



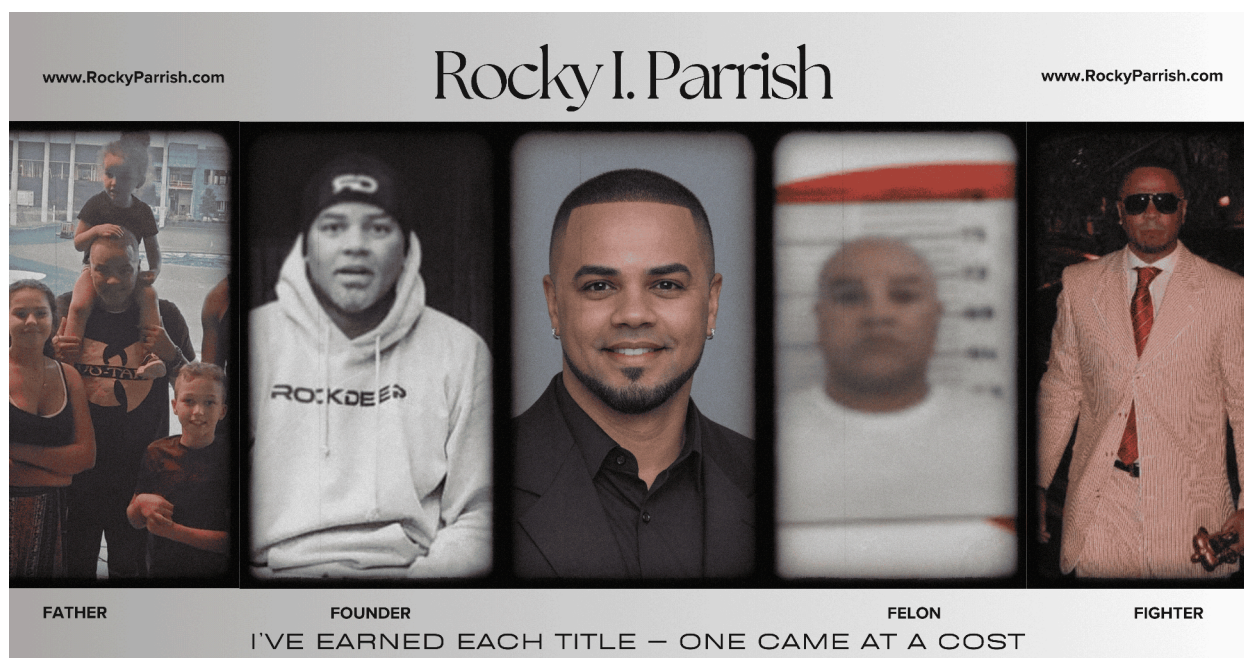
MyStory

The OG Uncle Drew

6th Blog Entry

By Rocky I. Parrish

12.26.2025

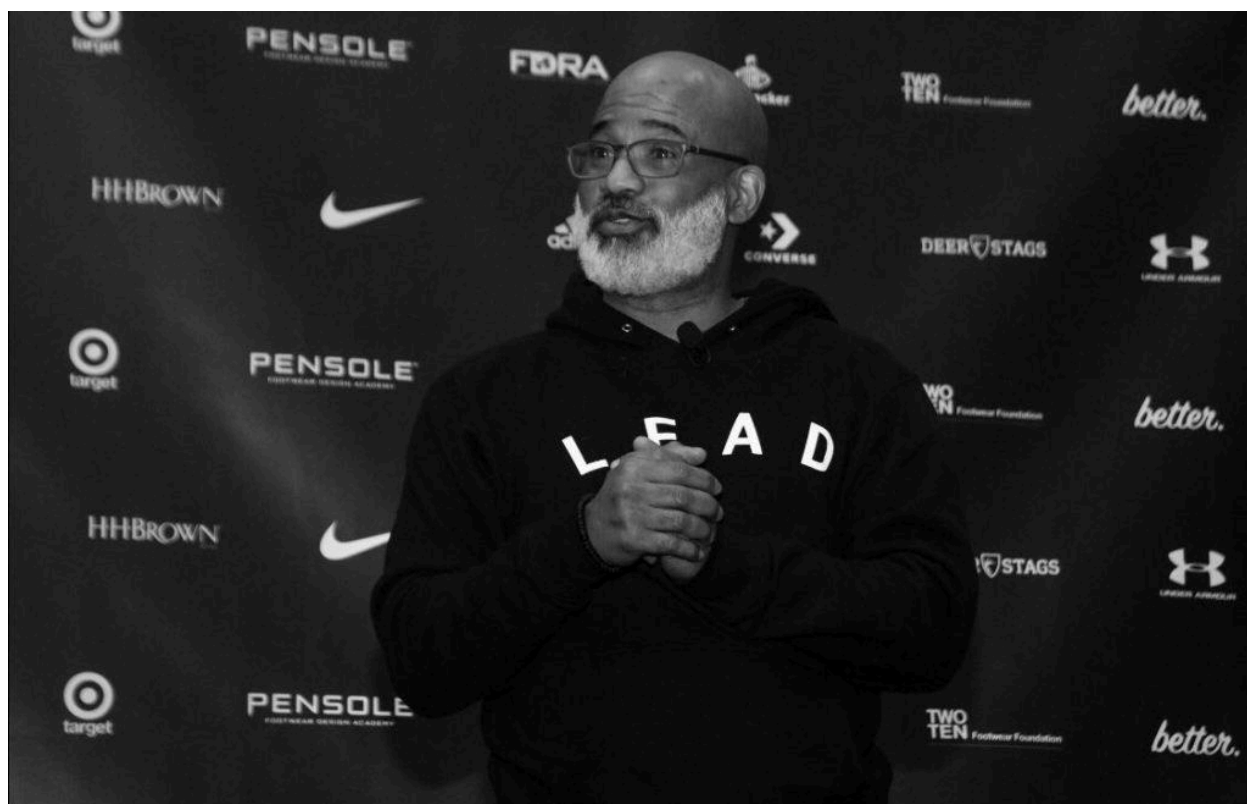


I have not written a blog entry in quite a while. So much so, I decided to start putting dates on my blog entries to remind myself more than anything. There are several reasons I began doing blog entries, and one of them was for my own mental well being.

For those that are new to me or my blogs, writing is my original love. I have always loved writing, and although I do not think I have written a blog entry about why that is, it is what it is.

Another reason is to share. [Share my journey unfiltered.](#) The people who I came across, those who helped shape me, and those I am personally inspired by.

