

LeVar Burton

LeVar Burton launched his acting career while still a student at the University of Southern California. Cast in the groundbreaking role of Kunta Kinte in the landmark television series *Roots*, at 19 he found himself on the cover of *Time* magazine. A seemingly impossible act to follow, Burton managed to do so in dramatic fashion, achieving further global acclaim as Chief Engineer Geordi La Forge in the iconic *Star Trek: The Next Generation* television series and feature films. But it has been his role as host and executive producer of the beloved PBS children's series *Reading Rainbow* that he is most proud of. Airing from 1983 to 2009, it was not only one of the longest-running children's television shows in history, but also one of the most acclaimed, earning over 200 awards including multiple Emmys and a Peabody. He is also the host and executive producer of the television game show *Trivial Pursuit*.

Always committed to improving children's education through innovative uses of storytelling, in 2012 Burton launched RRRKidz, a digital educational publishing company, co-founded with business partner Mark Wolfe. Together they hold the global rights to the *Reading Rainbow* brand through a partnership with series creator, WNED/Buffalo. *Reading Rainbow* was reimagined to combine today's forms of media and technology with the goal of inspiring a new generation of children to love reading. The all-new *Reading Rainbow* is a digital reading service filled with over 500 children's fiction and non-fiction books, newly produced video field trips and new content added every week. With over 16 million books and videos enjoyed since launch, *Reading Rainbow* is the number one educational app on iTunes and recipient of numerous awards.

Most recently, Burton turned to Kickstarter to bring *Reading Rainbow* to "Every Child, Everywhere" — especially to classrooms in need. The campaign met its 35-day goal of raising \$1 million in less than 11 hours, and became the most popular Kickstarter campaign ever with over 105,000 backers and a final tally of over \$6.4 million. As a result, in 2015 RRRKidz will introduce *Reading Rainbow* EDU, complete with engaging supplemental learning content for teachers and students.

And in October, 2014, *Reading Rainbow* published Burton's first children's book, ***The Rhino Who Swallowed a Storm***, a powerful and uplifting story to help children cope with the difficulties of everyday life.

The honored recipient of 12 Emmy Awards, a Grammy and five NAACP Awards, Burton has demonstrated in his career that he can do it all —acting, directing, producing, writing and speaking. He is often invited as a keynote speaker at leading education and technology events, most recently speaking at NASA, ISTE, The National Headstart Association and many more.

And in 2014, with educational groups, business organizations and media clamoring to recognize him for the record-setting *Reading Rainbow* Kickstarter campaign, Burton was named Geek of the Year in the annual Geekie Awards, was listed as one of *Ebony* magazine's Power 100, and earned the World Tech Award for Education, awarded by the World Technology Network.

He now enters his fourth decade in the industry, with millions of fans throughout the world, and continues his mission to inspire, entertain and educate.

