Courtyard Conversations S3E2- Dr. Jason Shelton Transcript

Doughlas:
Welcome to Courtyard Conversations. I'm your host, Doughlas Gutierrez, and today I'm here with the one and only Dr. Jason Shelton.

How are you doing today, brother?

Jason:
I'm doing all right, sir. How you doing today?

Doughlas:
Man, I woke up this morning. Like I said, any day above six feet is a good day.

Jason:
I heard that. Well, it's an honor to be here. Honor to represent the Center for African American Studies here in the School of Social Work. So, it's all good.

Doughlas:
Awesome. Well, thank you again for your time. I know you had class earlier today, so I really appreciate you squeezing in and giving us this important time for this important conversation.

Jason:
No problem at all. Again, it's an honor to be asked to be here, today with you all.

Doughlas:
Thank you, thank you. Well, let's get started with today's program. Do you mind giving us a short introduction, background about yourself?

Jason:
Yeah. Dr. Jason Shelton, I'm a professor of sociology here at UT Arlington. Been here 17 years now.

Doughlas:
-Wow.

Jason:
I do research on what I describe as the fun stuff race, religion and politics.

Doughlas:
-There you go.

Jason:
And I chair a committee for the city of Arlington called the Unity Council, which addresses a number of aspects of inequality and disparity in our city and tries to enhance the quality of life. I know we'll talk about that a little bit later. Live here in Arlington. Have enjoyed it. I'm from Ohio. I grew up in Los Angeles, went to graduate school in Miami. So I've, experienced a lot of America and in different places. And, I know one of the things we have in common is we got that good ole Alpha Spirit ✊🏽 . So we're going to always highlight that along the way, sir.

Doughlas:
Absolutely, absolutely. And it's, it makes sense that you are in sociology. You are kind of aligned with social work, and you're doing the groundwork to actually advocates and benefits the community.

Jason:
Yeah. That's one of the things that I've always admired about social work. I think sociology and social work are very similar. There are similar assumptions and ideas that we bring to our research and our community involvement. One of them is essentially the idea of community. The idea of inequality is a part of life. And it's okay that we address it in different ways. I've, I've always enjoyed your faculty. Dr. Jandel Crutchfield is amazing. She is taking her research and translating it into the broader social world and trying to address and enhance, opportunities for people in the, our students in the Mansfield public. Mansfield, Independent School District. And I think that's one of the things that social work does amazingly well is that, of course, you all have what I describe as the nerdy professors who teach and do research. Right. But what you all also have are people on the ground.

Who who take those assumptions and and try to improve everyday life for a great number of people. And I really admire that. We as sociologists, we don't have as much of that aspect. We're sort of stick to the nerdy teaching and research part. But I've tried to do my part through the Unity Council over the last four years and trying to take those principles, the academic ideas of, of, of community and assessing inequality to sort of enhance the quality of life for people here in our city. And so, ironically, we just had a meeting last night. We meet in City Hall. Another one of your faculty members here in the School of Social Work, Dr. Darlene Hunter was there. And she was our one of our speakers last night. And she's helped our committee several times over the years serving as a speaker. And what she does is she's come in and shared her research. I do the same thing.

It's sort of guiding the committee to sort of track what are disparities in the city, whether those are disparities by race or by residents or, or or, ethnicity, gender. There's a number of different ways that we attract this, age. A number of different matters. And we track that and we, we look at research and we do interviews and we lay a report on Mayor Ross was the is the current mayor. Mayor Williams was the previous mayor. We lay reports on their desk that have

recommendations for addressing inequalities and disparities in our city to enhance the quality of life. So it's been great to be able to take the the academic principles and translate them into opportunities to enhance the quality of life in the city that I live in. Right. And, and that's been great. And again, I think social work has been doing that for a long time. And it's it's great to be able to sort of take that from a sociological perspective and try to follow you all in what you all are doing.

Doughlas:
That's well said, well structured, actually.
-All good.

Doughlas:
What's…You mentioned something earlier to kind of, aligning sociology and social work. Is it more of a bandwidth dilemma or just more of an area of focus in terms of the research and then the practical stuff?

