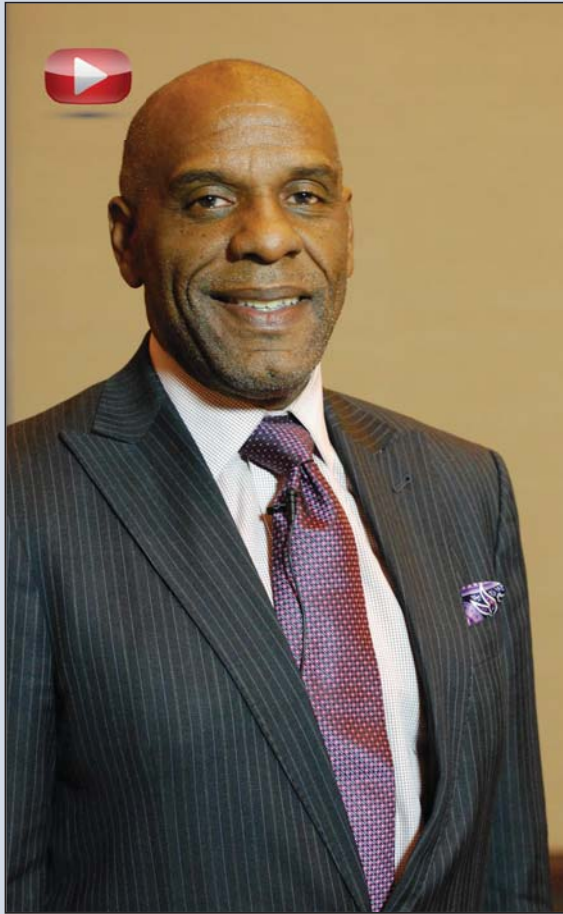


Assemblyman Steven Bradford

“Speaks with DyNAMC America’s Future Leaders”



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Assemblymember Steven Bradford, representing the 62nd California District in the state legislature took time out to share his thoughts, advice, and personal passions with three NAMCO student members who served as panelists on the Millennial Generation Y Roundtable during the 2014 National Leadership Diversity Summit in Las Vegas, NV. Assemblymember Bradford was interviewed by Jasmine Simone Jordan, a student at the University of Nevada Las Vegas and President of the Native American Student Association; Hector Fong, a 16-year-old student at the College of Southern Nevada High School; and William McCurdy, II, President of the Associated Students of the College of Southern Nevada Student Government.

William: First of all, I’d just like to say that we are happy you have been selected to be featured on the cover of DyNAMC, Leaders for a Changing World. It is a great honor. Next, I would like to know what a typical day is like for Assemblyman Bradford.

Bradford: What is a typical day like? I don’t think there are typical days. I mean it’s full of activity when we are in the capital. But, when we are in the district we are doing meetings and constituting, outreach, and things of that nature. Meeting with various organizations and business interests. It’s a full day of meetings, challenges, and negotiations, sometimes, as it relates to legislation. But, it keeps us on our toes.



Left to right, **Hector Fong**, College of Southern Nevada High School, **Jasmine Simone Jordan**, University of Nevada Las Vegas, **William McCurdy II**, College of Southern Nevada

William: Thank you for sharing. Tell us how you balance your professional and social commitments.

Bradford: My personal life? Is that it? I have no personal life. It’s time consuming, and I think, to do this job right, it takes a whole lot of your time. So, I really admire my colleagues who are married and have kids, because that is a hard balance for them. I just happen to be a single guy so I work all the time. I think this is the social part of my life, too, the work that I do. Public service is who I am. I do it 24/7. It’s kind of like it’s easy for me. It’s natural.

William: Thank you. It’s obviously what you love what you do.

Bradford: It is. And as they say, if you find something that you love, it’s not work. So it’s easy to get up every day and meet with folks. Even people who you might not agree with, but have the opportunity to have a discussion and debate; so, it’s worthwhile. If you are paying attention you are going to learn something anyway, whether you agree with somebody or not. Hopefully, the take-aways are going to benefit you in the long run. It’s a good opportunity.

William: Thanks for sharing.

Jasmine: Sir, why is diversity important to you? Of all of the bills--the 11 bills that you helped sign into law--which of them do you think focuses on diversity and inclusion?

Bradford: I did 11 on diversity and inclusion. So, all of them. I focus on that. I did specific bills that expand what we call GO 156 in the state

of California, which is encouraging our utility companies to do contracting, particularly with minority, women owned, and disabled-vet owned businesses in the state California. So, I think those 11 bills were important in helping to expand the debate on why diversity is important. Just look around the table. Right here, this is what California looks like, and this is what the nation looks like. I think everybody should have an opportunity to do business and have a seat at the table. Many times you see corporate America lacking that diversity. We see a lot of contracting opportunities with major corporations lacking in diversity, so I think our employment opportunities, our business opportunities, should reflect California and the nation.

