

Derrick PlattFC

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SPEAKERS

De'Wayne Drummond, Leon Robinson, Derrick Pratt

D De'Wayne Drummond 00:09
Hey y'all. It's De'Wayne Drummond.

L Leon Robinson 00:12
And Leon Robinson here. Thanks for listening to Iron Sharpens Iron, a joint on grassroots community organizing.

D De'Wayne Drummond 00:20
Today we're talking to Derrick Pratt. Derrick is a lifelong friend of mine. And he's doing some very, very powerful work in Mantua. So I'm just really excited for all of you to get to know him.

L Leon Robinson 00:36
Derrick is owner and program director at PC Radio Live, and a lifelong resident, property owner, and business owner in the Mantua section of Philadelphia. He is also a co founder of weembracefatherhood.org. Over the years, he has facilitated countless education and life skills workshops on criminal record expungements, roundtable discussions on different topics, and a host of health, fitness and sports kinetics. So De'Wayne, is there one thing

that we don't know that we should know that's missing from his bio?



De'Wayne Drummond 01:10

That's a good question, Leon. You should know that Derrick is a stand up guy, and a good brother.



Leon Robinson 01:18

Well, it sounds like he's the kind of organizer that we want to talk to on Iron Sharpens Iron now. I'm not gonna hold it against him that he's a friend of yours.



De'Wayne Drummond 01:27

Hey, he is. He's a good friend. He's my big brother. And it's alright. Let's go on.



Leon Robinson 01:34

Okay, let's get this program started.



De'Wayne Drummond 01:37

Welcome to Iron Sharpens Iron. Derrick, thanks for joining us today. I know you are from the Mantua section of West Philly. I believe it's called down the bottom. So first off, how are you feeling today?



Derrick Pratt 01:53

I'm feeling spectacular. Thanks. How are you?



De'Wayne Drummond 01:57

I'm doing well. Well. Marvelous.



Derrick Pratt 02:00

Glad to be here. Okay,



Leon Robinson 02:02

Yeah, welcome to Iron Sharpens Iron, and thanks for joining us today. So, tell us how did you get started in community organizing.



Derrick Pratt 02:10

Um, basically, um, I was born into it, I will have to say, my mother did community organizing, my grandmother did community organizing. So you know, as a young fellow coming up here in West Philly, the Mantua section, the bottom as they call it, you know, I'm, I've always seen, you know, my mother and my grandmother, and different people from the community, doing things for the community, and it's just something that always stuck with me. So, um, once I was in a position to be able to do my part, you know, I, I jumped in with both feet. My mom, she organized a block party for years, called D-Up Day down Mantua section whereas though, they fed the whole community music, everything was was free. And my mom, she owns a variety store. So on the corner of Mt. Vernon Street, my mom owned that variety store back when black people had corner stores. But um, that's how I grew up. And my mom would do that every year, for our block and for the surrounding blocks in our neighborhood. And, um, I just picked up where she left off.



Leon Robinson 03:40

Was your mom a block captain?



Derrick Pratt 03:41

My grandmother was a black captain.



Leon Robinson 03:43

Okay, all right. Yeah, now we're talking. Now we're talking.



Derrick Pratt 03:46

My grandmother was a block captain. And this is years, I know I'm kind of dating myself. But that's when they had lunch programs. My grandma had a lot next to her house, and tables and stuff. And you know, she would feed the kids in the neighborhood. They would come by, you know, eating lunch during the summer months.

L Leon Robinson 04:07
Okay.

D De'Wayne Drummond 04:08
Can you tell us about your work managing the community connectors? Who are the community connectors? And what do you do as a mentor for them?

D Derrick Pratt 04:16
Well, I am the manager of the community connectors over at People's Emergency Center. And we're a program that's funded through LISC. And the Community Connectors is young people from the neighborhood or they don't necessarily have to be from the neighborhood but from any community between the ages of 14 and 21. We hire them. We mentor them. We teach them life skills. We help get them work ready and give them an opportunity to earn a paycheck while still you know going to school for the younger ones. So they help with our food distribution. Pre-COVID, they would do door to door surveys. They would engage with the community in arts and craft projects, deliver newsletters, attend community meetings and stuff like that to take notes.

