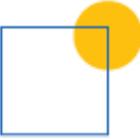




THE BLUEPRINT

Virtual Town Hall



Racial Injustice and Community Engagement: I Can't Breathe

The Blueprint Virtual Town Hall
September 29, 2020
Transcript

Moderator: Shawn Dove

Speakers: Ed Reed and Darrel Young

Shawn Dove ([00:08](#)):

Welcome, everyone. My name is Shawn Dove, and I'm the CEO of the Campaign for Black Male Achievement. I want to welcome you to The Blueprint town hall, re-imagining the narrative of the modern black man. We have an exciting and invigorating panel today. Joining me is Mr. Ed Reed and Darrel Young, and just a little background for Ed. Ed is a Virginia native with over a decade of experience in state and federal policy and not-for-profit leadership. He currently serves as the executive director at Fair Count based in Atlanta, Georgia. You will hear more about his story. We'll go into that. I want to keep it short. Darrel Young was born in Amityville, New York, Strong Island. He is a nine-year NFL veteran playing for the Washington football team where he served as team captain for three consecutive years and was recipient of the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award in 2014.

Shawn Dove ([01:18](#)):

The conversation that we're having today is a focus on racial injustice and community engagement. Just as we are diving into this conversation, we are aware of and have just have seen reports of another black man... We don't know if he is a dad, but he is someone's son, someone's brother that was shot in the back by police. Part of what we're focusing on today is just how imperative it is that researchers and policy makers consider the importance of hope in response to stressors experienced by African-American dads and not only hope, but the issue of agency, compassion, and love, also. I wanted to open it up and ask both Ed and Darrel just to give me a meaningful motivational minute, introducing yourself. I didn't go into your extensive bio, but we're going to start with you Darrel. Just introduce yourself with a meaningful motivational minute to our audience.

Darrel Young ([02:25](#)):

Absolutely. Thank you for having us, Mr. Shawn. I appreciate it. I am Darrel Young, former NFL player now, which we call NFL Legends, working up in the NFL office as the manager of player engagement and assisting



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THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

players in their transition in and out of the NFL. One of the things I like to do is give back and serve, and, as you alluded to in the intro that you gave, I was a Walter Payton Man of the Year Award winner, just for the community service that I did, because I am passionate about the youth and just giving back and giving young men and women an opportunity to experience what I experienced, just understand their brand, that they could take it to the next level. That's just a little quick spiel about me. I appreciate you.

Shawn Dove ([03:11](#)):

Ed, I appreciate you, also. I mean, Darrel. On to you, Ed.

Ed Reed ([03:16](#)):

Thank you so much, Shawn. Thank you, Darrel, for the intro there. I'm Ed Reed program director at Fair Count based out of Atlanta, Georgia, but we do have a national reach and a lot of national partners as well. But we're working in communities on a day-to-day basis to ensure that they are seen and heard in the civic engagement process, not only for 2020, but for the next decade and decades after that and generations after that to come as well. The last year and a half have been some of the most impactful work that I've done in my career around engaging black men through an initiative, we have at Fair Count called Black Men Count, which is reaching black men where they are to engage them around civic engagement and what that process looks like and what it can be in our communities on a day-to-day basis.

Ed Reed ([04:06](#)):

As a black man and raising a black son now who is 11 months old, it is important to me every day that we are engaging our brothers in this work that we're doing to ensure that some of the things that we see on the news, even as soon as early as this morning, don't continue to happen and plague our neighborhoods. When I see that, I don't want that type of future for the son that I'm raising. So, I look to other black men to join us in this fight to ensure that we're engaging in and building each other up so that we can be stronger through everything that's going on in our society. So, thank you so much. Looking forward to the conversation today.

Shawn Dove ([04:48](#)):

Great, Ed and Darrel. Thank you both for your leadership, and I can't go any further without lifting up the leadership of Kenneth Braswell founder of Fathers Incorporated that has put together this really timely platform, The Blueprint. He's just shown us on a number of platforms the importance of becoming masters of our own media and telling our own stories. The first question... And this is like a fireside chat, right? So, we're going to get in a where we can fit in. No raising hands. Just jump in. We just sitting around and kicking it. But for the both of you in this moment in 2020 has brought a year of disruption and unrest. What's the biggest stressor for black fathers during this time community unrest, COVID-19, and just all this transition?

