibility that calls you home.

Years later, the same hands that spent countless hours serving his mother behind closed doors would create artwork seen across the nation, reminding us that the achievements the world celebrates are often built on the decisions that no one else ever sees.

Perhaps this is why every piece Andre creates carries a deeper question, one first asked by his mother: ***“It looks good, but what does it mean?”***

As a child, Andre heard his mother’s words as a challenge to become a better artist.

And with time, Andre realized those words held more than artistic instruction. They became the philosophy that would shape not only his work, but the way he approached his life.

Before The Recognition, There Was A Mother Who Believed

Andre’s journey as an artist didn’t begin with a mural, a children’s book, or a commissioned project. It began at home.

Long before galleries, public art installations, or professional pursuits entered the picture, there was a mother who recognized something in her son that few others could see. She didn’t simply encourage his creativity. She made room for it. Whether it was time, conversation, or thoughtful encouragement, she consistently reinforced that what he loved to create was worth taking seriously.

Growing up, art wasn’t always viewed as a practical career. Like many young artists, Andre could have easily been encouraged to pursue a more

conventional path. But his mother chose differently. She chose to embrace the gift that God had given him. She saw possibility where others might have seen uncertainty, and she continued investing in that gift before anyone else had reason to.

That early investment became the foundation beneath his work.

Today, it's impossible to separate the artist from the woman who first encouraged him to become one.

The Making Of An Artist

When his mother's health began to decline, Andre's priorities changed. A full scholarship to California represented an opportunity many artists spend years working toward. Returning to Philadelphia meant leaving that opportunity behind and embracing an entirely different responsibility. And the decision wasn't easy.

Family members initially encouraged him to remain in school, knowing there was little he could do while his mother remained hospitalized. But as her condition worsened and doctors prepared the family for another surgery, Andre knew where he needed to be.

He came home.

The years that followed looked nothing like the future he had imagined. While many of his peers were expanding their networks, building careers, and pursuing new opportunities, Andre devoted those same years to caring for his mother, who had first made room for his dreams.

Even then, he never stopped creating.

Art remained part of his daily life, but it matured in a season that required perseverance as much as artistic skill. The discipline to continue creating, the patience to endure uncertainty, and the willingness to keep going without knowing what might come next became just as formative as anything he could have learned in a classroom.

Andre often reflects on another lesson those years taught him. During his mother's surgeries, he found himself constantly praying for the next miracle. Eventually, he realized he had become so focused on asking God

for what was next that he had forgotten to thank Him for what had already been done. That realization strengthened not only his faith but also a lasting habit of gratitude.

Some seasons accelerate a career. Others shape the person behind it. For Andre, it was the latter.

His audience sees the finished work, but they don't always see the years that gave those accomplishments their depth.

The View From Here

Andre shared that there was a season of life when he never planned living past the age of 25. Growing up in the inner city, that milestone felt farther away than it should have. And rather than living years ahead, he had to remain faithful to the assignment immediately in front of him.

However, his mother's passing forced him to confront a question he had never prepared to answer.

"How do you begin to live for yourself... especially at this time where you didn't think or you didn't plan past this, so what's next?"

It wasn't simply about moving forward after loss. It was about learning how to imagine a future he had never expected to reach.

Today, at 28, the irony isn't lost on him.

"There is so much life out there for us to live, and we are deserving to live it," Andre shared.

The artist who once struggled to imagine life after 25 now finds himself illustrating children's books, developing a publishing platform, mentoring aspiring creators, and producing artwork viewed by thousands across his hometown.

For Andre, the future is no longer measured by how far he thought he would make it. It is measured by what he chooses to do with the life he has been given.

A New Chapter Through Illustration

In 2020, Andre's work found a new direction through children's book illustration.

This creative undertaking enriched both his portfolio and his perspective. It also introduced him to a different kind of storytelling.

Instead of creating artwork intended to be viewed on a wall, he was now illustrating stories that would live in the hands of children and families. Each project challenged him to communicate imagination, emotion, and meaning through images that could outlast the pages they were printed on.

