

Rheta Grimsley Johnson

Wednesday afternoon (3/16/17), Rheta Grimsley Johnson was in the upstairs portion of the Pensacola State College library. She came to talk about her newly released book and to share some personal details of her life.

A class of '77 graduate of Auburn University, Johnson has always lived in the South. Her first journalism related job was a columnist in the Memphis newspaper. She gave advice for writing; “grab them by the lapels and pull them into your story.” She also says it is necessary to have humiliation—to be able to go on book tours and sell your book. “Humiliation is the key to success.”

Johnson has won a number of awards, including National Headliner Award for commentary in 1985. “To see your work on a refrigerator is better than any Pulitzer prize,” says Johnson.

She goes on to say how people need coping mechanisms in life, like alcohol or religion. Hers was good music. She says “Good music is one of the verities. If you live long enough you need a coping mechanism.” “Songwriters do it best, saying the most in the shortest amount of words.”