L Leon Robinson 05:24
Derrick, what makes it work? Does the NAC play an important part of that program?

D Derrick Pratt 05:24
Well, actually, as the supervisor for the connectors, I lend the connectors to the NAC. You know, our connectors work closely with the NAC anything, any community organization, that you know help wDe support them. Okay. Okay.

D De'Wayne Drummond 05:56
Derrick, your motto is, "Why should you be content being a product of your environment when it's so much more fulfilling to be productive in your environment?" What does this mean? And how do you apply it in your everyday life?

D Derrick Pratt 06:15
That's simple. It means actions speak louder than words. A lot of people, you know,

become complacent in the environment that they're in and around, and they tend to do follow what's going on, you know, instead of leading, and, you know, taking that initiative to go out and do some things, and let your actions speak for you. Majority of my younger years, I spent it around older people getting wisdom. And, you know, now I am of age, I spend a lot of time around the youth sharing wisdom. So, you know, that's kind of where, you know, my, my slogan really comes from, like, you know, Why be a product of it when you know, you can go out here and help the environment flourish?

D De'Wayne Drummond 07:13
True, true. True, true.

L Leon Robinson 07:16
And following up on on Dwayne's question? What does one need to be a productive person in this environment? And with the lack of resources, is this a realistic expectation with the lack of resources?

D Derrick Pratt 07:33
Sure, it's about basic knowledge. And knowing your community, knowing your area, and knowing what you want for self. Knowledge of self is very important to me. So once you know what it is, and you know, your strengths, and what you can do, you know, then it's easy to recognize, where you may be able to help others fill in the gap. So, you know, for me, I pay a lot of attention to my surroundings, my environment. And I'm, I'm a try thinker, I was explaining this to De'Wayne a few days ago on my train of thought. So a lot of times, you know, I see myself and the person I'm speaking to, so I it from me speaking, I see it from them hearing. And then I put myself on the side, seeing that conversation. So, for me, it's about knowing your surroundings, and seeing what's needed. And, you know, filling that void.

L Leon Robinson 08:41
Okay.

D De'Wayne Drummond 08:43
So you are the co, you are the owner, not the co owner, you are the owner and program director at PCRadiolive.com. Can you talk about how you use this business to support the work in the community?

D

Derrick Pratt 09:02

Well, one, you know, with the way things are today. I have a music background, first and foremost. So that was one of the reasons to build the platform, but also build a platform that can get directly to the people. You know, I always listen to the radio. I was one of those kids who had my tape deck right there. You know, I'm a big hip hop, r&b fan. So when coming up, you know, hip hop wasn't playing on a lot of stations. So I was right there recording and so always paid attention to communications and how radio stations operated. So when I had the opportunity, and with you know, technology, you know, the power of the internet and all of that. Um, a friend of mine was having a deep conversation. And he was auditioning for a job on a local terrestrial radio station. And he didn't get it, you know, due to local politics, and I did the research, and I was like, Well, if they're not going to give us a job, then we're going to start our own station up. That was the fact that terrestrial radio stations are ran by the antenna. So you would always hear, you know, the local stations talk about their, the area that they're able to reach? Well, with internet radio station, you can reach the world, because anyone who has internet access, access to Wi Fi, you can tune in to internet radio. So I looked at it as as being ahead of the curve, and us having a bigger platform than terrestrial radio. Only thing we lacked was, was sponsorship. And because of social media, you know, the world was at our hands, you know, it was just more about reaching out, organically growing that following. And that's what we did. So we put together different shows. And we promoted them through our social media. And then we start having local organizations. And people come and we interview them to talk about what's going on in the community throughout Philadelphia. PC Radio stands for Philadelphia Coalition radio. And with this platform, I wanted to introduce Philly to the world. Because a lot of a lot of people love Philadelphia, I've been a lot of places, travel. And everywhere I go, I noticed that people love people from Philly, like, just on the strength that I told her I was from Philly. I've had my dinner paid for, stays at a hotel room, and everybody want to know, "Do you know Patti LaBelle? Do you know Will Smith?" One of the things that made me aware of is that pretty much anything that goes on in the world, someone from Philly has something, some connection to it. And I knew that the world had a liking and wanting to know what was going on in Philly. So we started the station. And in our station, we played 90% of Philadelphia based music. We're not just a Philadelphia based radio station, but we introduce build up your music to the world. So some of the artists that may not get played on terrestrial radio, or may not have the labels behind them and the marketing budgets and so on and so forth. We played a music. And that's what solidified this platform to be valuable. And I use that. Because a lot of people connect through music. And when we was interviewing the people, we started out local, but then we start interviewing people from all over and I just wanted this platform to be a platform for the next people to be heard, as well as to get the word out and what's going on and the communities across America.