After watching one of [his latest interviews on YouTube](#) , I knew I had to push all my current projects to the side if just for a few hours and share the [Original Uncle Drew](#) with the world. Today was one of those reminders that certain people are not just part of your story, they shaped how you move.



So here is what I am going to do. I am going to tell you how we met, the moment he showed me what real leadership looks like in rooms that decide the culture, and why I am still learning from him right now.

How We Met:

Let me take you back to Nike, to the first time I met Drew, and the moment I realized I was in the presence of someone different.

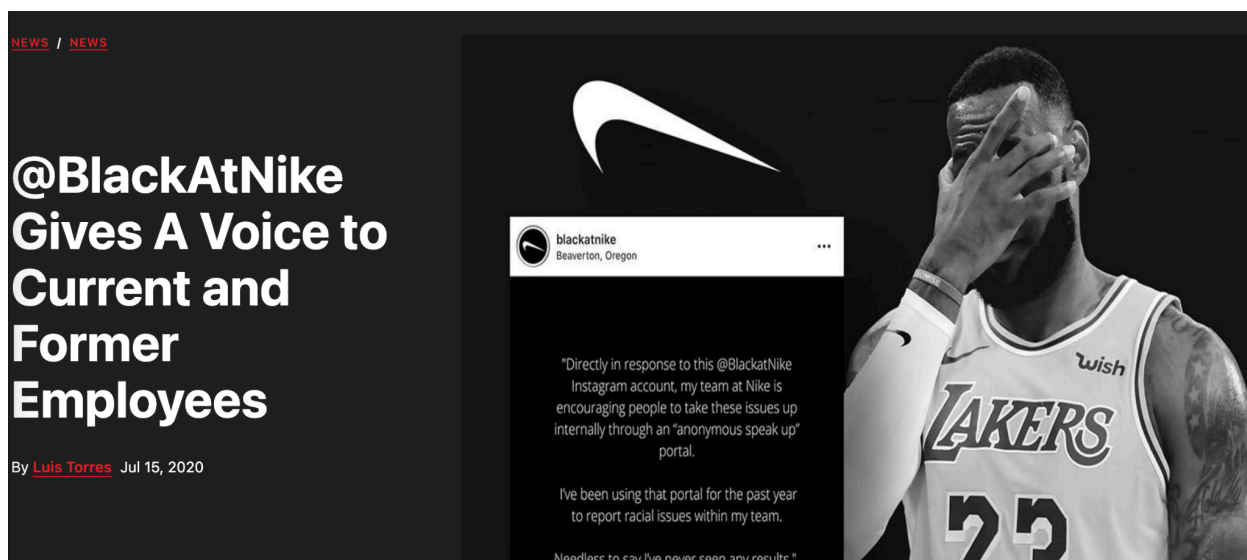
My first day on the Nike Campus, I had met Esaie Witherspoon who was also from the DC area; more specifically DC Proper. Esaie worked in the Nike Outdoor / Trail category which included infamous lines like ACG (All Conditions Gear) and of course that includes the Nike Goadome which was made popular in our area (not Baltimore).

