

**Podcast Title: Leaning to Dream Again****Host:** Cassy Ndembe**Guest:** Rev. Courtney Carson, Vice President of External Relations at Richland Community College, Decatur, IL.

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**Podcast Episode Description**

In this deeply engaging conversation, Rev. Courtney Carson, Vice President of External Relations at Richland Community College, shares his remarkable personal journey from challenging beginnings in Decatur, Illinois, to becoming a transformative leader in education and workforce development. The discussion highlights the innovative Enrich program at Richland, emphasizing trauma-informed practices and holistic education that extends beyond job training to life transformation.

Rev. Courtney Carson discusses pivotal moments in his life, including mentorship from Reverend Jesse Jackson and Pastor Jack Greenwood, that reshaped his trajectory and worldview. Rev Carson outlines how his challenging past experiences with poverty, expulsion from high school, and personal struggles deeply informed his current passion for providing accessible and meaningful education that prioritizes emotional intelligence and personal growth.

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**Episode Overview****Three Key Takeaways:**

1. **Holistic Education:** True education goes beyond skill acquisition; it involves emotional, psychological, and spiritual growth to create sustainable life success.
2. **Trauma-Informed Approach:** Integrating trauma-sensitive practices in education significantly improves students' ability to succeed professionally and personally.
3. **Community Transformation:** Helping one person holistically can transform an entire household and, by extension, uplift the entire community.

4. **Importance of Mentorship:** Mentors provide pivotal moments that can dramatically alter life trajectories.
5. **Positive Reinforcement:** Creating environments that reinforce positivity significantly influences individual and group success.
6. **Accessibility and Belonging:** Accessible education pathways foster a sense of belonging, essential for sustained personal and professional growth.

## Resources & Relevant Links

- Richland Community College: [richland.edu](http://richland.edu)
- Enrich Program at Richland Community College
- Rainbow PUSH Coalition: [rainbowpush.org](http://rainbowpush.org)

## Next Steps & Takeaways for Listeners

- Consider exploring trauma-informed educational practices within your institution or workplace.
  - Reflect on personal or organizational approaches to mentorship and holistic development.
  - Connect with local initiatives like Richland's Enrich program to support community development through education and workforce training.
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  - Future Vision for Decatur – Positioning the city as a leader in clean energy, education, and workforce development.
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