As he worked alongside authors, Andre also gained a firsthand understanding of how difficult the publishing process could be for emerging creators. Many had compelling stories to tell but little guidance on how to see those ideas come to fruition.

This initiative led to the development of **Made2Believe**, a publishing platform designed to help aspiring authors navigate the process of bringing their stories to life. More than producing books, the vision is to remove barriers for writers who didn't know where to begin.

His mother had once recognized potential in him before the opportunities existed. Through **Made2Believe**, he now hopes to do the same for others by helping writers transform ideas into finished works that can educate, encourage, and leave a lasting impact.

It became about ensuring emerging voices were not left without a way forward.

That change has prepared him for projects with a greater responsibility, where illustration, storytelling, and community intersect in ways he could have never anticipated.

History In Full Color

As Andre's work continued to evolve, the stories he was being asked to tell expanded in reach and deepened in meaning.

What began with murals and children's books eventually grew into projects that carried a different kind of responsibility. They demanded someone who understood how to translate history, identity, and community into something people could experience.

As MLB prepared to bring All-Star Week to Philadelphia, Andre was invited to create one of the event's featured public art installations.

Looking back, Andre recognizes how much had changed since the earliest days of his career.

"I remember being at a point in my career where you were applying for everything, and everybody's telling you no because you don't have that body of work yet... and now all these people are reaching out to me," he shared.

This invitation was not merely a career milestone. It was the culmination of years of disciplined work, artistic growth, and a steadfast commitment to serving his community through art. Just as importantly, it reflected the trust he had earned along the way.

That trust was affirmed by Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia, whose career has helped shape the city's public art landscape.

Standing beside Andre at the unveiling of the Liberty Bell installation, she turned to him and said, ***"I knew you were the right person for the job."*** For Andre, those words carried weight.

Rather than producing an illustration, Andre approached the piece as a chance to tell a story about the city's baseball legacy.

Among the players featured throughout the design, Hall of Famer Dick Allen was illustrated on a larger scale than the others. That choice reflected Andre's desire to honor Allen's impact on Philadelphia baseball and ensure that his legacy received the prominence it deserved.

Andre recalled that during All-Star Week, one visitor stopped in front of the installation and became emotional after recognizing that detail. For him, that reaction confirmed something he had hoped this project would

accomplish. People weren't simply viewing the artwork. They were engaging with the history it was created to preserve.

In many ways, it brought him back to a question his mother had asked years earlier: ***“It looks good, but what does it mean?”***

What Remains

Looking across his work today, it would be easy to measure his career by the projects themselves. From children's books and murals to public art installations and collaborations, each project marks a different chapter.

Over time, Andre's relationship with art has evolved beyond the act of creating. It has become the lens through which he understands service, discipline, and the responsibility that comes with being entrusted to tell someone else's story.

His success didn't create that perspective, nor did the opportunities that followed. It emerged through disappointment, seasons of uncertainty, and the decision to return to work even when it would have been easier to leave it behind.

Reflecting on that relationship, Andre once said, *“I think with a jealous lover like art can be, it has a way of just bringing you back when it knows that you're meant to change lives and also change your own life with this medium.”*

For Andre, those words reveal that art continually called him back to the work he was created to do. Recognition alone could never sustain that calling. If it could, there were moments early in his career when, by his own admission, he would have walked away. Andre had already learned that his relationship with art couldn't depend on applause or public affirmation.

As his faith matured, so did his understanding of the work itself. Rather than pursuing every opportunity on his own terms, Andre learned to place God at the forefront of his life and trust Him with the outcome.

Looking back, he sees the doors that closed, the waiting, and even the disappointments not as interruptions to his journey, but as part of the preparation that made him ready for the doors that are open to him today.

The work God was doing within him proved just as important as what He would later accomplish through him.

In the end, the story of Andre Chaney has never been about becoming known. It has been about becoming faithful to the work placed in front of him.

Whether caring for his mother, illustrating stories for children, preserving Philadelphia's history through public art, or helping another author bring an idea to life, each chapter reflects the same commitment: **to create work that carries meaning beyond itself.**

Some opportunities open doors. The greatest ones reveal the character it takes to walk through them.

To Follow Andre's Journey: Instagram @andrenchaney

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