Jasmine: I agree.

Hector: Can you name someone who has had a tremendous impact on you as a leader when you were my age of 16-years-old? And why were they so influential?

Bradford: The easy answer would be Dr. Martin Luther King; what he stood for and what he still stands for today. Because we are still trying to truly reach that American dream, where all men are created equal, are treated fairly, where we live in a colorblind society. We have yet to achieve that; so, I think from an inspirational standpoint it would be him.

But, I think there were a few teachers in my life who inspired me to do what I do today. Not necessarily to be an elected official, but to show up, to stand up, to speak up. I think that is





important. You do those things a lot of times, and you just remain quiet and never let your voice be heard. So, I think its key to know, that at your age, your voice is important. People need to hear it, and people need to respect it.

Hector: Thank you. Next question is: What is a trait you believe every leader should possess?

Bradford: Showing up. You've got to show up. You have to be willing to speak truth; stay committed to your convictions, regardless of whether people disagree or agree. You've got to stay true to who you are. I think that is important. Many times we find ourselves compromising who we are. Now, it doe requires compromise in life. It requires compromise in business. But we shouldn't compromise our values and who we are in order to achieve a goal. I think the integrity of an individual is important.

Hector: Can you describe your leadership style for us?

Bradford: Just straight talk. And as far as my staff, I don't micro-manage. I have folks come and say they have a skillset. I allow them to demonstrate that they do have that skill set. Everybody comes into a job interview saying, "I can do this." Okay. I will let you run and do it, then. Until you fumble and mess up, I won't mess with you. My leadership style is kind of hands-off, roll up your sleeves, and get involved. I let folks run projects and, hopefully, they will rise up and demonstrate what they can do.



Hector: Alright, thank you. What do you think is the biggest challenge leaders of today are facing and why?

Bradford: The biggest challenge leaders of today are facing? That's a good question. Again, I think its commitment. A lot of folks are in leadership positions, but might not be as committed to the process as they should be, and you just have to stay committed. It's easy to give up. I think that's what we need to do, is to stay committed and stay focused. And keep an open mind. A lot of times we come with our preconceived notion of what people are or what a situation is. You have to be open. If you're going to be a good leader, you have to be willing to take advice from young folks, as well as seniors and elders. I don't walk around thinking I know everything. I enter a situation thinking I can always learn something. I think a good leader has to be willing to listen and learn.

Hector: Thank you.

Jasmine: Next question. What is one mistake you witness today's leaders often making?

Bradford: Mistake? Maybe, not knowing or really getting down to the substance of the issue. We deal with a variety of large issues in California, and across this nation, and a lot of times we come with our preconceived notions of how to deal with it. Again, I think one has to be open

minded. We have to be open to change and, a lot of times, we are wedded to our certain beliefs and our certain ideas. Whether they are leaders or not, sometimes they are unmoving and unyielding. So, I think being willing to be flexible. Like I say, be willing to be open to other suggestions and other ideas.

Jasmine: Thank you. And

next, what are a few resources you would recommend for someone like me looking to become a better leader? I know that you are involved with My Brother's Keeper, the incentive that President Obama is starting. You guys raised around nine million dollars in order to start that project, so what would you suggest I get involved in?

Bradford: I tell folks there is no cookie cutter way of doing what it is you want to do. It is just a matter of getting involved, of rolling up your sleeves. I really started in my community through coaching and Little League and Homeowner's Association and block club meetings and things of that nature. And, understanding the concerns were of Ms. Jones down the street and trying to find answers to that. I think the best thing folks can do is get involved. Don't be afraid to ruffle some feathers and agitate folks. You got to be agitators, too. Challenge the status quo. Challenge authorities like me. Don't take my answer as gospel. We should challenge and question authority, and I see a lot of folks aren't willing to do that. There's nothing wrong with questioning authority. Respect it; but question it. There's nothing wrong with questioning it.

Jasmine: Thank you.

William: Boy, it definitely sounds like you have been on this journey to become Assemblymember Bradford your whole life. So, my next question would be, at what age do you think a young person should start deciding who they want to be and what they



want to do in their life?