Jason:
That's a great question. I think sociology is more focused on the research. And I think for social work there's a component, again, not all social workers, but there's a good strong component of I don't want to be a professor. I want to be on the ground to help people. And I think that we in sociology have that a little bit, but not like the how y'all got it. And you all have...

Doughlas:
A lot of passion behind it.

Jason:
Yes, devoted full careers to it. We devote this research project to what are those research projects to it, and we teach about it. But it's not necessarily devoting our full career to life on the ground in communities, in challenged communities and impacting people who are experienced difficulties in life. We don't get that the same way in sociology. And so I think that's really sort of, sort of career choices along the way.

Doughlas:
Kind of transitioning a little bit into the program for today. We are in February. February is Black History Month.

Jason:
Yeah.

Doughlas:
Dr. Shelton, what does Black History Month mean to you, and why is it important to continue celebrating it today?

Jason:

Oh, wow. That's a great question, bruh. I think well, for me, it goes back to, on a personal level, I had I had the honor and privilege of having all four of my grandparents until I was 28 years old, and I knew all four of them very well. And I, all four of them grew up... I had both of my dad's parents grew up in the segregated South. So I remember all those stories that they've told us over the years, right, about segregated busses and segregated lunch counters and their life growing up in the segregated South. On the flip side, my mother's parents, her mom grew up in Detroit in a in a black neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan, in, so she didn't grow up in the segregated South. And her dad also grew up in Detroit. But he grew up on the other side of town in a in a different kind of like the hood for Detroit. So it was, it was a really interesting to hear, to hear these. My grandparent's upbringing, what they all had in common was a rich history but they had different stories to tell. One one side in the deeply segregated South, the other one's in the North where they had more opportunities, but they didn't have the opportunities that white folks had.

And so they empowered us with a rich history, a rich knowledge, and told us, go out there in the world and make an impact. And that's what I've tried to do today, in my own way. And so I think Black History Month is critical. Black History Month is we have had so much to the richness of the history of this nation. Good, bad and ugly.

Doughlas:
-All of it.

Jason:
Embrace all of it. We have to embrace all of it. And, and I think that's critical for…Yes, we have come a long way in Black America. I remember my grandfather, my dad's dad. We called him Big Gene. Big Gene was one of them dudes, he never cried. I never saw big Gene cry over the arc of his life. And he lived to be 92 years old. I never saw him cry. But the night Barack Obama was elected, we were on the phone and it was my first year here at UTA. I started in 2008 and in August of 2008, and in November, Barack Obama was elected president.

And I called home to Ohio and I said, Grandpa, are you watching this? And I heard his voice crack. I heard it.

Doughlas:
-You heard it kind of leak through?

Jason:
I heard it,
I didn't see it, but I heard it. Yeah. And, that's when I knew. And he said, son, I never thought I'd live to see this. So I know for the arc of his life, he saw more progress in the arc of his life as an older man that he would have never imagined, and as a young man, which is why he left the South right. He was very clear about why he left the South, and he wanted more opportunity. So I know he could talk about the, the progress that was done. But at the same time, his wife,

my grandma, would always say, “baby, we come a long way, but we got a long way to go.” So we're not there yet. But yes, that's why I say good, bad and ugly. We've got to celebrate that history. We've got to acknowledge that history, but continue to move forward to close gaps that remain a part of modern day American society.

So that's why we need Black History Month to call attention to our rich history, to call attention to the good, bad and ugly, and help to give us direction on what happens next, to make sure that, we address inequalities and disparities that have been a part of American society.

Doughlas:
I love that.
You kind of answered this next one, but I want to be more specific. How has the recognition and understanding of black history evolved over the years?

Jason:
Well, okay, that's a good question.
I think, you know, when you talk about black history, you know, you're talking about Carter G. Woodson and the you know, there was a time where black history was not a month, but a week.

Doughlas:
-Yeah.

Jason:
Right? And and then you hear you hear black folks say it all the time. “Well, why they give us the shortest month?” Well, they didn't give us the month. We created this. Right? We created the week. It was black folks who created Black History Week. And then it evolves into Black History Month. And I say all that to say that that's why it's evolved in some dramatic ways in terms of length of time. But it also has to evolve in terms of what we teach our children. I won't get all too deep into it, but there are some research that shows very clearly that over the years, African-American parents aren’t passing on knowledge. We don't have conversations at home with our kids related to black culture and black history.

