Redefining What it Means to be Black

Abstract

Identity crisis plagued my psychological and physical experience when I was raised in Fall River, MA and Wilson, NC. Labels gained significance as I attempted to understand religion, policy, poverty, violence, and race in my household. I learned to believe in a white Jesus, but to fear the white man as well as my fellow black brothers. I was conflicted by the power of labels, and the role my black inferiority played in this world dominated by manmade labels. All labels come from finite beings who tend to inject their opinions and beliefs from a fear-based position. This perspective tends to skew the meaning of labels, to subjectively teach labels from a superior and inferior stance (e.g., whites are smarter than blacks and blacks are more athletic than whites). I had to redefine my purpose by questioning everything I ever learned and by rejecting everything that defined me up to that point. This new birth and new narrative provided me with a limitless power that ascended me higher than the limitations of what I defined blackness.

Learning Outcomes

- Participants will understand the intersectionality among blacks from different households.

- Participants will understand how being black served as something negative in my world.

- Participants will learn the role that policy, religion, and domestication played in limiting my power.

- Participants will use this information to redefine blackness and to become limitless in the process.

Program Relation to Theme

My talk is training people to see beyond the limiting belief of color, by inspiring my participants to tap into their inner spirit for limitless power. I will urge people to walk with a unifying faith and not by dividing sight.

James Williams, PhD, DM, CHE, CC

Brief Bio:

Currently, Dr. Williams serves as an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee and is the owner of UNMASKYTP, LLC, training domestic and international leaders to dwell in joy while seeking curiosity in every endeavor, using mindfulness, various leadership tactics, and one-on-one coaching to build brighter leaders for the future. He has worked with leaders in Spain, South Korea, Bulgaria, China, and at many Fortune 100 companies.

Dr. Williams is also a professional actor, performing as Uncle Tom in *Into the Wilderness (SAG/movie)* and starring as Waco Collins in *Murder Chose Me.* He wrote two books, *From Thug to Scholar: An Odyssey to Unmask my True Potential* and *How to Get Abs like a Bodybuilder but Eat like a Fat boy.* He has also published over 15 scholarly articles and delivered over 30 presentations on emotional intelligence, soft skills, sports, leadership, employee training, mentorship, hospitality pedagogy, human resource management, and personal and professional development.

Dr. Williams grew up masked, selling drugs at 13 years of age, and fathering two kids, dropping out high school, and living on the streets by 17 years of age. He was affiliated with the street gang, *BLOODS* and attempted to shoot someone prior to removing his mask of suffering and mindfully living in heaven on Earth.

Dr. Williams earned six degrees (two doctorates), Ph.D. from Iowa State University. He honorably served the United States Air Force, winning Airman of the Year. He played professional arena football for the Raleigh Rebels (2005-2006). Dr. Williams has industry experience in the dental, banking, sales, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, hotels, and education. He is also a *Certified Hospitality Educator and trainer.*

Dr. Williams has also spoke to over 100 unique audiences, and won numerous speech competitions for *Toastmaster's International*; served as a keynote speaker for Coffeewood Correctional Institution, public schools, colleges, fortune 500 companies, professional organizations. Dr. Williams was also recognized as a *Top 15 Emerging Scholar of 2019* by Diverse: Issues in

Higher Education. Dr. Williams also was a featured speaker for TEDx UTK in 2019. Best international mentor for Chinese Hospitality Education Initiative for the 2019 national championship in Shanghai, China.