

Alice fell down the rabbit hole, Luke Skywalker met Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Harry Potter boarded the train. They faced challenges, met helpers, fought enemies, and grew into the heroes they were destined to be. Joseph Campbell found that cultures the world over have been telling the same story since the beginning of civilization. He called it “the hero’s journey.” The renowned scholar went on to suggest that this shared myth represents everyone’s potential to change the way they live, find success and happiness, and share their rewards with others. “He realized that it was a blueprint for the way that a human life should be lived,” explains Patrick Takaya Solomon, director of the new documentary, *Finding Joe*. “He found this pattern and realized that in the day-to-day living of it, it’s about pursuing a goal, a passion, your bliss!” If you’ve never heard of Campbell, you’ve probably heard his mantra: “Follow your bliss.”

In *Finding Joe*, Solomon interviews scholars and philosophers like Deepak Chopra and Campbell’s close friend and colleague Robert Walter, as well as success stories like skateboarder Tony Hawk, actress Rashida Jones, drummer Mick Fleetwood, screenwriter Akiva Goldsman, and director Catherine Hardwicke. It was Solomon’s goal to present both an expert explanation of the late Campbell’s work, as well as examples of the hero’s journey in action. “Tony Hawk was a guy who lived the hero’s journey unknowingly,” marvels Solomon, “precisely to the letter of the Campbell doctrine, and he had no idea. The interview ended with his talking about starting a foundation for skate parks. This guy has done it to the letter!” It was a revelation for Solomon to hear not only the same arcs and archetypes over and over, but also to hear that all of these successful people took the final, universal step — as described by Campbell decades earlier — and brought the fruits of their labor back home. “They all took the essence of their journeys and they brought it back to their community. They went out into the forest, they discovered some treasure, and they brought the treasure back to share it. It made me look at stories in a different way and it made me look at life in a different way.”

Between interviews, Solomon uses children as “transitional elements” in *Finding Joe*, having them act out a King Arthur-esque search for the grail, complete with a kid in a knight costume discovering that he needs to make peace with the dragon he’s fighting. These little images add just the right amount of playfulness to compelling concepts like Campbell’s enduring declaration, “We must be willing to give up the life we’ve planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us.”

“When you walk the hero’s journey,” Solomon relates, “you kind of line yourself up with, for lack of a better term, universal forces that have the ability to put in your way synchronicities, coincidences, and opportunities that wouldn’t be there otherwise. If you’re not conscious, or you’re not looking, if you don’t see a challenge as a door opening, then you get to be stuck where you are. It’s tough — on the one hand I know that it’s not some overly magical force, like magical in the Harry Potter sense, but I do know that that’s the way that it works. So when things happen for me, it really gives it a personal “I-made-that-happen.” My taking this step or this risk created this counteraction, which was this great opportunity that wouldn’t have been there for anyone else, and was there because I did something.” ▼

Finding Joe premieres in Los Angeles on September 30th at Laemmle’s Monica 4-plex.

Patrick Takaya Solomon Discovers the Hero Within

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