

DuJuan McCoy American Warrior Speech- May 4, 2023

Ivy Tech Indianapolis Graduation Ceremony Speech

I have two short stories that I'd like to tell you: The first is about a server named BERAKET at the Wynn Steak House SW in Las Vegas.

My wife Tina and I have been frequenting SW steakhouse for almost 20 years now since they opened. We sort of stood out in the crowd of this 5-star Restaurant because there weren't many blacks that were there nor were regulars at the restaurant. Although we visited SW at least 7-8 times per year, they knew us on a first name basis. We'd developed a relationship with them over time. Service was then and still is remarkable.

Little did we know that a young black worker from Ethiopia, the only black that we ever recalled at the SW Steakhouse, was observing us from a far every time we came into the restaurant. He was a dishwasher.

As he continued to **BUILD EQUITY** in that company and that job with SW, he set his sights on becoming a server where he could make a better living for himself and his family in Ethiopia as well as perhaps meet some interesting people like Tina and DuJuan.

About seven years ago **BERAKET became a server and** came up to me and Tina for the first time and said 'Mr. and Mrs. McCoy I've been watching you for years and you are such an inspiration to me... I am from Ethiopia, and I came here to America looking for a better life and when I saw you in the restaurant regularly, I knew it was possible for me to become what I wanted to become and make a lot of money,' then he pointed to his pockets and said 'my pockets are now bulging. In my country (Ethiopia) there is a saying, "**would you rather go to Heaven or would you rather go to America.**" And the answer is America. Only in America can you go out and stake your claim on the great American dream the Great American Pie.'

We still visit SW steakhouse and now BERAKET has worked his way up to becoming a senior waiter earning well into the six figures while living his American Dream. He said... 'When I go back home to Ethiopia I am like the king because I made it to America the land of opportunity!'

Beraket's story is a great story of:

1. **Recognizing opportunity in America 'land of the free' with innumerable amounts of opportunities for everyone and anyone who has the desire and drive to indulge.**
2. **Building equity and relationships with companies via communication and personal goal setting.**
3. **Finding inspiration to help keep him motivated.**
4. **Most importantly he didn't play the VICTIM ROLE he played the WARRIOR ROLE.**

The next condensed story I want to tell you is about a young black kid from a single parent home that grew up in the Indianapolis westside neighborhood of Haughville. **His name is DuJuan McCoy.** I went to IPS schools from kindergarten-8th Grade and was bused out to Ben Davis HS in 1982. At that time that was my vision, and my experience of what education was.

But when I got out to Ben Davis, my eyes were opened to a new form of education, we had better athletic facilities, we didn't have to use a public park 3 miles away from our school to practice football. We had a track to run on. We had long jump pits. We had a speech and debate team which I signed up for. Wow what an advantage to be in this school with these many resources!

I'm now seeing a different life and redefining my personal image of what I thought education was.

I graduated from Ben Davis in 1985 then went on to Butler University and graduated in 1989 after changing my major four times trying to figure out what I wanted to do in the next chapter of my life.

In April 89 before I graduated in May, the Indianapolis Star wrote a full-page article on me about my accomplishments at Butler and the fact that I was one of handful of blacks that were graduating from BUTLER. Sadly enough 34 years later, that's still the case at Butler. In the article I said I wanted to work in Sales and Marketing when I graduated as I was graduating with a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in marketing and sales.

The Sales Manager at WTTV channel 4, a Mr. Bernie Souers- 68-year-old white man, God rest his soul, read the article and called me up and said, how would you like to interview for a sales job at WTTV channel 4. I said of course, I don't have a job yet. I interviewed for the job and on the spot, he said, 'I don't think you are mature enough for this job right now, why don't you get a sales job somewhere else but stay in touch with me.'

I said "No Problem" thank you for the feedback. I was BMOC at Butler and thought that college experience was part of the real world, but in fact it showed my immaturity as it relates to business and what Bernie Souers – a seasoned recruiter and firer of people, a proven manager, a proven leader, was looking for. So, I took a job with a company called Copyright out of Carmel Indiana, selling Copiers and Fax Machines. It offered a formal sales training program to teach me advanced sales techniques. **The System was called SPIN selling. Situation Problem Implication and Need selling. BTW Butler University had no placement office at the time, no internship requirements and basically did not help me find a job. It was all self-initiated.**

Six months after working at Copyright, I called Bernie again at Channel 4. Bernie said, wow I can't believe how much you've matured since our last conversation. I'd like to offer you a job as an Account Executive. I accepted in October 1989 and have been a TV guy ever since. I now have over 34 years of EQUITY in TV and have been voted the one of the Best TV Executives in all of America for the last 5 years.

During this 34-year process, my drive and ambition got the best of me. I moved my family around the country, and we've lived in, worked or owned TV stations in ten different cities in different regions of the country and worked for small medium-large media organizations. **Including the Conservative party leader Rupert Murdoch and FOX Television Stations.** I was the first African American to own a FOX affiliate in America, I've bought and sold 17 TV stations for 100's of millions of dollars. I've dealt with the largest banks, largest private Equity companies and media companies in America. I deal with government regulating agencies, and politicians. Now I've reached the pinnacle of my profession by owning WISH TV and WNDY in my hometown. I now have an opportunity to bring my profession full circle and become a public service megaphone with how we report on News for every community in Indianapolis. What a wonderful opportunity What a wonderful life! We are giving a voice to traditionally voiceless communities. What a gift and what an honor.

I tell you my story because I hope that I can become an inspiration to you from any of the many facets in my stories today that I've told you. I became a manager and leader of people in the workplace by title when I was 25 years old, I am now 56 years old next month. That's 31 years of hiring and firing and identifying common threads in people that are successful like BERAKET like Me.

And they are:

- 1. Recognizing Opportunity in America land of the free with innumerable amounts of opportunities for everyone and anyone who has the desire and drive to indulge.**
- 2. Build Equity and relationships with companies via communication and personal goal setting.**
- 3. Finding Inspiration to help keep you motivated.**
- 4. Most importantly don't play the VICTIM ROLE play the WARRIOR ROLE!**

Simply put:

It is your choice to play the Victim role or the WARRIOR ROLE.

Warriors always seem to find a way to persevere, they don't let anyone in their "Kitchen" they fight through, tough talk, they fight through seemingly systemic issues, they don't let others deter them from their goals, their mission or their purpose.

Warriors fight to the finish and they Hustle, "They Hit \$" and they never quit! Just like you all did to get your degrees and graduate today!

Congratulations class of 2023 Ivy Tech Indianapolis campus students. – YOU have all been WARRIORS- So FAR by completing this Chapter of your life!

Let's not rest on our laurels and just say "I have my degree," let's go put it to work and **DREAM BIG!**

So in unison let's see how loud we can get.... repeat after me!

IAM.... NOT.... A.... VICTIM...I AM ...AWARRIOR ...

I will continue to run my life as a warrior!

Give yourselves a big round of applause!

ONWARD and UPWARD in 2023!