Ed Reed ([05:50](#)):



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

Yeah, I'm happy to jump in first. I think you alluded to all of the things that are happening in 2020. Now we wake up and we're like, "Well, what could it be today?" There's something else. I think the message of, "I can't breathe," is something that resonates, I think, and is a premise for a lot of what we're seeing in our society right now. But we look at everything that's going on, and then we look at the global pandemic sort of coupled in that and not having an opportunity to serve on summer panels, talking to people that are seasoned, younger people, and really there's a mental toll that's being taken as a result of this pandemic and the social distancing that we're having to do. That coupled with the social unrest is not really a good combination. But one of the pluses and pros that I'm seeing out of everything that's going on is that we're also seeing a increase in the warrant wanting of civic engagement, particularly for black men and black dads for that matter.

Ed Reed ([06:55](#)):

And so we're seeing the things that are going on that are through adversity are negative in our society... We've seen them in Georgia. We've seen them in Wisconsin. We've seen them in all across the nation in terms of black men being murdered by the police. We're seeing people step up to the plate in terms of taking part of the civic process and enacting some policies and some at the local level, but at the state level as well. So, those are pros, I think, that are coming out of some of this social unrest that we're starting to see. We can only hope that that conversation will continue to happen. But the last thing I'll say is black men sometimes have a hard time grasping with... I think, mental health is something that we don't like to talk a lot about, right?

Ed Reed ([07:52](#)):

There's a stigma associated with mental health, but mental health is really key to ensure that our whole person, our whole body is enacting, that we're able to provide for our families, that we're able to be there for our children, we're able to show up, we're able to produce. I think we have to concentrate on that mental health component that we have through everything that's going on and make sure that first, that we're taking care of. What is it that helps us get through a lot of this social unrest? What is it that helps us get through everything that's going on with coupled with the pandemic. Once we can tackle that, we can start to address some of the other things that we're seeing in our society right now.

Shawn Dove ([08:33](#)):

Great. I'm so thrilled that you brought that up, Ed, because we talked about the civic engagement. But I think also what this year has done is demystified to a deeper degree for black men, black dads, to be able to say and get vulnerable and say, "I need help. I need counseling. I need therapy." That has been an upside of a lot of the duress that I have seen of this year. Darrel, I want to come to you and following Ed's lead, balancing the stresses and the pluses and opportunities. What do you see?

Darrel Young ([09:15](#)):

To be honest with you, when I seen COVID hit... I'm from a black area, so I seen what COVID did to our schooling



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

system. Our daughter's in kindergarten, now. She goes to private school. Most of the majority of her friends are in public school. They didn't have the opportunity in kindergarten to meet via Zoom because they didn't have the bandwidth and have the resources. So, I look at it like that. I said, "What can I do to be engaged in order to give back?" Here I am in a black town, but sending my daughter to a private school but through the benefits and resources where there was a lack of. So, one, in the process of figuring out what we can do for these public school so they [inaudible 00:09:56] areas, but, two, an opportunity for me... My fiance did a great job of homeschooling our daughter.

Darrel Young ([10:03](#)):

But also I stepped in when I could, when I wasn't on Zoom calls. I was teaching her the clock. I was teaching her some numbers. So, I think just being an engaged dad, and I don't think there was enough highlight of that during COVID because everyone talked about unfortunately the George Floyd situation. But let's go before that. There were dads who were literally doing this day-to-day while doing Zoom calls, while going to work, working from home. So, we need to highlight the black dads because we don't get enough of that attention. Everything we hear is, "He's in a single family home." What about the guy, the dads that are there doing the things. So, I think, from a plus standpoint, it's an opportunity, and Kenneth in the Fathers Incorporated group, they're doing a great job of just understanding what's the resources.