But I digress and am sidetracked already! Shout out to Esaie!

Esaie took me around campus to meet all persons DC **Urea** / (Area) first. Then all persons black.

This is important to know for several reasons. Like prison when you first arrive, everyone seems to know what area you are from, and one or two folks will take you around and introduce you to everyone else, and give you house shoes, sneakers, toothbrush, and whatever essentials to get you to your first day of commissary. They give you the lay of the land and the need to know info.

Let me say this clearly. I am not comparing Nike to prison. I am comparing the social mechanics of being new in an ecosystem where you can step on landmines if nobody shows you the real rules. [But I'll also say Nike has issues as well.](#)



At Nike, Esaie did the same for me, because you will not find many who look like us on campus. That was pretty helpful within itself.

At lunch in the Mia Hamm building, Esaie also introduced me to a few guys that either were not at their desks when we went by, or whatever, and one of those dudes was none other than Drew Greer himself.



Cool dude, nonchalant, but funny like the rest of us from any other hood around the US. I did not know his status at Nike at the time, but you could tell there was a reverence and a high level of respect around the square table we all sat at. He, like others, invited me to stop by his spot when I got time, and I visited him in his office later that week.

What I realized that day was that while everyone else I had met were in cubicles or community setups with desks gathered in an area in the Mia Hamm, Jerry Rice, Ken Griffey Jr, and Pete Sampras buildings, this dude was in a corner office across campus, I believe the Nolan Ryan building.

When I arrived at his office he was on the phone, but waved me in and pointed at the couch and chair across from him. The office was dimly lit with a relaxed feel to it. This was my official work introduction to Drew, because whoever was on the other end of the call was getting chewed out, or so you thought, because Drew does not mince words. Ever.

When I say one might think the person was getting chewed out, Drew ends the call with pleasantries and a strong sense of support as he told whoever it was, "I believe in you, that is why I put you in this position."

I do not know if Drew remembers that at all, but it stuck with me. I met someone who was like myself in a ton of ways when it came to managing in my previous worlds. Be direct. Leave no gray area. Empower your people.

We chopped it up for about an hour, and Drew invited me to sit in on his weekly meetings that he spearheaded. I was sort of surprised, because this was not just some regular regular design, or product meeting. These meetings were weekly critical check in decision making meetings.

NBA All-Star Las Vegas

The All-Star game would be taking place in Las Vegas in a few months, and it was a HUGE deal. Adidas was the Official NBA sponsor, but that wasn't going to keep Nike from making Las Vegas their event all week long.



I could list a ton of quotes and memorable anecdotes from my time spent in those meetings, but one of them that stood out to me, is one I retell often when I speak of my days spent in Beaverton.

The **Nike Air Force 25** commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Nike Air Force 1 campaign was underway and there were activations being planned along with releases of the Player / City Edition versions. Everyone not in the conference room, were on the call via dial in. To give you a sense of the set up I've added a picture of what the conference room looked like, although it doesn't do it justice.



But let me attempt to provide a little context and brief background if you will.

I have been in plenty of high powered important meetings from my previous lives from Consulting to Government Contracting and even as a former Government Employee. I had even been in a few design meetings already in Jordan Brand and Nike Basketball.

I'll write about those in a future blog entry, but those will delve into some of the different aspects of Nike as a whole....but again I digress.

Now imagine chairs around the big table pictured, like you'd see in movies where the Lawyers from opposing firms are going at one another, and their assistants or other lawyers are sitting behind them feeding them information or handing them important documents.



