

Danny Williams Jr

My passion for activism and law derived from a long line of legal professionals in my family, which began with my great grandfather, Peter Addison Chappelle, a 1914 graduate of Howard Law School. Despite his education and honest career, my great grandfather had to witness his law firm and the other businesses of what is known as Black Wall Street crumble in the flames of the Tulsa Race Massacre in 1921. Due to generational trauma, I was aware of racial hostility and discrimination long before my ability to comprehend the unsubtle repressiveness of systemic racism in the US. Like generations of other Black Americans, my upbringing hinged on the notion of having to work twice as hard only to receive half as much. This mindset robs us of the just freedom of innocently dreaming of success without the fear of discrimination.

Nonetheless, I will not deny that each of us, no matter the economic background, are tasked to overcome an institution deep-rooted in racism to receive what the Census deems average for our compatriots.

Furthermore, as a North Tulsa-native, investing in my community is a goal I've had since I was a high school freshman. Instead of being overcome with anguish due to witnessing little economic growth, I charged myself with resolving neglected neighborhoods' desolate conditions. Upon graduating from the University of Tulsa (TU) in 2018, I began to accomplish my goal. I invested over \$500,000 in buying and rehabbing neglected homes to create nice affordable living in an area of low economic growth. While engaging with the community through my investment efforts, I have witnessed numerous counts of unjust levels of poverty compared to standards elsewhere in the US. Over the past 50 years, the middle class in the US has been adversely affected by factors such as the overseas departure of blue-collar labor, continually increasing inequality in public education, and failure to adjust federal minimum wage requirements to

account for inflation. These pervasive effects on the working middle class are economically stunting many Black communities, such as North Tulsa. Going to law school will provide me with the tools necessary to serve the people in economically depressed communities while serving as the voice for the voiceless through public service and advocacy.

Mainly, I witnessed the flaws of the system as I endured through the lack of diversity in my undergraduate studies and my post-graduate employment. While at TU, I was the only Black student in my program and one of fewer than one hundred in the entire School of Business. Recognizing the importance of diversity of race, sex, and religion, I pushed for change within the School of Business. I had several conversations with faculty members throughout my matriculation on directives to advance diversity. I contributed to the school's efforts to diversify by sitting on panels that brainstormed ways to reach students from underprivileged areas in the State. By the time I graduated, the School of Business had a 15 percent increase in minority enrollment, more than a quarter of those students being from underprivileged local high schools. Being a part of this subtle change in the status quo is one of my proudest accomplishments.

Moreover, during my time at TU as a student-athlete with a rigorous athletic and academic schedule, I expressed my passion for advocacy and community through local outreach and involvement. I made an effort to be a part of organizations that aimed to reshape the campus's divisions on societal issues and the Tulsa community-at-large. Appreciably, I had the opportunity to join the Association of Black Collegians (ABC) whose goal was to spread awareness of our innate obstacles on campus to faculty and students while mentoring the next generation to overcome these systemic obstacles. I also, co-founded a group known as the Black Men's Initiative (BMI) with other Black male athletes on TU's campus. The purpose of BMI was to be a face in the community through mentorship and service, specifically serving

underperforming public schools in low-income areas. While serving under BMI, our efforts were recognized by the University's Athletic Director and Vice President of Admissions & Student Success. Working with both ABC and BMI, I had the chance to mentor young children who had aspirations to become doctors, lawyers, and teachers but lacked the confidence to pursue it. The overwhelming lack of confidence in themselves had a persistent effect on me. In many cases, our brightest pupils' potential is hidden by the public school system rather than on display at an institution for higher learning. I take great pride in the network and community I am building, and it is an immense privilege to mentor the aspiring younger generation to help them shape their own narratives and futures.

I am proud to acknowledge that I beat the odds brought by a historically biased system, but I would be remiss to say it was easy. It was challenging to combat old, prejudiced mindsets, but I refused to settle for the excuse of failure due to fear of repression. These experiences in my life have given me a broader perspective on leading change in our society at large. I am confident that studying law will provide me with the academic knowledge I need to lead socio-economic reform in Tulsa and other US cities. I feel a vital purpose of working in a community dedicated to ensuring that all people, especially minorities, receive an uncompromised opportunity to succeed and contribute to a global society. I want to use a network of resources combined with existing local knowledge to create innovative educational and economic advancement policies.