

**Interview Records of Jamell Walker
Completed for the Black Lives Matter Oral History
Project**



**Jamell Walker was interviewed By Walker Robinson
11/29/2023**

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Abstract- Jamell Walker

Narrator: Jamell Walker

Interviewer: Walker Robinson

Interview Date: November 29th, 2023

Location: Miami, Florida

Length: Approximately thirty minutes

Jamell Walker is from California, and the conversation begins with her discussing the similarities between California and Miami. She then goes on to talk about how family was big for her growing up and then later on joining a sorority. She then talks about how she now finds community with the parents of her children's friends. Later she goes into how her sister inspires her. She talks about living in a predominantly Hispanic area that is very Trump-saturated, and how there was a lot of pushback within her community to the Black Lives Matter movement. She talks about going out and introducing her children to her neighbors as a way of keeping them safe from being mistaken for criminals. She later touches on everyone's responsibility to love, care for, and protect each other.

Field notes- Jamell Walker

Compiled 11/29/23

Narrator: Jamell Walker

Interviewer: Walker Robinson

Date interview occurred: November 29th, 2023

Location: Miami

Narrator: Jamell Walker is an OB/GYN from California currently living in Miami.

Interviewer: Walker Robinson is a student at Sewanee, The University of the South currently in his Sophomore year. He is working towards completing his final project in his class 'Black Power to Black Lives Matter' aimed towards documenting oral histories concerning the Black Lives Matter Movement. He is a Biology major specifically interested in sports medicine.

Description of the Interview: The interview was conducted on Zoom. The interview went smoothly, with no major interruptions.

Interviewer

Walker Robinson

Transcript

0:03 Walker Robinson: This is Walker Robinson from Swanee University to South. It is November 28th, 2020 3, 10 30 3:00 PM and I am with Jamel Walker and Oh, and where are you from?

0:27 Jamell Walker: I am currently living in Miami, Florida.

0:31 Walker Robinson: Okay. Thank you for being here.

0:34 Jamell Walker: Thank you for asking me.

0:36 Walker Robinson: Of course. Glad to have you here. All right. Where are you originally from?

0:42 Jamell Walker: I guess I'm originally from Bellmont, Pennsylvania. I was born in Pennsylvania, but we were academic brats, meaning my dad was in academia, and so we used to move every three years. So I claim California Jabrina, my youngest sister, excuse me, she claims Tennessee.

1:04 Walker Robinson: And how is where you currently live different from where you were raised?

1:12 Jamell Walker: I was raised in California, so it's about as close to California as I can get weather-wise, beach wise, and without all of the earthquakes. So I love it.

1:28 Walker Robinson: Love it. And where did you find community as a child?

1:32 Jamell Walker: Where did I,

1:34 Walker Robinson: Where did you find community as a child?

1:38 Jamell Walker: I'm sorry, I can barely hear you.

1:40 Walker Robinson: Sorry. Where did you find community as a child?

1:43 Jamell Walker: Where did I find community as a child? I think because we moved so much, my biggest community was my family, just the four of us, my mother, my father, and my younger sister. But everywhere we went, my parents were involved in Jack and Jill or AKA and Kappi Alphi Si. And so we

found community everywhere and the university communities where we live too.

2:13 Walker Robinson: How is that different from where you find community today?

2:17 Jamell Walker: I still find community with Alpha Cap Alpha as I'm now a member myself. But right now my biggest source of community is with, interestingly, with my kids', friend groups and those parents and the activities that my kids participate in and people from work.

2:37 Walker Robinson: People from work. Okay, nice. Do you enjoy it?

2:40 Jamell Walker: And I have a group of lifelong friends that we still hang out with.

2:44 Walker Robinson: And do you feel like you have a good community support you enjoy your community

2:49 Jamell Walker: When you move back? I couldn't hear you composer.

2:52 Walker Robinson: I said, you enjoy, enjoy all these communities a lot.

2:57 Jamell Walker: I get a lot from them. It's very fulfilling. I get a lot of support, able to give support and feel like I have a core group of people that I can hang out with and have a good time with.

3:14 Walker Robinson: What is your occupation and what was your journey to this role?