That was me and Esaie, sitting in those chairs soaking it all in.

The room had a laid back feel, as you saw kicks no one else had in the outside world and Drew was at the head of the huge table doing small talk and cracking jokes. I'm thinking, man... so this is what happens in these meetings. Cool.

Then the meeting started and I swear on all seven of my kids, you could almost feel the buttocks clench, and folks straightened up in their seats as check-ins around the table and from the conference line happened. Drew would ask questions, provide insight or feedback to each team member providing updates and close out with a good job or something of the like to each.

Then a subject in the meeting that I suspected Drew had been waiting on, and had been irked by, came up. The price point of the AF1 25th anniversary sneaker, and had it been decided.



The key word there is *decided*. Not *calculated*, but *decided*. I forget what the initial number was that was given, but things got *spicy* and I was caught WAAAAY off-guard.

Due to the very high and frankly ridiculous price-point that was thrown out, the reasoning behind it was consumers, and more specifically sneaker heads had the expendable income to afford such a crazy price point.

I had no idea this is how price points were determined at times, and don't get me wrong, this is not standard practice at Nike, as I've been in those meetings too over in Sportswear, where the conversations start at the recoup amount and work from there.

However I was learning something new and how this happened at times, and all of a sudden unexpectedly Drew yells out - “Hey Rocky did you have expendable income growing up, or do your kids have expendable income?” I did the “psssh” sound us black folks do, when you know something to be a ridiculous assertion, and said “no sir, I'm not sure I have that now!”

Drew then yells out “Hey Esaie, what about you? Did you or your folks have expendable income?” Esaie, who obviously was used to what was going on, chuckled and responded “no sir, not in DC!”

Now I won't go into what Drew's next comments were, but he covered how folks are speaking from their privileged experiences and not those who make up the culture at its then current state. It was pretty colorful and strong words were used, but at no point was it demeaning or insulting. At least if you didn't have thin skin or weren't self aware.



Everything he said was the absolute truth and he explained why everyone should adjust their thinking when it came not only to that particular price point issue, but other things that involved the **Culture**.

Drew still didn't like where the price point was at release, but he had gotten his points across.

I did not know it then, but that moment became a blueprint.

Mentor - Mentee

I have always believed having a Mentor and being one, is like Giving Back. It's not an option, it's an obligation you have to those who are like yourself. Making things a little easier to navigate for the next person in our culture should be something we all want to do.

However I know just like some other cultures gatekeeping is huge and some individuals feel like getting to where they are going or still being on that journey is one they want to protect.

I think this comes from a place of insecurity, and worry that if you share your secret sauce with the next person they may somehow leapfrog you into better success. I am one who is encouraged by seeing more people who look like me reaching back to pull forward and not gatekeep.

One of the stories I will pen in a separate Blog Entry will be about my time with the guys over at Jordan Brand and Nike Basketball and when I gave a presentation to Nike's top brass which included VP's and Executives from Nike and the Basketball and Sportswear Category.

I worked on that project with Dr. D'Wayne Edwards, the Design Director for Jordan at the time and Gentry Humphrey who was Design Director.

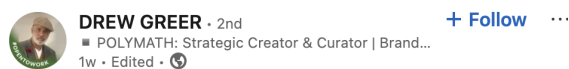


I told Drew about the presentation and he gave me insights on a few items I should cover and things to expect after I completed the presentation.

He didn't miss at all and it was crucial in how I was viewed by those in Executive positions, who may have been looking for me to miss the mark.

If you spend ANY amount of time with Drew, or simply engage with him on his [LinkIn page](#), you will see he is ALWAYS teaching and trying to help others.