Darrel Young ([10:44](#)):

As you alluded to, black men, it's almost a sign of weakness to ask for help, and that has to change, now. I think because of COVID, it is changed in a lot of ways. You talked about the mental health aspect. There's nothing wrong with mental health. It just means that you just need to communicate with someone because it's teaching them how to communicate. I actually just read a book and the title was that Everyone Communicates but Few Connect. So, now it's our chance to talk about how we've connected with our kids, how we've showed the road to say, "Hey, this is how we've adjusted. This is how we've pivoted." So, all those things are highlights and those are transferable skills that I learned from sports one, but, two, just growing up within my community and the way my dad raised me. So, the opportunities just to highlight the dads who are there, who are present. It's unfortunate that we have that stigma, but you know what? If that stigma's our whole lives then we're going to overcome these odds and just be available.

Shawn Dove ([11:37](#)):

Great. Great. And you touched on something. You guys have both been great keying and queuing up questions that I had on my mind. You talking about your dad, Darrel, right? And if you can briefly share just what was your relationship and your experience with your dad, and then how does that impact and relate to how you're feeling as a father now with both challenges and opportunities? Then, Ed, we're going to come to you with the same question after that.



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

Darrel Young ([12:08](#)):

Yep. So, my parents have been married 44 years this year, and I don't understand anything but love. That's where I come from. My dad worked two jobs growing up. I was fortunate to play in the NFL, but that didn't define me. That came from my foundation and the work that my dad put in. He said his goal wasn't to [inaudible 00:12:26]. He can't complain about having a lot on his plate because his goal was to eat. So, that's my same mindset. I'm going to take care of my family. I'm going to be available. He also told me love is spelled T-I-M-E, so you're going to be present, which transferred into my life now with my daughter. I'm going to be her first hero, and that's my goal. I'm going to be the person that she looks to and says, "I love my daddy because of he did this, because he did this. I miss my daddy because of this." And I hope someone can hold her hand in the near future and say... Or not in the near future. She's five now, but in the future and say "You know what? This is how a man is supposed to treat a young lady."

Shawn Dove ([13:03](#)):

[crosstalk 00:00:12:59].

Darrel Young ([13:04](#)):

So, that's my goal now and then the opportunities out of that. Like I mentioned, my dad was in my life, so I'm going to be here for her. The opportunity now is to raise a young black woman in this world, given the stigmas that are present, showing her that you can get an education and there's more to life than just working in a place where you don't value. I'm not going to say there's something wrong with it, but we all have goals and where we want to go. I worked in Finish Line when I got cut in the NFL for a little bit. It wasn't what I wanted to do, but you have to take steps to get to where you need to. So, I'm always going to show her that your back's going to be against the wall a lot of the times. Because you're a black woman, you're going to be a strong woman. You're going to communicate, you're going to speak up, and you're going to be educated. That's one of the things. People don't like to see educated men and women in this world. And I'll just leave it at that.

Shawn Dove ([13:49](#)):

That's all right. That's a whole town all by itself. Ed, will be the same question, your personal story around your father, and how does that impact, relate to your current opportunities and challenges that you see as a black father in this moment?

Ed Reed ([14:08](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I'm so glad you asked that question. My father is an entrepreneur, pastor, a former elected official. So, you had talked a little bit through my bio and heard my story. Much of his life has impacted the course of my life as well. He was not able to go to college, but I was able to. He made sure that the systems were in place, that I was able to go to college, that I was able to go to college almost debt free. I saw him work 12-



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

14-, 16-hour days to ensure that that was the case. As you know, someone now having gone through the education process and out here in the career and working on my own and making things happen, I start to see aspects of his life and his career take part in mine. I start to see it in the way that I father my son, in the values that are instill in him. So, certainly having that figure there to be able to model something after was key and instrumental for me , and I see it really on a daily basis.

