

# Baltimore's CHILD

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# Robert Levine III

BY ADRANISHA STEPHENS | PHOTO BY DAVID STUCK



**LIVES:** Baltimore

**FAMILY:** Wife, Donesha; children, Robert, 20; Amaya, 14; Ariel, 10; and Macai, 7

**OCCUPATION:** Founding Executive Director, Beyond the Natural Foundation

## Tell us about your work and how you got in this field.

I am a musician, songwriter, producer, and founding executive director for Beyond the Natural Foundation (BTNF), a music arts enrichment nonprofit organization that serves youth everywhere. My day either involves composing music for TV and film projects or managing music arts enrichment programs that inspire youth to live greater lives. Music has always been the way I've expressed my creativity as a child growing up. I began playing drums in church at the age of 8. This consistent exposure to the healing and inspirational power of music led me to pursue a life with music as my sole means of self-expression. As creativity would have it, drumming led to a love for poetry, songwriting and production, and becoming a multi-instrumentalist creating musical compositions that have been featured in television and film, and recorded and performed by artists in multiple genres. In October 2013, I founded BTNF to serve at-risk youth by engaging them in music education and performance to provide expressive therapy and inspiration for creating greater life opportunities. I truly love the work that I do.

## Do you have mentor or role model?

My first mentor is my dad. He is a phenomenal man who gave me my first sense of identity in the world. I admire him for his continued strength to persevere through life while loving and leading his family. Pastor Roderick Hairston of Messiah Community Church is not only my pastor, but I consider him my big brother and friend. He has poured an immeasurable amount into my spiritual development which has led to me becoming a better man to serve my wife, family and community. Pastor Michael Martin of Stillmeadow Community Fellowship is someone that I look up to as well because he epitomizes what community connection is all about. I've watched him bring resources together while connecting and empowering people which has produced a positive impact in Southwest Baltimore in just two years.

## What advice can you give working parents?

Parenting is an honor and privilege and should be of the highest importance and priority. My advice would be to never let

all the duties of work and other community commitments get in the way of investing in your children and being actively engaged in their daily development and life experiences. Take full advantage of the time you have your children under your care and covering by spending time with them and creating memories that will last a lifetime. Don't miss the moments.

### How do you manage your career and your family life?

Managing career and family can be challenging but the key I've found is using effective time-management, planning, and communication to create and maintain a healthy balance. My wife and I place every single event and activity of our lives on a shared calendar. My creative time as a songwriter, studio sessions and business meetings are all blocked out on the calendar. This allows us to always have a clear picture of what is going on and when. This keeps us organized. On a regular basis, we make sure we get some intimate time with

our kids individually and collectively. Then, something that is very important for us is date night which we religiously have every Wednesday. This allows for my wife and I to have a regular touchpoint where we can catch up and spend time where it is just us, like the good old days. We have regular game nights with the kids and we also have a regular routine for our children during the school year. I get the kids going in the morning and my wife gets them going in the evening. My wife helps the kids with all the reading and writing aspects of school work and I help them with all the math and special projects. My wife and I pride ourselves on having a partnership which allows us to remain effective at home and at work.

### How do you de-stress? Hobbies/outside interests?

De-stressing for me often includes unplugging from all the noise of life: cell phone, social media and television. I'll often enjoy finding some open fields, sitting outside amongst the trees or being by bodies of

water. I love lighting candles, turning on relaxing soundscapes and enjoying states of mindfulness and meditation. As for hobbies, I am passionate about exercise and fitness. I believe in investing in the mind, body and spirit. I also enjoy eating great meals and desserts and watching movies with my wife.

### What's next for you?

In the next two years, the brand of BTNF will be growing and beginning to get national recognition for the great work that is happening. I look forward to having Beyond the Natural Foundation very close to moving in its first brick and mortar location that will be an amazing state-of-the-art facility that will serve youth by engaging them in music education and performance to provide expressive therapy and inspiration for creating greater life opportunities. BTNF will also have a youth community choir and marching band that will perform around Baltimore and the surrounding counties and showcase all the gifts and talents of Baltimore youth. ■

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