If you do like insights, perspective, unfiltered and inspiration with a bit of Spicy dialog in the comment section, you will want to follow him!,



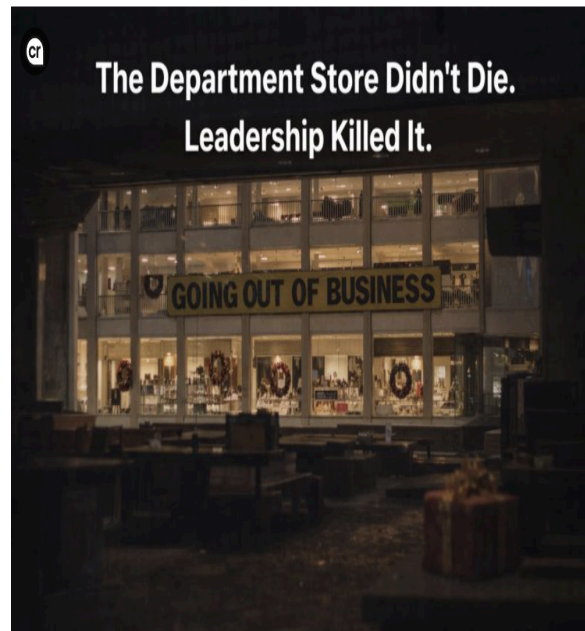
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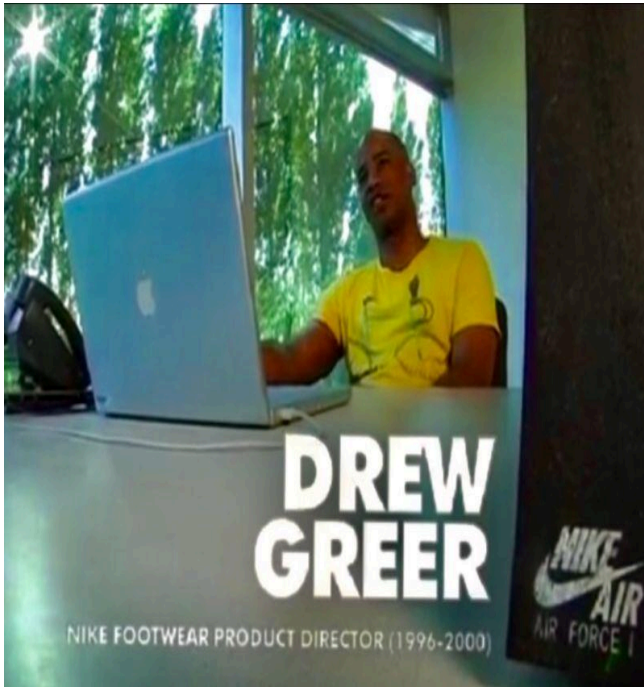
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Who is Drew Greer?

You may be thinking, why would I just NOW get into who Drew Greer is? Simple, there's so much I could say and share, that trying to put it all into some sort of clear section of a blog would be a disservice to all he's done for the Culture.

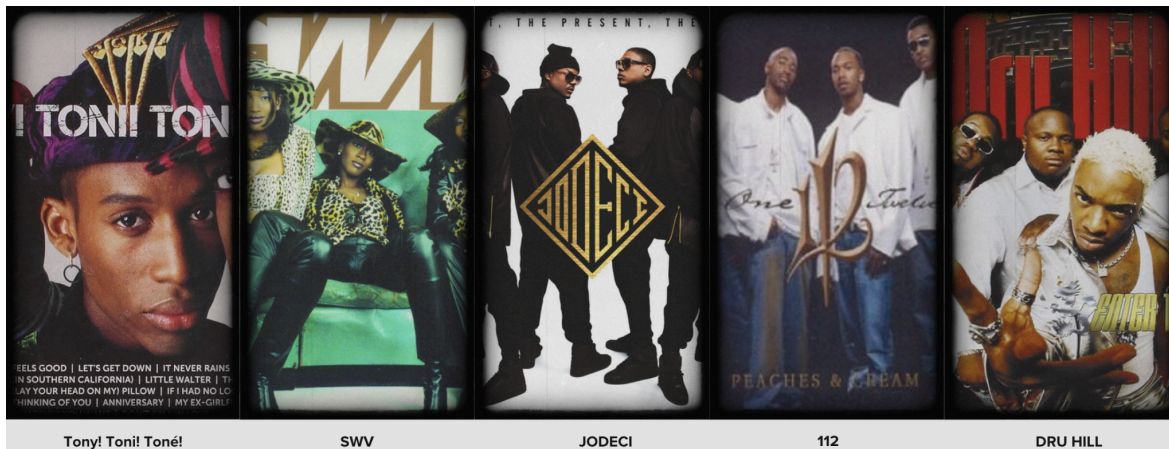


- Drew is the culture builder, not just a professional.
- Drew represents a certain kind of Black excellence that does not need to be loud to be undeniable. Although he doesn't mind getting loud.
- Drew's impact shows up in product, stories, people, and ripple effects.

