

PORTRAYAL & PERCEPTION

AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN & BOYS

Episode 2

Owning It

Ever want to pursue an idea and make it into a **business**?

In this episode, WQED host Michael Bartley shows how **African American entrepreneurs in Pittsburgh** are not only experiencing financial success, but are inspiring the future business leaders of tomorrow. Entrepreneurship provides a wealth of opportunities in all industries and in a variety of locations. Jamie Wallace and Justin Strong started their restaurant and lounge businesses in the up-and-coming East Liberty neighborhood, while Gregory Spencer and Charles Toran take their engineering and chemical companies beyond the Pittsburgh area, with customers across the country and around the world. The men featured in this episode have overcome a variety of challenges to pursue their dreams of self-made careers while inspiring the next generation of African American entrepreneurs.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Portrayal & Perception: African American Men & Boys is a series of community-based television programs produced by WQED Multimedia showcasing positive media profiles of successful African American men. Sponsored by The Heinz Endowments, this series strives to inspire discussion, elevate portrayal, and clarify perceptions of African American men and boys in the community. This guide provides further information, discussion questions, and resources for students or groups to explore the topics highlighted in each episode.



FOR TEACHERS

These guides are intended for use in sociology, information technology, media literacy, and social studies classes. Questions are geared for high school students, grades 9-12.

To be an entrepreneur, you have to be a risk-taker to a certain extent: calculated risk makes a lot of sense.
– Jamie Wallace

Biography



Gregory Spencer

Neighborhood: Oakland

Occupation: President & CEO of Randall Industries, LLC

New Project: Furthering export market in Shanghai

Has the show impacted your work since airing?

My segment focused less on my business and more on how Black business executives perform community service work and consistently give back to the community. While the show did not directly impact my business activities, it did provide exposure to me and the volunteer work that executives do every day in terms of working with young black men and going back and respecting our past.

Who was your greatest mentor and how did he affect your life?

My pastor while in high school and college was my greatest mentor. Dr. William S. Hopson. He was blind at age 3 but found pleasure and appreciation in the most basic things in life. He would always say, "It is a great day to be alive." Reverend Hopson taught me to respect everyone I meet, to watch them closely and to listen to them carefully. I used to smile to myself when he would often refer to things as if he had sight. At the time I couldn't appreciate that he "saw" more than any of us.

What do you think are the greatest challenges and opportunities African American men face in the world today?

I think our best challenge and opportunity is for all African American men to receive and value education. As a society, we need to find a way to take the stress out of the educational process for our young black boys so they can appreciate the learning and connect their education to their everyday life.

What responsibility do you think African American male leaders have to the next generation?

African American males have an awesome responsibility to the next generation, particularly the males. That is why mentoring is so important. It involves transferring knowledge, caring, and conveying a sense of pride and history to the younger males.

Don't let anybody put you in a box. If you have a dream, go for it.
– Gregory Spencer



Discussion Questions

*It's not how you start
the game, it's how
you finish.*
– Joyce Ellis

CREATE YOUR OWN MEDIA!

Teachers, help your
students create
their own media.
Download the
[Media Guide](#) and
[Common Resources](#).

1. What ideas of your own do you have for a business? What are three things it will take to make it happen? List your aspirations AND your next tangible steps.
2. Who are the entrepreneurs you look up to?
3. How important are strong relationships and positive role models to success?
4. What stigmas are attached to people who grow up in housing projects? What counteracts those stereotypes? Consider the question on a personal, neighborhood, and cultural level.
5. Conduct a brief case study of an example of entrepreneurship in your community. What effect can community investment have in areas of socio-economic distress?
6. The LeMoyne Community Center is a great resource for the residents of Washington, PA. Does your neighborhood have a community center? What services and resources does it provide for its residents?



FEATURED ORGANIZATION

LeMoyne Community Center:
www.lemoynecommunitycenter.org

Resources

A Guide for African American Entrepreneurs (PDF): Publication of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc., intended to provide fundamental guidance on the process of starting a business — www.tinyurl.com/p96fo8r

Black Founders: Organization that strives to empower Black entrepreneurs and to provide access to advice, mentorship, and funding in the field of technology — www.blackfounders.com

Black Innovation and Competitiveness Initiative: Project that seeks to leverage existing assets within urban American communities to create new opportunities and ensure competitiveness in the 21st century global innovation economy — www.blackinnovation.org

JumpStart: Non-profit organization accelerating the success of diverse entrepreneurs, their high-growth companies, and the ecosystems supporting them — www.jumpstartinc.org

Minority Business Development Agency: Government agency that provides business tools, educational opportunities, research, and funding to minority entrepreneurs — www.mbda.gov

Corporate Diversity Associates: Minority talent acquisition firm that offers support services for corporations and institutions across the country — www.corporatediversityllc.com

Black Business Association: National organization founded in 1970 that works with emerging black-owned firms to help them gain access to long-term contracts and expansion capital — www.bbala.org

National Minority Supplier Development Council: Global council for advancing business opportunities for Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Native American business enterprises — www.nmsdc.org



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