3:20 Jamell Walker: I am currently, let's see, a medical doctor. I'm a practicing obstetrician and gynecologist. I started out doing my regular high school stuff, went off to college and got my bachelor's in sociology. After graduating from Stanford University, I decided that I wanted to get a master's in public health. So I went to the Harvard School of Public Health and got a Master's of Science in Health and Social Behavior, did a lot of research, and while I was doing my research, I decided that I really wanted to be a doctor, and so I picked up my pre-med requirements, took the MCAT and ultimately found my way to medical school and residency, well medical school at Southern Illinois University and residency at Tulane for OB obstetrics and gynecology. And I guess the rest, as they say is history.

4:26 Walker Robinson: History. Who or what inspires you?

4:33 Jamell Walker: Inspires me now or inspired me then

4:36 Walker Robinson: Both.

4:39 Jamell Walker: Then I had really inspirational parents. They're both deceased now, but they were very, very supportive. I knew that no matter what I did, I had a support system and if I failed, I knew they would help me get back up and dust me off and pushed, literally pushed me in the right direction. Now, I think I'm inspired by my sister. She's dynamic and amazing and she's so incredibly humble that I don't even think she realizes how amazing she is.

5:16 Walker Robinson: Yeah, she's really amazing.

5:19 Jamell Walker: And she's also your mom?

5:21 Walker Robinson: Yeah.

5:21 Jamell Walker: I love her a lot.

5:23 Walker Robinson: Me too. Me too. What other traits does she have that inspires you?

5:33 Jamell Walker: She's vastly intelligent. Even when we were children, she would outsmart, my parents probably shouldn't tell you that, but she really, she could outthink my parents and that was just amazing to watch. But my parents have been around block, so they were able to say, what's your brain? You're not that smart. We got this. We know what you're doing. We know what you two are doing. So she's vastly intelligent. She's humble to a fault. She gets promotions and accolades and she shrugs it off as if it's nothing. She is an incredible mother who I strive to be like on a daily basis because I feel like there's no handbook that comes with children. But gosh, she makes it look easy sometimes. And even when she fails, she again gets back up and puts it together for her boys. She gives it all to her family, and that is inspirational to me. And she even finds time for the crazy dogs, and she fosters good relationships and friendships, and that's something that I admire about her and inspires me that I can go to her with any question, any problem, and she will not tell me an answer, but she'll help me figure out an answer for myself. And that's priceless.

7:13 Walker Robinson: Yeah, really is. What do you aspire? What is your aspiration to be? What type of person do you aspire to be? What are your aspirations? And do you, you've achieved them or do you feel like, or what are they if you still continuing to strive for them?

7:36 Jamell Walker: That's a good question. If you had asked me 10 years ago, I would say, oh, I want to be Surgeon General of the United States.

7:44 Now. I have no desire to do anything political at all. So it's constantly, not at all nothing. But I do think that I have a bit of, how do I say this? When you go to schools like Stanford and Harvard, your classmates are sometimes pretty spectacular and amazing, and it's hard to stand next to them and be like, oh, I'm amazing like them. I do this. But we're all amazing in our own right, right? They don't do what I do. I don't do what they do, but we all contribute to society and the world as a whole. So do I think I've met the pinnacle of my success? No. I have more things I want to do. I want to own my own medical businesses and help decrease black maternal mortality and morbidity, especially around the birthing experience. I want to help us get access to care. All women have access to care, children, everybody. I want to do things like that, big lofty goals that I don't know how I'm going to solve and do these things, but hopefully I will have that support system, push me in the right direction, working on it, baby steps.

9:06 Walker Robinson: It's going to happen.

9:08 Jamell Walker: It's going to happen. I like your faith in me. It is going to happen, happen probably sooner than I think.

9:18 Walker Robinson: Yeah, most likely. And all right, let's get into some of the Black Lives Matter questions.

9:26 Jamell Walker: Oh, okay. Let's go.

9:31 Walker Robinson: So when did you receive the news about George Floyd or what was your first experience with the Black Lives Matter movement?