Study done some years ago that asked American kids to name five figures in black history. And as you can imagine, the most predominant names are Martin Luther King. They can say Rosa Parks. Those are the two predominant names. But after that, the name, the names fall off dramatically. It's in other words, these are the two prominent names. Some kids will say Malcolm X, and then some kids start saying people like, you know, Michael Jordan or Barack Obama. More contemporary names. Not names that go back. So in other words, what we've got to do is of course, we've got we hoping that schools will educate our children on Black History Month. And if they do, they're doing it
in February most of the time. And hopefully we can make this longer than February.

Jason:
But what's happening at home, that's what we got to do. We got to talk with our young people in informal ways around the kitchen table about African-American history and about African American circumstances. It can't just be a February thing, and it can't just be a thing that we allow the educational system to do. So we need to have informal conversations with our children about history year round, in about contemporary circumstances year round. That's how young people learn history and it just becomes a part of their life.

Doughlas:
It's interesting you mentioned that. I was I was discussing with, a colleague the other day that this, is kind of a lost art. That, with the advancement of technology, social media in the digital age.

Jason:
-Oh, yeah.

Doughlas:
Don't get me wrong, I think there are pros and cons to a lot of different things. Like from the tap, from the click of one button, I can have food arrive. I can have transportation ready for me.

Jason:
Yes!

Doughlas:
I can talk to my grandmother on the other side of the world.

Jason:
Yes!

Doughlas:
Technology has connected us in ways that we have. We could not have imagined.

Jason:
-No doubt.

Doughlas:
But there's always another side to the coin.

Jason:
Oh, yeah.

Doughlas:
Now, where communication used to be a lot more oral and verbally, Now it's digitally. And yes, there's a social awkwardness tied to it. There's the uncomfortable, authentic presence that makes people not that doesn't allow people to become vulnerable.

Jason:
Yes.

Doughlas:
Specifically with that, how do you think the age of technology has changed the way we transfer information to one another?

Jason:
I think in the in what we're talking about is a decline in the sense of community. Right? The idea of of eye contact, the idea of a handshake, the idea of knowing how tall somebody is. They used to call me Little Jay for a reason. You don't know I'm Little Jay until you're in the room with me. I'm a short dude, you know what I'm saying? And so, over the computer, you can't see that. And over a social media feed, you can't see that there's a lack of community there. And I think that's one of the things that we're seeing, not just, in America overall, that what we're seeing is a lack of people who understand other people, and we hide behind the computer for a lot of times, and we talk a whole lot of mess in front of a computer. People will say things over a computer, you know, they won't say to somebody, face.

Doughlas:
Yeah.

Jason:
And so again, it's, it's it's it's the role of technology. Now there are some upsides of that, don't get me wrong. And I agree with all the things that you said. It's made the world smaller. But we've got to make the world smaller. But also hold on to community, hold on to attachment, hold on to a deeper sense of of connection to other people that transcends the technology that's in our hands or at our fingertips.

Doughlas:
You also mentioned something earlier about having the children or younger, younger adolescents name icons in leadership. Now, this is from a Hispanic man on the outside looking in. I've heard of conversations that an issue within the black community is that the black community looks at sports icons and* entertainers* as leaders. What's your take on that?

Jason:
Oh, that's always been the case. We have. So you also got to think about this sociologically where what has what pathways have been open to African-Americans historically, athletics and entertainment have been a pathway. It's not been the same pathway related to education and

politics. Thankfully, we're at a point where now that is a pathway that is open to us in today's world. It has not been one historically open to us, and that's where that history is important. Understanding what pathways are available to us helps to explain why. Yes, even today, some of these young kids, even middle class African-American families in suburbia, are going to put some eggs in that basket, because that's a historical pathway that's been available to us. Now, with some of the parents got to realize is, your kid ain't really that good at athletics, so maybe you need to spend a little bit more time with helping that kid become stronger academically. Right?

Doughlas:
-Hit them books!