Ed Reed ([15:11](#)):

Again, the entrepreneurial spirit that he had drives me on an everyday basis, that you got to wake up, and you got to go get it. Something's just not going to be waiting there for you or given to you. You got to work hard to get to where you want to be. I talked about him being a man of the cloth and being clergy, and that really has founded me and grounded me. Everything that I do is grounded in my faith as well. Then the third piece being, I mentioned him being an elected official. His campaign was one of the first campaigns I ever worked on. From that point I knew... I didn't know that I wanted to be an elected official, but I knew that I wanted to be a part of the civic engagement process. I wanted to be a voice for the voiceless. I wanted to have an impact on the process. So, that has continued to drive me, and I want to instill those values in the son that I'm raising.

Ed Reed ([16:05](#)):

Something I want to go a little bit back to in terms of COVID-19 as well, and I think Darrel made a very excellent point about being home and taking care of your families during this time and not [inaudible 00:16:18]. I'm bouncing from room to room in the house now from Zoom call to GoToMeeting, whatever it may be to do meetings, but also balancing rearing a 11-month old with my wife as well at the same time. But I wouldn't trade it because, had we be in the office right now, he would be a daycare, and I would only get to see him in the evenings or the nights or drop him off in the morning. Now I get really the entire day, so I don't miss those milestones. I'm seeing him take the first steps. I'm seeing him say the words, and those things, I would have never gotten to see a lot of that had it not been for this pandemic [crosstalk 00:16:57].

Shawn Dove ([16:57](#)):

Upside of the pandemic. They're are some upsides.

Ed Reed ([16:59](#)):

Absolutely.

Shawn Dove ([17:00](#)):

Yeah. So, this is only a 30-minute panel, and we can go on and on. As both of you were speaking, black fathers, I'm a father of four. There's someone in my network of leaders, activists, a brother named Greg Corban, who's about two weeks away from becoming a dad for the first time. And this is for both Ed and Darrel. You guys are



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

fatherhood coaches, and this issue of injustice and community engagement and the role of re-imagining black fathers, for my brother, Greg, who is going to be a father... Due date in a week. What three things would you tell him, you would you advise him on, to just optimize his role as a father, particularly being a black dad?

Darrel Young ([18:05](#)):

For me, the first thing is, everything I've ever come across, everyone has the best baby advice, but one is do what's best for you and your lady. Because at the end of the day, you're going to be the one up at three in the morning. So, that's one. Two, understand what you went through and what you don't want your kids to go through. Now, there's some things that we can't control, but at the end of the day, it's based off, kids are taught. Kids are taught things. It's all about opportunities that are out there and we have to show them what's available to them. That's highlighting the good dads that are around, but also giving them that information that they need to understand that, "Hey, this is what's going to get you in trouble with some things, but here's how you communicate it."

Darrel Young ([18:46](#)):

And three, just being there. I mentioned earlier, love is spelled T-I-M-E, just being that dad that's in the house when your wife needs a break, when your significant other needs a break. Just being there. Just being present. Just saying the words, "I love you," reiterating that to your kids, to your significant other, your family, but kids remember that. My daughter now, every morning we wake up and we say, "I love you." It's the first thing we're going to talk about. That's the best feeling in the world. When I got released from the Panthers, "I love you," is the most important words to me because that was all I needed. It was all I need was that reassurance from my little one. So, those would just be the three nuggets that I've learned in my life that I would say this is how... I'm not going to say the best dads do it. This is the way I did it because I was taught this way.

Shawn Dove ([19:31](#)):

Right. Great. Thanks for that, Darrel. Ed?

Ed Reed ([19:34](#)):

Yeah, and to almost piggyback off of that. So, the three things I would say with the first being, being present. I think that is inclusive to the process, being present and being there for your child, being there for your significant other in the process is really important. I look at my involvement right now and I find myself, my wife telling me, it's like, "You really involved in this process more so than society will let you feel that men are normally involved in the process." And I don't think it's me. I think that that's actually the case where a lot of black men. We just don't see that. That's not the picture that we see that's depicted in society. So, being present I think is really important.

