



RAINN WILSON



Actor Rainn Wilson is often described in the media as portraying “a nerd.” In fact, Rainn himself says that as a kid, “I was pretty different from the norm.” But as one major news source notes, his ability to play “the quirky character . . . has bolted Wilson to fame.” Rainn received a 2007 Emmy Award nomination for his role as the eccentric Dwight Schrute on the hit TV show, *The Office*.^{*} Rainn and his co-stars also share a 2007 Screen Actors Guild award for their ensemble performance. And the show won a 2006 Emmy for Outstanding Comedy Series.

Rainn was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1966. His love for acting began with a play in elementary school. After years of study, he earned a master’s degree from New York University. Rainn has appeared on other hit shows, and he’s hosted *Saturday Night Live*. When he’s interviewed for TV or magazines, he happily answers questions about the Bahá’í Faith. His thriving career includes movie roles, like *The Last Mimzy* (2007), in which he played a science teacher who championed his student’s amazing abilities.

Rainn lives in California with his wife, writer Holiday Reinhorn, and their son, Walter.

Q. What is your favorite childhood memory?

Every summer, we’d go to Seabeck Bahá’í School in western Washington . . . It was the most beautiful campus . . . underneath the mountains. There were bald eagles circling around. We’d take long hikes in the old growth forests . . . It was there [and at Bahá’í winter schools] I really received my Bahá’í education . . . You’d get a sense of what the Bahá’í world could be like, because it was so diverse and all ages and all races and all types together, united with one purpose.

Q. What was the most challenging experience for you as a kid, and how did you handle it?

I was kind of a misfit, an outsider . . . I lived in a[n] . . . environment where it was all about being popular and playing sports. I was . . . into academics and music . . . I kind of hung out with the nerdy, freaky friends . . . That was the most interesting thing to overcome . . . to gain a sense of myself, that that was okay . . . When I



Left: Rainn got hooked on theater in his elementary school years.

Right: Rainn (right) and a friend have fun with a comedic dance sketch at a junior high school talent show in Seattle, Washington, in 1979.

found acting, when I could really express myself, I guess you could say I went from regular nerds to drama nerds. But it all worked out well. Now I have a great job that I love.

Q. Who or what has led you to so much success in your career?

I started being a professional actor at age 23, and it wasn’t until I was 36 that I started really having any *real* success . . . So it was perseverance. I just kept

working at it, trying to get better and better and better as an actor . . . You have to strive for excellence. That requires focus and commitment and all of those things.

^{*}Note to parents: Rated TV-14 in the U.S.

^{**}To learn more about William Sears, see page 18.



Q. How did your parents encourage your career?

They always encouraged me in the arts. When I started getting interested in acting . . . they saw how real my passion was, and how I was committed to being great at it and earning a living at it. And they supported me completely. They were concerned; you know, you're very, very lucky if you're able to earn any money at acting . . . I got the training and I worked very diligently at it for years and years . . .

Q. Who are your heroes or role models?

One of my favorite Bahá'ís growing up . . . was William Sears.** I went to hear him speak a couple of times when I was a kid . . . He was in the entertainment industry as well, and he was so funny and he was so warm, and he always had the right thing to say.

Q. How is having a sense of humor helpful in life?

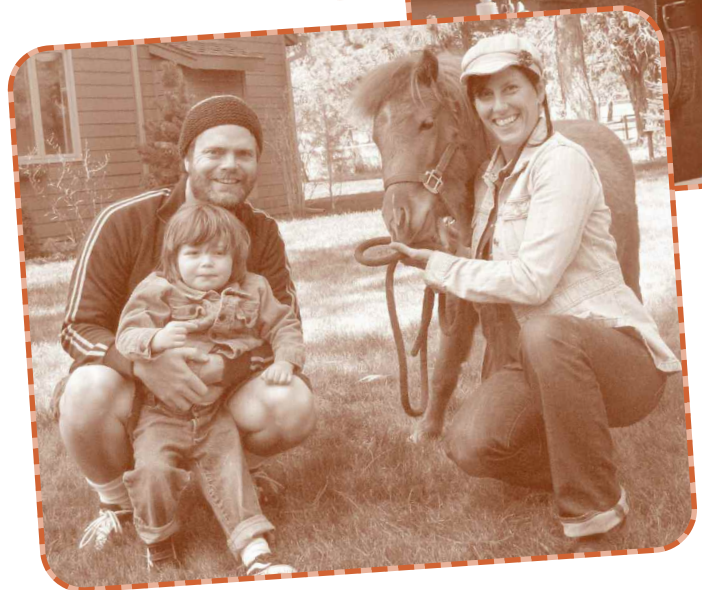
A good sense of humor gives you perspective. It helps you not take yourself too seriously . . . I think that God gives us gifts, talents, and faculties, and it's up to us to utilize them, and I was always the one who had the ability to make people laugh . . . To quote William Sears, "God loves laughter."

Q. How do you handle playing a character who does something you don't like or think is wrong?

My job is to be a storyteller. What's most important to me is the story that I'm telling . . . The character that I play is in service to a much greater story that is being told. If the story that's being told has a good message or has a nice heart to it . . . It's all in service to the greater picture.

Q. What virtues do you think are most important as an actor?

Patience, because you're always waiting for a job . . . I think detachment . . . You can get very caught up in a life of being an actor, and it's important to remember your



Top Left: Rainn brings his popular character to life in the hit TV show, *The Office*. **Top right:** Rainn's character in the movie, *The Last Mimzy*, displays a double-headed snake in his classroom. **Bottom:** Rainn with his wife, Holiday, their son, Walter, and their pet, Reba.

spiritual reality is your true reality. And whether or not . . . your career moves forward, or people like you, or you get good reviews—all of that . . . has ups and downs . . .

Q. What do you do when someone asks you about the Bahá'í Faith?

I'll probably judge . . . who they are and where they're coming from and just give them one piece of information. I usually like to start with the fact that Bahá'ís only

believe in one God . . . Leave them wanting more and improvise. Don't have a set speech . . . listen to your heart . . . Bahá'u'lláh guides you if you listen to your heart.