Drew IS the Culture.

While I don't want to list ALL of the things Drew has given to the Culture, I think it's important to note, the Culture he's helped build, the company he's helped make billions since his exit, has never given him credit, acknowledged what he's done for their brand let alone the Culture.

ABBA, The Cars, The Eagles, The Police and my personal favorite Fleetwood Mac have broken up for different reasons, and gotten back together. Why? Because it just works.



Tony! Toni! Toné!, 112, SWV, Dru Hill and the group that helped me get to seven kids and plenty of fun in college, Jodeci all broke up and got back together to go on tour. Why?

Because no one is making money on their own. Not any real money.

Sam Altman was FIRED from OpenAI, Bob Iger and Jack Dorsey left Disney and Twitter respectively. Kevin Plank stepped down from Under Armour and... wait bad example.

Ok everyone I listed before Plank all returned to be successful with the companies they were once with. Can anyone argue Steve Jobs success returning to Apple?

Why? Because the dollars will always make sense.

Drew Greer (admittedly with help along the way) has given us Iconic Nike Releases like the infamous [Wu-Tang Clan Dunk](#) and so many more to list, but here's my ultimate point as I wrap this up.

I felt compelled to write this now, so this brotha can receive at least a few flowers from my corner of the world while he's still here gracing us with his knowledge.

Culture vs. The Culture

I ask myself, why does the Industry not always want to celebrate the people who built it?

Not just the Sneaker Industry....but most.

I learned long ago coming up as the youngest person in most rooms I was in that ideas, aren't good ideas until they are someone else's idea.

Some people hate giving credit to others. Some folks are just here to reap the benefits of a system that allows them to take take take and never have to or feel the need to give back or credit those who helped them along the way.

Most of them are regarded as Culture Vultures. Something some just don't understand as a concept which is mind boggling in itself.



Simply read one of Drew's LinkedIn posts that get the people going and you will see all types of folks speak on Culture, but not realize the culture they speak of and the Culture we speak of are two completely different things and they will always miss the mark.

You can't understand any culture unless you immerse yourself in it. It's what keeps Faketriots who seem to have issues with immigrants from having an open mind.

Sure, they'll eat at their restaurants or celebrate their holidays, but simply having a conversation or reading up and researching another culture can be all one needs to open their mind to something bigger.

THIS is what Drew Greer brings to **THE CULTURE**.

Bringing It Back For A Moment

I want to briefly bring up something I have not even really talked to Drew about yet.

[I endured a brief prison sentence back in 2023.](#) I am home now, and I have been head down since I have been released, working to recover, rebuild, and bring ROCKDEEP back to where it was, and beyond. I plan on talking to Drew and that conversation won't be about judgment. It is going to be about what it always is with him. Clarity, accountability, and how to take lived experience and turn it into fuel.



That is the part people miss when they think mentorship is just career advice. A real mentor is not just someone who helps you get in the room. They help you stay solid when life tries to take your legs from under you.

And the wild part is this. I am still learning from him, even now.

Thank You, Drew

Thank you for being direct. Thank you for protecting the Culture in rooms where decisions get made by people who do not always understand what they are touching. Thank you for being the type of leader that can hold people accountable, and still end the call with, "I believe in you."

Thank you for inviting the new dude to sit in the meetings, not as a favor, but as a responsibility. That mattered more than you probably know.

The Promise, and the Point

Here is what I promise. I am going to keep paying it forward the same way I always have, even though I'm starting over myself. I am going to continue to mentor. I am going to continue to teach. I am going to keep telling the truth in public, even when it is uncomfortable, because that is what keeps the next person from stepping on the same landmines and overcoming the same obstacles.

And if you are a designer, product manager, or a person trying to figure out how to move through industries that were not built with you in mind, take this with you.

Find someone who does not just teach you skills, but teaches you standards. Find someone who tells you the truth, not what sounds good. Find someone who protects the Culture when it is easier to be quiet.

And if you already have a real mentor, tell them while they can hear it. Do not wait until they are a memory to give them their flowers.

[Receipts](#)

[Drew Greer, LinkedIn page](#)

[His latest interviews on YouTube, Eric Wilkinson interview](#)

[Other Drew Greer Interviews](#)

[Drew Greer: Complex](#)

The journey and **[MyStory](#)** continues.