L

Leon Robinson 13:40

Okay, Derek, um, I like how you use your social media, the social media, in your community organizing is a very good tool. And I and as a former journalist for two community newspapers in Germantown, I know what it's like to get people excited. When you as a photographer, I used to go out and take people's pictures and put it in the papers, then they would see the pictures in the paper, and that would heighten them, but it would heighten them into being involved in the community. You understand what I'm saying? So I know what it is because people get excited when they see themselves, when they see themselves working, or when somebody interview them, and they get hype. So that's the way to pull them in to the community kind of thing. So what what is it like? How do you think this plays an important part of this communication you got going on? Because you're gonna do what community organizing one way that's just out in the street or whatever, but you took it up a notch. You're giving people opportunity to be to be heard, to be heard. And once you be heard, then then you put them on the spot about Hey, what are you doing? What are you doing? You understand what I'm saying? So how has that been for you in terms of getting folks involved or whatever?

D

Derrick Pratt 15:01

Okay, so like you said, people are interesting because, you know, people want to get their music out there. Like I said, I'll cut into them about what are they doing and being more personal. But what it has done for me was, I started going to school by drive. And we did that through a kickball tournament. So kickball, you know, is a fun style game that we all probably played, which you don't see as much anymore. But regardless of the age, anyone regardless of your age, your physical or whatever, pretty much anyone can participate in kickball. You don't need that much equipment. Big red ball. You know, it's pretty the route is pretty basic, like baseball. So I started doing a kickball tournament. And I would get the shows, because a lot of businesses and companies were looking for ways to promote themselves and get their brands out there. So what I would suggest to him like a few clothing lines, local clothing line people that, you know, I helped create a bigger brand for themselves. I would tell them, hey, if you had the De'Wayne Drummond clothing, so I would say let's do the De'Wayne Drummond podcast. So now you're promoting your brand through music on your show. And what we do is I had seven to eight shows that's a part of our radio station. And all of them would sponsor a team.

L

Leon Robinson 16:48

Oh, okay.



Derrick Pratt 16:50

Here's what we have. Every year out in Fairmont park in a month for August, we do our kickball school supply drive, and the tournament, we have trophies and all of that. And we have people from the community participate in, we have people from the radio station, we have the artists, you know, we have artists out there performing. And once again, this is free food, free everything. But we will have people who came by the station with their brands sponsor, sponsor these. And I will put all of their logos and stuff want to share it the same way big corporations do. But grassroots, and I gave local businesses a platform to have their, you know, business and their brand on T shirts. It's getting promoted through my social media. Different shows within the radio station are talking about your brand. So it's constantly pushing it and putting it out there. And then all of the supplies that we collect at the kickball tournament, the following week, we would do a block party here in Mantua and giveaway all of the bookbag school supplies, book bags full with school supplies in them, you know, to the kids-- free food, you know, beverages, music, then we will bring in, like local talent. I don't know if you're familiar with the Dollar Boys. That's like a young kids group, a dance group. So we would bring them in, have them perform, you know, to show these kids, that it's other things that, um, or just enlighten them of other things that they could be doing. And by bringing, like the Dollar Boys, the Kill Switch, drill team, and stuff like that, we will have their organizers here. And then they was able to speak to the kids in our community and potentially sign them up. So we were kind of helping each other but at the same time, giving them more activities, and other ways of thinking, you know, for the young people inspiring young people, uplifting them, giving them