Ed Reed ([20:18](#)):



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

The second is... I talked about this before, but mental health and self care. I think it's really crucial for both parents to engage in that counseling, engage in some type of self care before having a child. Sometimes you can get caught up in everything else that's going on and you lose control of what's going on in yourself, which will then have a negative and adverse impact on your child. So, it's really important that your child sees you in a healthy light mentally, physically, emotionally, so that that doesn't portray a negative impact on them. And then third is communication. You know, we can't have enough communication throughout that process. Everything is going on, it's really important that you're communicating effectively with your significant other, your spouse, but also with your child, that you're teaching them little things. They do pick up on everything. I'm really learning that. [inaudible 00:21:13] 11 months. They pick up on everything we do. [crosstalk 00:21:15].

Shawn Dove ([21:14](#)):

Man, I listen, but they're watching, following, imitating everything.

Ed Reed ([21:18](#)):

That's right, and I like that folks over at Fathers Incorporated through their Real Dads Read program when the child's older, they're being present there reading in the schools. That's not something we can do right now as a part of COVID, but there are things we can do to read in our house right now, to be present in that way for our children as well. So those are the three things. Being present, taking care of ourself, the mental health and self care, and then the third, making sure that we're effectively and efficiently communicating to everyone in the process.

Shawn Dove ([21:47](#)):

Okay. And I'm going to stay with you for a second, Ed. And I know that we are winding down with our time, but I want to make sure that we get in opportunity for both of you just to share how your work, Fair Count, Darrel, the NFL, how does that intersect and elevate either on a policy or programmatic or both a positive way for black dads? Tell us a little bit about the work at Fair Count.

Ed Reed ([22:21](#)):

Absolutely. So, through our Black Men Count initiative, we look to engage black men in the process of being counted in the 2020 census. So, that is something that there are a ton of stigmas out there, and why we shouldn't be counted in the census? There are a lot of suspicions about the government, where your information is going to be used, but we never talk about the positive impacts on being a part of that civic engagement process. It's really opened up my eyes to this part of civic engagement and what myths are out there in terms of black men and how they feel about civic engagement. One of the things that we did pre-COVID was we started doing these events we call Black Men Speak, where black men would get together and they would informally, intimately just chat about the issues.



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

Ed Reed ([23:08](#)):

What we found is we thought that the census was something that it really wasn't. So, this was a real good opportunity for us to talk about the positive benefits of a census for our communities in terms of funding, in terms of political power, in terms of economic development and jobs and that type of thing. I think a lot of the black men left those conversations... And we've started to do those virtually as well. They left those conversations with a new found meaning for civic engagement and what it means to be a part of the process. So, for me as a black man, coming in to lead that initiative at Fair Count has been really impactful for me, and I think impactful for a lot of other folks as well.

Ed Reed ([23:49](#)):

But we started in Georgia, and we've subsequently launched a national initiative as well. We've been able to partner with thousands of black men to get them involved in this process, and we will continue to do so through the end of September. Then we're going to roll this into voting as well to make sure that black men are part of that process. So, a lot of it has been figuring out why is it that we're not a part of the process, because society would believe black men are not showing. Those statistics are not going to show you that black men are way more involved than their counterparts. Right?

Shawn Dove ([24:27](#)):

[crosstalk 00:24:27].

Ed Reed ([24:29](#)):

That's right. And so we're trying to make sure the data is on the forefront of the conversation, but also look into what the myths are about the processes around civic engagement and being able to really show the relational and direct impacts that civic engagement has on our communities. Oftentimes we're looking at a scenario and if we don't see the direct benefit to me at that time, we don't want to be involved in it. So, we have to really make it plain. You have to meet people where they are and make it plain and shown those direct impacts.

Shawn Dove ([25:02](#)):

Great. Great. I really appreciate how you've lifted up just the theme of this town hall of re-imagining black fathers. You were very intentional in lifting up the assets and that there may be a dominant narrative out there that's being told by others that black dads are not showing up, black men are not showing up. It's important that we tell our own stories. So, Darrel, I want to just hear from you with the NFL and the work that you're doing with engagement and how that's advancing whether programmatically or for a policy agenda of black fathers.

Darrel Young ([25:41](#)):

So, you talked about the dominant narrative. That's one of the things that is out there for NFL players, and we



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

think about that. The NFL, the black players represent 75% of the players on the field. When we talk about stereotypes and stigmas, predominantly we're talking about the young black men that make up this game. One of the perceptions is players have children in different cities. Players aren't taking care of their kids. They're not paying child support. So, these are stigma. And it could be one person out there.

