

4-18-2018

Paying It Forward: Dion's Story

Dion Sampson

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/facing_stories

 Part of the [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Community-Based Research Commons](#), and the [Place and Environment Commons](#)

eCommons Citation

Sampson, Dion, "Paying It Forward: Dion's Story" (2018). *Facing Dayton: Stories*. 48.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/facing_stories/48

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Facing Dayton: Neighborhood Narratives at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Facing Dayton: Stories by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlange1@udayton.edu.

Paying it Forward: Dion's Story

STORYTELLER: Dion Sampson

I have lived in Dayton my whole life. I love my community so much that sometimes the issues we have to deal with make me want to leave. Then my wife reminds me that no matter where I go, I'll find some issue that I'd want to fix, so I stay. I have lived in Dayton long enough to realize that while the communities vary, the people don't. Everybody has needs, gifts, talents, goals, dreams, and experiences—this connects us. Although we are interconnected, we are still unique. We cannot forget that! The fact that I have my own set of unique fingerprints and you have yours is an indication to me that we are both unique.

MY EXPERIENCES, MY CHILDHOOD, AND MY LIFE WERE GIVEN TO ME AS A GIFT FROM GOD, THEY'RE

WOLF CREEK



MY “FINGERPRINT.” THEY’RE A REMINDER THAT I HAVE SOMETHING UNIQUE TO GIVE TO MY COMMUNITY THAT ONLY I CAN GIVE. Yeah, I had problems, I had pain. But man, who doesn’t? Life is rough, I agree, but that is not an excuse to just lay down and die. Our pain connects us to each other, it makes us human. If we let our pride build walls to people who see the Light that is within us, we will never grow from that pain. I would’ve been in jail or dead if I didn’t grow out of mine.

Yeah, I didn’t formally meet my dad till I was in my 30s. I got married at 35.

Yeah, I lived in a single parent house with my mama and had two different step fathers.

Yeah, I didn’t know what it was like to share a meal at the table with my family.

Yeah, I never had any man verbally call me “son” until I was on my way to college.

But it only took one!

It took one person to open my eyes and realize that it’s not all darkness and pain that surrounds me. That man was Lloyd Martin, my band director at Dunbar High School. He saw my 1.6 GPA and told me I was going to college. I thought he was crazy. I said, “You seen my report card?” He told me, “This report card is not an indication of who you are.” That was all it took. It changed my life.

I went to college from there, Central State University. I had another band director, Dr. James Oliver, who kept me driven to succeed. I was able to travel internationally to places I would have never thought I’d see. It was transformative. It was my senior year when I decided to drop out. **THERE WAS A LOT OF VIOLENCE IN DAYTON AT THE TIME, AND I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. I CREATED “BROTHERS ON THE MOVE” IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET SOME YOUTH OFF THE STREET.** The first year I was paired with 25 young men who were failing school, in one year, we were able to help them get to B’s and C’s. After the first year, we moved into four schools, doing the same thing. I discovered my passion was connecting with youth and adults. I ended up in education and have been there for over 20 years.

Since then I have become many things: a husband, a dad, an educator, a youth and college pastor, an elder of a church. **HOWEVER, MY PHILOSOPHY HAS REMAINED THE SAME: MEET OTHERS WHERE THEY ARE AND GIVE THEM THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO EMBRACE THEIR PAIN AND DO BETTER FOR THEMSELVES.** I look toward Jesus for support. He was a master at it. He met the need. People were hungry and he fed them, people were sick and he healed them.

The day I learned Mr. Martin died—I was devastated. I decided that living is my way of paying forward what Mr. Martin had done for me. **I SERVE MY COMMUNITY BECAUSE I AM CONSTANTLY REMINDED OF HOW MUCH GOOD MY COMMUNITY HAS DONE FOR ME.**

So overall, life is a blessing.

THANKS, MR. MARTIN, YOU’RE A GREAT GUY.