Leon Robinson 19:02

Yeah, giving them a sense of self worth about their community.



Derrick Pratt 19:07

Absolutely.



Leon Robinson 19:08

A self worth about their community. And that's a good way to use social media to do that. You know?



De'Wayne Drummond 19:15

Yeah, that's true. That's so so true. Derrick, you also are a co-founder of We Embrace Fatherhood. For our listeners who don't know, We Embrace Fatherhood is a coalition of West Philadelphia fathers, activists, artists, with a mission to publicly celebrate black lives and black fathers. We actually worked on this together. So Derrick, why don't you tell us about We Embrace Fatherhood, and then I also can chime in.

D


Derrick Pratt 19:51

We Embrace Fatherhood. Just in you know, the title in itself is something That that's very needed in our communities, you know, throughout. With a lot of things going on, young people need strong leaders, people to look up to, because, you know, just as well, as I just spoke of, you know, having an internet radio station and the influence of social media and the internet, like, it kind of became the mothers and fathers to our young people. So they're more in tuned into the cyber world and being raised by the cyber world than us. And we have a lot of, you know, mothers that's out here. And We Embrace Fatherhood is not something that's against mothers, but what it is, is to build and uplift and strengthen the man back into the families and for us to support not only our children, but support our women, support our women, and they need that. So, you know, for our brothers who may have made mistakes, who's coming home from jail, our young teenage fathers, you know, who never had a father and don't know how to be a father, but they're a father. You know, me and De'Wayne had an epiphany one day. We were just talking 12am in the morning. De'Wayne called me, you know, we always runnin' stuff back and forth with one another. And we were out doing, actually, we've been working on our food cupboard, food pop up, which we've been out serving food to the community for the last 40 weeks. And I'll talk more about that later. But that kind of inspired, and the jump off of We Embrace Fatherhood because we were working on that, and us being out here, you know, feeding the community, week by week, we seeing mothers show up, you know, with the children. We barely seeing men, we're serving this food at a playground. So we see the kids out here, really, with, you know. Some are with they mothers, and some of them just here coming up on their own. And De'Wayne, you know, we had a conversation. Father's Day was less than two weeks away. And we were just talking about the young men. We were talking about community, you know, we were talking about food insecurities. And we start talking about a project that I was a part of, called, "From the Root to the Fruit," which is done by photographer, Ken McFarlane. And this project, and exhibit, it's now on 41st, in Haverford, on the old trolley company building. They had placed all of these images in the windows of that, and developers came in and bought that property. So you know, De'Wayne being a civic leader, community leader, um, I had asked him like, "Wait, what can we do to preserve this work? This work has to remain in our community because it's so inspiring. It's showing men in different generations of their of their children. And that kind of sparked the whole conversation, which led to We Embrace Fatherhood. And like I said,

it was two weeks away from a Father's Day and started the conversation was, "How do we preserve this artwork? Do we step to the investors and ask them to, you know, leave this up?" You know, redo their property, but leave, leave this up, because normally you don't see men. Or a lot of times when you see large images of people on a wall, they're dead." So with this, everybody that's a part of the Root to the Fruit was here living still breathing. And I think that this meant a lot for our community to not just, you know, only be put on a large a large picture of black men on the wall, you know. So, we talked back and forth, and one of the ways to preserve it was to either deal with the developers to keep it there or find other places throughout the city or in our community to keep it up because artwork is so inspiring. So okay, I have more, but I'm gonna give De'Wayne a plug to interject because I don't want to take the story too far. Because...

