

Nicole Lynn Lewis

Author/Speaker

Questions & Answers

Why did you decide to write *Glori*?

Because so many people told me that my story putting myself through college as a young mother needed to be written. They made me realize how rare it is to hear success stories about teenage mothers. We are out there. There are so many women who have gone on to lead very successful lives – but they're overshadowed by all the negative images of teen parents. So I wrote *Glori* to help fill that void. Young women need to know that a pregnancy doesn't have to stop them from achieving their dreams.

Your book might be considered controversial. Some might question whether or not it glamorizes teen pregnancy. What are your thoughts on that?

As you read the book, it immediately becomes apparent that there is nothing glamorous about my experience – no flashy cars, no fancy clothes, no easy sailing! In contrast, I faced homelessness, poverty, hunger, an oppressive relationship, a drug-infested environment. It was the most difficult time of my life. Being a teen parent is not glamorous and that comes across in this book.

Do you think the book encourages pre-marital sex or encourages girls to get pregnant?

This question fascinates me. When someone writes a book about overcoming a drug addiction or homelessness, do we question whether their book encourages people to smoke weed or give up their homes? Why should we look at teen pregnancy any differently? The only thing this book encourages is a belief in yourself and having the willpower to achieve your dreams no matter what life throws your way. Also, I think people have oversimplified the issue of teen pregnancy. It is so complex. Pregnancies at a young age can be a result of sex between a boyfriend or girlfriend or a casual encounter, but in other cases (the numbers might surprise you), they are the result of rape, sexual molestation and assaults. So the message in this book is a positive one. It tells young women that no matter what has happened to you, your life isn't over.

What part of your life does *Glori* document?

It follows me from my junior year in high school – when I started dating my daughter's father – to two years after I graduate from college. My life was somewhat of a rollercoaster during that time. I became pregnant during my senior year in high school at 17-years-old and then again at 18. We lived from place to place while my boyfriend sold drugs. Sometimes we didn't have food to eat. I was alienated from family and friends. All the while, I am trying to fulfill a promise I'd made to myself and to my mother of enrolling in college one year after my high school graduation.

Why was going to college so important to you?

One, I came from a family in which going to college was expected. Around the same time I found out I was pregnant, I was receiving all of my acceptance letters to various colleges. My sister went to Ivy League schools. Both my parents were educators. Another reason is that when I became pregnant and saw the employment options that were available to me with only a high school diploma, it reinforced the need to go to college. I wanted that degree so badly. I always tell young mothers, you have to want it more than anyone else wants it for you or it's not going to happen.

Don't you feel that you were at an advantage then when compared to other young women who don't have the same upbringing?

Absolutely. I know that. I came from a middle class home, and I had role models growing up. I had people telling me I could do anything I put my mind to. That's why *Glori* is so important because for those girls who don't have anyone saying that, this book can be their support and encouragement. I can be a role model. I can be that person saying, "You can do it. You're smart enough. You're strong enough. Believe in yourself."

What are your hopes for this book?

I hope *Glori* touches people. That's why I wrote it. I hope it inspires them to do whatever it is they think they can't. For young mothers, I hope it motivates them to start putting more effort into getting their high school diploma or researching colleges. For men and women who had children at a young age and have gone on to lead healthy, stable lives, I hope it celebrates them and their accomplishments. For people in general, I hope it encourages them to persist despite the odds.

I had someone say to me once after they read the book that they might not have had an abortion had they read it a year earlier. That is so powerful to me. It means that it is making people realize how powerful they are. They can write their own future and be a different story.