Shawn Dove ([26:11](#)):

[crosstalk 00:26:12].

Darrel Young ([26:14](#)):

I can say this name because it was out there in public, and no disrespect to this player, but Antonio Cromartie on Hard Knocks a few years ago, they criticized him for not being able to name his children. But the real story is they made him repeat the script so many different times that it came off slower, and people said, "This guy doesn't know his kids." Well, that's not the truth. But when you tell someone to slow down and say it over, of course, you're going to think. If I tell you to say the ABCs and slow down and say it backwards, you're going to think about it twice. But those are the stereotypes that are out there, that players are not taking care of their children.

Darrel Young ([26:44](#)):

So, part of the initiative at the NFL is we reached out to Fathers Incorporated, some other fatherhood groups, where we said, "We need to be intentional about the approach, about how to engage with the players that make up this league. We want to give them resources. We want to talk to them about what it means to be a dad. We want to humanize players to fans because players can be represented by fans in stadiums on Sundays. Let's make sure that we're equipping them and empowering these players throughout the week, as well as they built up to that to be servicing a payment for us."

Darrel Young ([27:13](#)):

So, when we talk about that, we talk about engaging, having conversations with your children, whether black or white, being [inaudible 00:27:20] to have that uncomfortable conversation. The first thing my daughter said to me is, "Why is that guy's knee on his neck?" with the George Floyd situation. And I said, "I have to be honest with you." So, having those honest conversations is something that we do with our kids, and also "Daddy, you got cut. What does that mean?" Well, that's a hard thing to speak on, and now your kid is looking at you while you're looking at yourself as a failure. So, equipping them with what it means to them to be an engaged dad, being intentional. Have the information there, but also when we talked about the mental health and the tool kit and self care, all of these things that we want to put in place for players so when they go out on Sundays, they're their best selves. They represent the National Football League, but they represent their families. They represent what it means to just go out there and live a dream.



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

Darrel Young ([28:06](#)):

So, when we put players in these situation, we want to make sure we're developing the players holistically. That's the approach that player engagement has. When I was on a field three years ago it was very different than what it is today. Not going to say because of me, but because of the work that Troy Vincent passed down from the top and said, "Players is the number one goal. Players, as partners, is our number one goal in the NFL. What are we doing to provide players with the resources so when they're in the game, they feel like they're part of the shield and when they leave the game, they feel part of that brotherhood and that community?"

Shawn Dove ([28:36](#)):

That's great, and as a moderator, I didn't realize what time we started. I know that we have a tight timeframe, and I want to just assume that we have five minutes left. I'm going to take five minutes left. There are two pressing questions... I just got to get them out there, for the both of you in the last five minutes and get in what you can fit in. We may not be able to answer them both, but I wanted to put them both out there. The first is, we can't talk about black fathers without black mothers in the context of the community that we all live in. What's the intersectionality and the role and the partnership with black woman and black mothers, is the first half. The other half is, what would you do, Darrel and Ed, if you were 10-times bolder on behalf of black dads, this platform of re-imagining black fathers? What would you do if you were 10-times bolder?

Darrel Young ([29:47](#)):

That's a good question. I'm going to pass that to Ed, man. He got [inaudible 00:29:50].

Shawn Dove ([29:53](#)):

Lateral, you got the lateral, brother.

Ed Reed ([29:56](#)):

I would say I'd just answer the first question first. Black women are a crucial part of the conversation. One of the things I mentioned is that we started doing these Black Men Speak events where we're having these very intimate, informal conversations, and we were targeting black men. What we started to find is that black women would show up, too. We started to find that we had to include them as a part of these events and these conversations in a way, because sometimes they're the ones who are doing the scheduling, they're getting the black men to where they need to be. It was really eye opening for us to make sure that we were being inclusive in that way and that black women have always been that way in our community, in our households, in our families. So< we surely wanted to lift them up in the process and make sure we were being inclusive in that way.