9:42 Jamell Walker: Okay, so probably around George Floyd, definitely. I live in Florida, which is a crazy place to live in and of itself because of its politics. But it was also during Covid. And so I remember sitting in front of the TV because we were on lockdown in our home, and the immense sense of frustration, fear, hurt, agonizing pain for his family and children. And then the numbness that came after, because it became a series of things that continued to happen and it became numbing. And it's almost to the point now where I feel like these terrible, terrible things happen and we don't react anymore because they're so bad. And we all have PTSD to them, and our reaction is to compartmentalize and not deal with it. What I liked about the Black Lives Matter movement was that it's a constant reminder that we can do and are capable of doing and making change.

11:00 Walker Robinson: Very true. And what is your experience with social media?

11:06 Jamell Walker: I'm the wrong person to act terrible with social media, you mean just in general or in reference

11:14 Walker Robinson: To the Black Lives Matter as a social media expert, but just what has been your experience? What do you think about social media and what have you seen social media? Do you think it's good, bad, or what are your thoughts on it?

11:31 Jamell Walker: I think it's entertaining to a fault,

11:36 To a fault. I think that we get caught up in nonsense. I watch my children watching tiktoks and Instagrams and videos that are completely meaningless. I try and guide my social media towards more meaningful meditations, things of that nature. But I get caught up in the ratchetness too. It's entertaining. Do I think it's purposeful in that there are entities that are above our pay grade that are making us dumber? Possibly. Do I think that there are entities that want us to be so caught up in electronics that we forget about the everyday beauty that's around us? Yes. I think we have to be careful and cautious. We can look at the examples of things that they're able to do with ai, and it's alarming and the prospects of technology. And just over the

weekend, I watched my 2-year-old cousin, he could not remove his face from a tablet, but that's their generation and what they do and how they are

12:58 Walker Robinson: iPad kids.

12:59 Jamell Walker: He's an iPad kid, and he's going to be that way. And if he's not that way, he'll be left behind. And so I think there has to be a common ground and a compromise that's made so that we can all be safe and still get the info. But it's an amazing resource to search for information if you know how to do it.

13:25 Walker Robinson: Do you remember when you first saw the moment when you first saw the George Floyd video, and how did you see it? How did you come

13:40 Jamell Walker: Across? I initially didn't want to see it because you heard about it first. And I have suffocation issues anyway. I've watched people suffocate. And to think that someone purposely suffocated another human being is unthinkable, unconscionable. And when I watched it, my heart was broken, completely broken, still broken, just all the unnecessary loss of life.

14:25 Walker Robinson: What is your opinion of the Black Lives Matter movement?

14:33 Jamell Walker: I think all organizations have good things and bad things. I think that we need to concentrate on making sure that we're doing things in a political way that is positive and uplifts the greatest number of people, helps people with access, raises awareness. And if we see it as that type of mechanism, then I think we are using it the right way. If we expect it to overthrow governments decrease and decrease poverty, I think we might be asking too much of one organization.

15:23 Walker Robinson: Yeah, absolutely. It might be, you see, you're saying it might be better just focusing on just one specific issue at one time.

15:35 Jamell Walker: I don't want 'em to work on just one specific issue, but I want us to work collectively on issues

15:42 Walker Robinson: Collectively. That makes

15:44 Jamell Walker: Sense.

15:46 Walker Robinson: Yeah. What was your community's reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement?

15:53 Jamell Walker: My community's

15:54 Walker Robinson: Reaction? Yeah, your community. That community, your friends and the people you surround yourself with. I got it. As well as your community overall is just the area that you live in. And

16:08 Jamell Walker: Too, I live in a predominantly Latino, Hispanic area, part of Florida that was very Trump saturated, continues to be Trump saturated, and so it was very isolating and derogatory towards Black Lives Matter in my community. My community of black folks were uplifted by it, encouraged by it, and then ultimately, I think we became, it began to resonate with us in a way that allowed us to move forward and a very troubled time. I had a Black Lives Matter sign in my yard. It was run over by one of my neighbors.

17:00 Walker Robinson: It was run over by one of your neighbors?

17:03 Jamell Walker: I watched him on my camera, and so I don't put political signs up in my yard anymore, but I've also noticed that there aren't as many

Trump signs up either. So I think attitudes and behaviors are changing, or we're just being less vocal about it, maybe.

17:25 Walker Robinson: Yeah.

17:25 Jamell Walker: But I had a core group of black, white, Latino multicultural people who were very supportive of Black Lives Matter.