Bradford: As early as possible. I don't think it's a certain age when you realize what your passion is. You can realize what your passion is at five, for instance. If you know you like drawing, you know



you like working with your hands. I think we just need to follow what our passion is. I never set out to be an elected official. I went to college with every intention of being a doctor. I was a biology major and thought I was going to be a doctor. I realized [my passion] at a motivational class. Someone just said that if money, time or anything wasn't a barrier, what would you do? You close your eyes and think about it. I said, "I'd like to be an elected official."

That's pretty much how I started on that journey. It wasn't anything I set out to do. But when obstacles are removed and you're told you can do anything you want, I said I would like to do that, because I'd always believed in public service. I look at this as public service, giving something back. I think we are all challenged with giving back, regardless of how old or how young we are. We have to be committed to something greater than ourselves.

William: I agree. Thank you.

Hector: What advice would you give a young person who is looking at pursuing politics as a career? Specifically an elected office.

Bradford: Start in the school. Run for student government. I did that. Volunteer in elected officials' offices and volunteer on campaigns. That's how I started, by volunteering on campaigns. Decide if you really like to do this work or not. I mean,

that's why the best way is to either internship, volunteer, and again, just get involved. On the campus level it's great. I ran for student government in junior high school and high school. I didn't do it in college, but that's kind of where I first started, and it was a great opportunity.

Jasmine: What is the best experience of your career thus far?

Bradford: Best experience of my career?

Jasmine: Most rewarding.

Bradford: I just think doing the work. I mean really doing the work. I mean, I passed almost 40 pieces of legislation, and I think all of the bills were important. A bill that we just passed was that in California we now have a three-foot wide bike lane. So, if you're driving down the street a car has to pass you, giving you three feet of space. I think for one, as a cyclist or as a motorist, I think it's going to change public safety tremendously in the state of California. Again, the diversity bills, to encourage corporations to do business with minority owned, women owned, disabled vet owned businesses. I think it's critical. One thing I am really passionate about is our criminal justice system, changing some of the oppressive laws we have, especially when it relates to drug trafficking and sentencing. I did a bill that eliminated double jeopardy for



folks who are in possession of a drug and also get a trafficking or a transporting charge. We saw that the majority of people who were being charged for both felonies were minorities. They were

African-Americans and Latinos, and it made no sense that the counterparts were getting simple possession charges and the African-American and Latinos were getting possession and trafficking charges. So, just changing some of our criminal justice system here in California is important. So, I'm excited about some of the things we did there.

Jasmine: That's awesome. Thank you. Also, in your career, whether pursuing academic endeavors or simply in life, what has made you the person you are as an Assembly member?

Bradford: Probably my mother.

Jasmine: She'll like that answer.

Bradford: Yeah. I think I got my values from my parents. They always insisted on, you know, speaking your mind. Being respectful on authority, but to not be afraid to challenge it and question it. I think that's key. A lot of times we just take things because that's the way things have always been, and we believe that's the way it always has to be. I think my parents raising me to believe that people need to challenge and question authority is probably one of the biggest things. It helped me get where I am today.

Jasmine: Thank you.

William: Well, there's a ton of information that is readily accessible about your accomplishments. What are some of the things or hobbies that you would like to do or find interest in that we would be surprised to hear?



Bradford: It probably won't be a surprise, but I love golf. If I could play golf every day of the week, I would play golf. But, I haven't had a lot of time in the last five years while I have been in the legislature. That, and I'm a cyclist. I ride bike. Those are the things I like doing. And I like a lot of quiet time. Being by myself. People think "Oh you've got to be this outgoing person!" No. I'm pretty much a real introvert, so I like to spend a lot of time by myself.

William: I actually enjoy golf, myself. I'm learning how to play. I think it's really interesting. It takes a lot of patience. Who is a golfer that you find interesting or you like their particular style of playing?

Bradford: Well, I mean, everybody loves Tiger Woods. I've known Tiger since he was a little kid. He grew up in the L.A. area. I knew his dad pretty well. I mean, Jack Nicklaus, I can name . . . I'm a golf junkie. There's a lot of phenomenal young players out there today. Also, Ricky Fowler. I like his style and the flamboyance he brings to the game of golf, he has a go for broke type



attitude. Phil Mickelson. There are a lot of great players out there. I guess my biggest idol in golf is Charlie Sifford. He is the first African-American who was admitted to the PGA tour. I had an opportunity to play with him a number of times. He shared his challenge.

He has a great book, Just Let Me Play. Simply about wanting to play golf, not to do anything else. But the challenges that man went through just to play a simple game of golf. It will blow you away, the obstacles he had to overcome.

William: Thank you for sharing. I will definitely be checking it out.

