



The Building Community Institute

4870 S. Lewis Avenue, Suite 203
Tulsa, Oklahoma, 74105
888-388-6348
www.cliffontaulbert.com

May 2008
E-Newsletter

"The Foundation"™

COMING SOON

To comment and connect with others please
visit us at:
<http://thepowerofcommunity.blogspot.com>

Clifton L. Taulbert's
Monthly e-Video Series*:
Unleashing the Power of Community
please call: 888-388-6348

* Video Series is a year-long subscription based
service, sent directly to your email.

SHADOWS THAT HAUNT US

The last time we talked, we were in Arkansas and this time, we have moved further north and west, to Des Moines, Iowa, to Drake University. As usual, I was excited over the possibilities of sharing the stage with a fellow writer. My visit would give me an opportunity to realize a conversation that Jim Autry and I had started nearly fifteen years ago in New York City. Jim is the former CEO of the Meredith Corporation and a white southerner. We both grew up during the time of legal segregation. However, our paths crossed for the first time in New York City. Jim was being honored by the Poets and Writers Society and I was an invited guest. And here we are now in the 21st century, 2008 as guests of Drake University and Iowa Public Television during the most talked about presidential race in America's history... to hold a talk on race and our southern journey in America. We had promised each other to hold this conversation fifteen years earlier.

Our first meeting almost didn't happen. I was excited to be a guest at this prestigious event. While being there, I was well aware that the majority of the people in the room did not look like me. I tried desperately to pretend that I was totally comfortable. I held my drink with a fierce hold that almost made my fingers feel as if they were part of the glass. And when Jim was introduced, I was surprised that he was a former Mississippian. His references to the south surprised and pleased me. I could not wait to shake his hand. And when it was time to do so, instead of a mad dash to his reception line, I slowed down. You see, while the crowd was gathering to praise him, all my memories of growing up black in the south came to the forefront of my head. I stopped in my tracks! I didn't want to be embarrassed or ignored by a white man. I almost walked away.

I stood alone for awhile and then finally mustered the courage to break through the conversations that were taking place in my head. I am glad I did. We had both matured beyond our southern upbringing. But his color and his accent and my shadows had told me otherwise. They were right at one time, but wrong this time. A friendship developed and a promise was made, one that materialized years later at Drake University.

The hope for America and for workplaces and our learning places will be our ability to hold honest conversations; thus creating environments where all are anticipated and welcomed. Don't be held captive by your past, the future could surprise you. To hear our PBS conversation fifteen years later, I invite you to your internet connection:

www.iptv.org/intelligenttalk