17:36 Walker Robinson: That's also one thing that people sometimes have to worry about. Have you ever dealt with anyone, or have you ever experienced anyone who will say one thing, but then they're really acting another way, not being vocal about, you know what I mean?

17:54 Jamell Walker: You mean in terms of racism or,

17:56 Walker Robinson: Yeah, exactly. Absolutely. Yeah.

17:59 Jamell Walker: Right. I mean, that's a constant experience, especially being here in South Florida. But I think that if you align yourself with the right people, you develop your community, you can develop a safety net around you. Maybe it's a false sense of security, but just like Halloween, I went to all my neighbor's doors when we first moved into this neighborhood, and I took

my children. I said, this is my daughter. This is my son. We live around the corner from you. We're your neighbors. Don't mistake us for trouble, mongers or what have you. We're just your neighbors. If you need anything where we're around the corner, you need sugar, flour, tomatoes. I'm around the corner. And people were very receptive to it, but it was purposeful on my part, on my part to make sure that my neighbors knew who these black children were in this neighborhood.

19:04 Walker Robinson: Absolutely.

19:05 Jamell Walker: That's my job as a parent. Also, my sister may say I'm a helicopter mom. That may or may not be true. When they ride their bikes in the neighborhood, I follow behind them in my car to make sure that they're safe. I used to, not so much now because I've already done my work in terms of making sure they know my neighbors, but I'm also working hard to teach them to be socially aware of their environment.

19:39 Walker Robinson: Absolutely. It can be necessary. Sometimes

19:40 Jamell Walker: It works better than others, but they're young. They'll get there.

19:46 Walker Robinson: What changes or if any, did you see in your community from the Black Lives Matter movement?

19:57 Jamell Walker: Wow, that's a really good question, because my sister lives in a very dynamic community where there were lots of Black Lives Matter signs, and literally when I went to her home in North Carolina, I felt like every other, if not every yard had a sign. And here it was probably one every 20 homes, if that much. So I don't know if that answers your question.

20:32 Walker Robinson: Yeah.

20:37 Jamell Walker: Yeah. It's Florida.

20:43 Walker Robinson: Yeah. What generation do you think was most impacted by the Black Lives Matter reform?

20:52 Jamell Walker: Oh my gosh. I think we're all impacted, but your generation

20:57 Walker Robinson: Really.

20:58 Jamell Walker: Yeah. I remember my nephews going to March, and I was so impressed and so excited because my dad marched with Martin and Malcolm and was a Black Panther. And so in my eyes, it was very heartwarming to see my two young nephews make similar strides. It was empowering for me to see that. I didn't get to do that because I was fighting breast cancer at the time, and I was really stuck in this house and couldn't go out and about other people. But gosh, I celebrated through them. I don't know if you knew that, but I was really proud of you guys.

21:40 Walker Robinson: I didn't know that. How has the Black Lives Matter movement, how has it impacted your life on an overall basis or even just a day to day interactions?

22:01 Jamell Walker: I think that I have always been a quiet activist, meaning that I work on a daily basis to make sure that there's equity in healthcare. And so I make sure that my patients know that their Black Lives matter, and that this black doctor here sees them and is going to take care of them, and I take care of everybody. But I make sure that everybody knows that this black life is going to take care of your life and make sure that you're okay. And so it's my personal mission to make sure that my patients have the medical support that they need. I guess that's the best answer I can give you.

23:01 Walker Robinson: That's an amazing answer. And how has the Black Lives Matter movement changed how you interact with people of other races or how they interacted with you?

23:14 Jamell Walker: I think that there was a time when I was really angry about the Blue Lives Matter, because I said, there are no blue people.

23:28 You see my black face. I'm black. My black life matters because we're discriminated against based on the color of our skin. So although I'm very empathetic with police officers and the career choices they have made, it is a career choice. They are the brave men and women who get up every single day and do their job to protect and serve us. But my blackness is front and center every single day of my life, every black person has that to deal with. What did my father say the day you were born, you were born with three strikes against you. One, because you are black, and two, because you are a woman every day you will have to get up and work three times as hard as the next person in order to be considered equal.