Jasmine: Let's see, when you create some of the bills, do you reach out to youth in order to generate strategies and solutions that will better their lives as well as future youth?

Bradford: Again, the drug trafficking bill was through meeting with young folks and understanding their challenges. We've done LWOP in California. We have life without parole for minors, and we are trying to amend that. Again, it's meeting with these young folks that have been sentenced at 15 and 16 and spending the rest of their life in jail.

But also, I chair the Select Committee of Boys and Men of Color. That committee has given me the opportunity to meet with young folks all across the state of California. You mentioned My Brother's Keeper, which President Obama launched



in February. But really, My Brother's Keeper is what we started in California six years ago. Often we say, "As goes California, so goes the nation."

I'm excited about all the work. But it was the young folks who helped us shape the School Bill of Rights that L.A. Unified School District just passed last year. Willful defiance. We are now dealing with an issue that didn't exist when I was in school. But now, willful defiance exists for people like yourself. They define willful defiance as not bringing in your homework, not having a pencil, not having a paper, not removing your hat. That didn't get you expelled from school when I was a kid. It got you to stay after, it got you detention, or you had to do extra credit work. Now we are seeing young folks being kicked out of school for what we are calling "willful defiance." Dealing with issues like that: things that young folks have brought to our attention.

Even a lack of nutrition in households and the issue of trauma. Not necessarily physical trauma, but the emotional trauma that young folks experience if they live in a gang infested neighborhood. By the age of 13, they've seen someone being shot or killed or beat up. That trauma is psychological and long term, and we are dealing with it. But it was not until we heard from these young folks who said, "No, I've never been a victim of it." But witnessing it is the same thing that our military folks are seeing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorders.

Young folks live in communities right now where they are suffering from some of the same symptoms that folks have experienced in war time situations. So, it's through that committee that we have had the opportunity to interface with young people who deal with those issues.

Jasmine: Well, I appreciate it; because a lot of times, leaders are so disengaged from the youth. I commend you for your involvement.

Bradford: I try to stay as close to them as possible. That's why I learn all the new rap songs.

Jasmine: It comes in handy.

Hector: So can you tell us what's next in your political career? What should we look for?

Bradford: I don't know. I assure you I'm not going away. I'm going to be doing something. I will probably run for state senate at some point. I'm being mysterious. I am going to be running for state senate in 2016. Hopefully we'll come out on top there.

Hector: Thank you.



William: It's definitely great to keep climbing. Give me three words you have for the future senator.

Bradford: Three words? Committed, hardworking, show-up. I've never missed a day of work. So, I show up every day. If you show up, nobody can pull anything over you. If, every day, you know what's going on.

Jasmine: In the recent mid-term elections, since you are interested in furthering your political career, less than, or just a little bit over, actually 32% of youth actually voted in this mid-term election. How do you feel you can, kind of, implement them or inspire them to participate?

Bradford: If I could figure that out, I'd be President of the United States! No, what we saw just this past week with mid-term elections was a dismal turnout, not only in California but across the nation. We saw, I forgot the percentage, but the 18-34 age group, they did not show up. We have to find the way to attract that voting block and get them engaged. They have to see they have skin in the game. A lot of times, they think their vote just doesn't count. Their vote does count! And their vote counts even more when they don't cast it. Because then you have somebody else making the decision for you. So they think it doesn't count, but it doesn't count when you don't cast it.

So, I think it's important that they show up. But, again, we have to give them a reason to be involved. I think what you are seeing with younger folks running for office -- just got a young lady, 18, what state was she from?

Jasmine: North Carolina

Bradford: Yeah. She just got elected; so the opportunity is there. But, we have to do a better job as the senior folks engaging them,

reaching out to them, getting them involved, and letting them know they have a role here.

Jasmine: And lastly, when you retire someday, not anytime soon, what do you hope your legacy will be?

Bradford: That I made a difference. I mean I'm not ready to write that off, yet, I still have a lot to do. But I just think, at the end of the day, that I made a difference. Helped people. Helped this community. Gave back. I think life is about service, no matter what you do. So, if they said, "Hey, he gave back." I think that would be enough for me.

William: Well, I am honored and humbled having the opportunity to sit here and listen, and I just want to say thank you for taking the time to enlighten us. We really appreciate it.

Bradford: Thank you for your interest. I think that's just as important, your interest in wanting to talk to some old guy like me. I appreciate it. I'm inspired by young folks and that which you do. I mean, my staff, my office is full of even high school interns, college students, folks who recently graduated from college. I'm inspired by the young folks. If I had it to do all over again I would stay young. No, thank you guys for your interest.