Ed Reed ([30:47](#)):

The second part of that, if I was 10-times bolder, time is this something for me that I've struggled with, with



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

COVID-19 particularly in this whole telework, work from home thing. So, I would love to be more impactful or have more time to be able to do things on this front. I think if I had that time, I would be a little bit more bolder in the voice that I had in the conversation. So, right now I have a voice in the conversation and have the impact, I think. I think given additional resources, I would be able to have a greater voice, and I would be able to be a bit more bolder. But it's something that I think that it comes with growth and development and, I think, with time is well.

Ed Reed ([31:44](#)):

But certainly the last year for me, working in this work primarily, has opened my eyes even to some things that I didn't recognize prior to doing primarily work with black men or prior to being a black man myself. I may have had my own stigmas that existed or stereotypes that existed, and this has torn those barriers down. I get to a place where I could talk frankly and maybe a little bit more open about some of those experiences at some point, too.

Shawn Dove ([32:21](#)):

Great. Great. Lateral, but thank you for that, Ed. Lateral back to you, Darrel.

Darrel Young ([32:25](#)):

It's a forward lateral, backwards lateral, man, because that was a good answer, man. I don't know if I can advance on that. But one of the things, thinking about what my mother did for me growing up and what she still continues to do, and thinking about my fiance now, there's something about a strong black woman. You cannot replace that now. I'm not coming from a place where I don't respect all women. It's just more so I know what's in my household. I know where my foundation is, but I also knew my mom knew how to let my dad be a father. I think that's one of the things. She stepped in when she needed to, but she also said, "I can't raise a man. I can raise a boy right now, but I can't raise a man." I always asked her what she meant by that. And she said, "Sometimes you just have to get out of the way with things, but I'm going to come to you with a different perspective." And that's what she's been able to do with me.

Darrel Young ([33:13](#)):

So, I always have this two-pronged approach. My dad is going to be that type that say, "Hey, boy. You need to go do that." Whereas my mom would say, "You know what? Did you ever consider to think about it like this?" So, the approach is very different. I appreciate that because I feel like I can communicate with my dad what I need to know right now, but my mom is going to walk me through it." That's what my fiance's doing with my daughter as well, now. That question, if I knew then what I know now. Man, I would ask a lot of questions, but what I will do now is create opportunities because of the platform that I had for nine years on the field, create a platform where I feel like I can give back to the community and show my peers, people that I even look up to, that, :Hey, this is how I became a dad. This is how I'm engaging with my kid to ensure that we're going to be student



THE BLUEPRINT

REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE OF THE MODERN BLACK FATHER

athletes. We're not just going to be athletes around here. We're going to carry that [inaudible 00:34:04] piece to it."

Darrel Young ([34:03](#)):

So, now just really just creating conversations around what it means to be a black dad. It sparked the conversation I alluded to early and Ed alluded to with the George Floyd conversation, but now we need to take it to a deeper level. What are we doing for the millennials now that represent our communities to put them in the best situation to show them not to work at Finish Line, but how do we work in management at Finish Line? How do we get to those corporate offices? So, just having those tough conversations, being real, being honest, being intentional, but at the same time, just engaging with my peers to say, "This is what my dad did for me. What is it that we can communicate where we can all learn from each other?"

Shawn Dove ([34:42](#)):

Great. So I want to thank both of you, Ed and Darrel, for just showing up in your honesty. One of the tagline for the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, our ethos, is about love, learn, lead; and the two of you certainly emanated that ethos. I just want to let folks that are watching know that this is more than a town hall event. It's part of a broader strategy that Fathers Incorporated is rolling out. To use a football metaphor that in many ways we have to stop celebrating touchdowns. I mean stop celebrating first downs and start celebrating touchdowns. So, this is all part of a progress of re-imagining black dads on a policy front, community engagement front, and a programmatic front. I just want to thank both of you for joining us today, and I want to turn it back to my brother, Kenneth Braswell, the executive director of Fathers Incorporated.

Darrel Young ([35:54](#)):

Thank you. Thank you.

Ed Reed ([35:54](#)):

Thank you so much.