24:29:00 That's hard for a 10-year-old to deal with. Right. But it was the reality that he pushed us with. I think it carried us far. So do I tell my children the same thing? Yes. Because they're family sayings. But do I tell them that their Black Lives matters every single day? Yes. Did I buy them? Yes. Do I continue to celebrate the melanin that they possess? Absolutely. Am I trying to make sure that they are proud, beautiful human beings? Yes. And then we interact

with other people. I make sure they know those things about us, and then I tell them, tell me about you so we can celebrate what is unique and beautiful about you, because ultimately, we all have to live on this planet and live with and celebrate one another. That's my answer. These are not easy questions, sir.

25:35:00 Walker Robinson: Sorry. Sorry about that. How do you think, I'll be sorry. The Black Lives Matter movement succeeded. What do you think the successes of it were?

25:47:00 Jamell Walker: I think that in a very critical time and with a very captive audience due to Covid, we were able to refocus and recenter on some core values that are important to black folks, and more importantly, they're important to all folks, and making sure that people understand that. I think that there was a severe backlash with that, and that's why our political environment is the way that it is right now. The reversal of affirmative action, Roe v. Wade, all of these things are reactionary, right? And we have to be careful in how we tread in the future. I didn't say not tread. Just careful in how we do it,

26:44:00 Walker Robinson: Careful how we do it.

26:48:00 Jamell Walker: It's too much important work that has to be done. To set it aside, you guys are too important. Your children's, children's children are too important. This planet needs our help, who are incredible assets, and we just all have to acknowledge what we bring to the table.

27:12:00 Walker Robinson: How do you think the Black Lives Matter movement failed? Or were there any failures that you thought that it had?

27:22:00 Jamell Walker: Do I think it failed

27:26:00 Walker Robinson: Or not failed? Why do you

27:27:00 Jamell Walker: Characterize it as a failure? Tell me that.

27:32:00 Walker Robinson: Yeah. Well, not failures failure, but were there anything that, yeah, it can't be failure because it's still going on,

27:43:00 Jamell Walker: Right? I don't think it failed, but I think it set forth some uncomfortable truth that exist in our country, and we are all living with the ramifications of those truths. So I don't think they failed. I think they showed us where the cracks were. I definitely think that the Black Lives Matter movement showed us where the cracks were and how other groups are

working. We're working to seal the cracks and make things even other people are setting forth to just destroy the whole thing. That saddens me for our country, for our people, all people that live on this earth, we have a responsibility to love, care for protect one another, and we're just not doing that.

28:47:00 Walker Robinson: What do you think can be done to change that? Or have everyone love and caring protects for each other? Or do you think, gosh, if

28:59:00 Jamell Walker: I could answer that, I'm going to win the Nobel Peace Prize and I'm done. I'm good. Exactly. Thank you. I'm going to give you the answer and we're done. Just give me my award. I don't know. Walker. I think, I don't know. I think we all have to do our individual part. We all have a role that has to be played, and if we all accept our personal responsibility in making this world a better place, not just a better place for me and my children, but for all children, all animal, I mean, just all of us. The environment, the things we're doing to the climate are inexcusable and thinking, recycling is really going to help. I think that there are bigger and better ways that we could fix things, and we have to, how do I say this? We have to be brave and do what is right. That's my answer. I don't know how we're going to do it, but we've got to do it. This planet is being destroyed on so many levels.

30:13:00 Walker Robinson: What are the state of race relations in the United States?

30:18:00 Jamell Walker: Complete and utter turmoil? I don't know. I think that if you are a good human being, you have surrounded yourself with other good human beings, right? You've created a community of people that love and support you. And in my case, it's irrespective of race. That may not be the case for everyone, but again, we have a social responsibility that we have to fulfill. I hope we get it right for your sake, for your children's sake.

30:56:00 Walker Robinson: Me too. And what do you think is the future of the Black Lives Matter movement?

31:05:00 Jamell Walker: Boy, they've got a lot of work to do. It's just like the naacp. It's just like the ACL U. All of these beautiful organizations that go out of their way to make sure that there's equity in what is done in this society. We have to keep fighting. We can't just sit back and be complacent. We must keep fighting.

31:38:00 Walker Robinson: Absolutely. Well, thank you so much for your time. That concludes our interview.

31:49:00 Jamell Walker: You're welcome.

31:51:00 Walker Robinson: So much. That was really good.

31:56:00 Jamell Walker: You're still recording.