 De'Wayne Drummond 25:24

No, no, you hit. Derrick, you hit a whole lot of points. But one thing that really, really stuck out to me, like even at the food pantry at the playground, that you said this one word, well a phrase. You was like, "Let's circle up." And I saw a bunch of men coming in the circle that couldn't be broken. And we only had two weeks to pull off the first event on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in 2019, during a pandemic, and it was it was for black men, black men, black men.

 Derrick Pratt 26:11

Not only the first event, one of the only events.

 De'Wayne Drummond 26:14

The only event. Yeah.

 Derrick Pratt 26:16

It was the Root to the Fruit Project that we partnered with the Barnes, and it was Black Lives Matters Homeless campus is the only thing during this pandemic that took place on Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Go ahead, De'Wayne.

 De'Wayne Drummond 26:28

Yeah, yeah. And even even down there with that, that black lives matter. For for housing, affordable housing, like even walking up and down that Parkway. And just seeing that movement. It just, it just made me realize that we did, we pulled off our movement in two

weeks. But we was already a part of a movement. I used to always see Derrick in the schoolyard, you know, dropping his son off for school. And, you know, it was always a connection between me and him. And and he just branched out. It was other people just like us, fathers that cared. And I think that that was so powerful. And you know, it was unprecedented. And it still is still more to come still.

L

Leon Robinson 27:26

Yeah, you know, you guys, we talked so much today, we talked about a lot of things here. And we talked about so much that we got to have part two of this. You know, we definitely have part two of this. And so before we wrap up with this, Derrick, tell us what makes a successful community organizer? What is engagement? You might have already explained it in your last conversation, but I want to ask you what makes a successful community organizing event engagement? What works for you?

D

Derrick Pratt 27:58

Just like minded people coming together. As Wayne spoke, we were standing out there, we circled up. And in that circle, it was, you know, black men and or just men in general strong wielding men who believed in the strength of family, who believe in inspiring and helping other people. So when we circled up, it was me. It was Mr. De'Wayne Drummond. We had Mr. Rob (Kapowitz?), and we had our brother Ken McFarlane. So one thing that we all had in common between me, De'Wayne and Ken, all of our kids went to school together. And we all see each other each morning in that school yard. So we was one of the few, like, you rarely see men in the schoolyard. You know, unless they take the NTAs or whatever else, but we was there. And that's one of the things that we all have in common. But when we circled up, and we were able to share all of our thoughts, you know, one thing I'm big on I, I use a lot of quotes, and my thing is we we was giving two ears and one mouth for a reason. So, always good ears always give your the same respect as your mouth. I mean your mouth to say respect his ears. You know, standing in that circle, as much as I put out, I was willing to listen. And that's how we were able to do that the exhibit on the parkway. That was just the start the inception of we embrace fatherhood. And we have done so many things since then. And we got so much more work to do. So.

L

Leon Robinson 30:11

Oh, great, great, great man. So we're going to wrap up this interview and we're going to ask Dwayne to ask you one last question, De'Wayne.



De'Wayne Drummond 30:20

So, Mr. Pratt, when I said this phrase, and since you'd say you like quotes, what does this phrase iron sharpens iron mean to you?



Derrick Pratt 30:34

Um, I mean, I could go on and on about, you know, I'm just being around like minded, educated, smart people. So once again, like my quote, just said, If you give your ears the same respect as your mouth, the thing that you're able to get from the iron, that's opposite of you, will make you greater. And the things that you say, will hopefully sharpen them and make them great.



De'Wayne Drummond 31:08

Mm hmm.



Leon Robinson 31:10

Okay, all right. Thanks a lot. And we're going to close out this interview. And, Derrick, I want to thank you. Thank you for coming along and joining us, it's really good. We saved the best for last. So I want to thank you for that.