

The Voters Have Spoken And Now We Must Act, by Bret Williams

In the run-up to the election this past Tuesday, I shared a lot about myself in the hope that you would come to know, trust, and select me. I deeply wanted to represent our interests on the Atlanta City Council. For a lot of reasons, that outcome was not to be this term. Nevertheless, I am profoundly thankful for all the support, well-wishes, and contributions to this effort. Thank you for joining me in trying to define the world that we live in. Now, if you will, please indulge me in telling you one last experience that I had which has helped shape and deepen my understanding of how to live my life.

In 2006, living in New York, I worked at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan as a federal prosecutor. I was married and had a newborn son. Although I enjoyed my work as a federal prosecutor in New York, I wanted to move my family and raise my child back down South. I desired a transfer to the U.S. Attorney's Office in either Atlanta or Memphis. (All U.S. Attorney's Offices are under the U.S. Department of Justice, and my job change would just be an inter-organizational transfer.) As you could imagine, I felt very fortunate when I landed an interview with the Memphis office which had an opening for a drug prosecutor.

I felt very confident. I was a federal prosecutor in one of the hottest offices in the country with a wealth of experience prosecuting drug crimes and a stellar educational background. Although I was prepared to travel to Memphis to conduct the interview in-person, I was informed that my interview would be by video-conference. (This method of interview should have raised my antennae; but it did not.) In anticipation of the interview, I set myself up in a room in front of a video-conference unit.

Then, like a scene from a bad sitcom, the video and audio from their side was visible and audible to me, but the interviewers could not see or hear me. The interviewers proceeded to discuss openly the fact that the Assistant United States Attorney position was slated for a woman (unknown to me) who had clerked for a local judge and that my application from a sister U.S. Attorney's Office had complicated matters. In short, I was simply being interviewed as an inter-office courtesy but would not get the job. After a few minutes, the video-conference began, with the interviewers apparently having never been aware of the one-way transmission to me. I proceeded with the interview, never letting on that I had heard the initial conversation. Needless, to say, I did not get the job.

But I was reminded of a valuable lesson: you are not the sum of your résumé, achievements, or lack thereof. Sometimes you will be awarded things you do not feel you deserve and other times you will be denied where you thought you were a "shoe in." No single job or comment is an accurate referendum on your worth or who you are. Only you can truly judge that. So, be honest with yourself, make any necessary changes, and keep fighting. Maybe you, too, will be so lucky as to miss out on a job in Memphis and land one in Atlanta!

Some of us see the world as it is (the inhabitants of Realville) and some of us see the world as we wish it to be (the Dreamers). Let's wake up and make Atlanta the world of our dreams. Let's keep fighting for Atlanta. Thank you all and stay tuned!