Jason:
Heck yeah. No question about it. But and yeah, I do think that there is
there is, there's truth in that argument that some of us, even middle class African-Americans, have put too much of our eggs in that basket. But I understand why they've done that. Because, again, historically, that's been a path that's been open to us. But now we need to convert, say, yo, you can be on that path a little bit, but yo, as you get a little bit older, homie, make that pathway to get a A and that history class, an A in that sociology class, an A in that English class. So widen the pathways that are available to you in today's world. They are there are more pathways available. We need to to put more eggs in those other pathways as as well.

Doughlas:
Well said, well said. I know you emphasize historically a lot. 2025 marks 160 years since the abolishment of slavery. How has life for the African-American progressed since 1865?

Jason:
Again, I'm going to go back to my grandpa's life and my grandparents' life. When I heard Big Gene's voice crack that night over the phone and he said, "son, I never thought I'd lived to see this." Again, that was a I knew then, and I had other signs of success in his life that he had, that he made it clear that he he never thought some of these things would happen compared to when he was a young boy in segregated, Edgewater, Alabama. So, yes, I know personally, hearing from my grandparents, my, I've told you about my dad's dad.

My mom's parents owned what we know is one of the oldest black owned businesses in the state of Ohio. And so they had a pretty darn good life, too. Bought them a nice house out in the suburbs. In of suburban Cleveland, Ohio, way back in the 50s. Like they that North-South thing I understood when my when my mother's mother said why they left Oklahoma, they saw more opportunity in Detroit. And that turned into Cleveland for more opportunity. And that was why they left. So my grandparents were very clear about the opportunities that they saw in the arc of their own lives between the late 1920s, when they were born. Up until, you know, my grandma, my dad's mom just died two years ago. So she they lived a long time. And so they saw a lot of change in the course of their lives.

Jason:
But again, as Grandma Shelton would say, “we come a long way. We got a long way to go.” So, yes, we've come a long way. We've had a black president. My daughters will hopefully see another one in the course of their life, and I imagine they go see a woman president at some point in the arc of their life. At some point, at some point they're going to see it. So there's going to be progress. America has always been a nation, and black folks get this two steps forward, one step back, two steps forward, one step back. That's been our history for centuries. And as long as we understand that, that's why it's called struggle. You have to be prepared to play the long game. My grandparents played the long game generations before us, played the long game. We have access in American politics in ways like never before. We're thinking that we're not playing that, that that this victory means we're not stepping back. We're going to take two steps forward and a step back. This is how the game has worked for us historically. It's how the game is going to continue to be played now. This is what our history has been. This is what we have to be prepared to do.

Doughlas:
I love that, first and foremost,
my condolences for your grandmother.

Jason:
Oh, yeah. All good. All good.

Doughlas:
When I think about what you said in terms of now, we are - black people are in positions politically. They're in positions academically. I think about the concept of a model.

Jason:
Correct.

Doughlas:
Having a model, having a sense of direction for the black community who historically have not had these successful pathways. A little bit about myself. So I'm a I grew up in a black and Mexican neighborhood, but I was the only Colombian and Guatemalan there. So throughout my whole life I've always had this identity issue where I didn't know who to kind of categorize myself with. When I played soccer, I was always with the Mexican kids. You know, when I was in AP classes, I was always with the white kids. When I was in my neighborhood with my friends, I was always with the black kids. So I never really had other fellow Colombians or Guatemalans to really socialize with.

Jason:
Yes.

Doughlas:
Leading into undergrad, I attended Dallas's only HBCU, Paul Quinn College.

Jason:
Yes.

Doughlas:
Where I also pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. 👍🏽

Jason:
What was it called again?

Doughlas:
Paul Quinn College.

Jason:
-And what was the name of the fraternity?

Doughlas:
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. 👍🏽

Jason:
-Yea, them ice cold boys.

Doughlas:
Ice cold boys. If you’re not first,

Jason:
- Ice cold boys.

Doughlas:
you’re last.

Jason:
-Yeah, yeah. Hey. Yeah.

Doughlas:
You know, first of all, servants of all, we shall transcend all.

Jason:
That's right. Yes, we do,.

Doughlas:
-But within my experience at an HBCU, I saw my first professor... First Hispanic professor, with a PhD. I saw my first black professor with PhDs. Almost everyone over there has PhDs, and I was never I. I hold pride even today with my fellow colleagues. I call them Dr. [insert last name.] I don't really see myself as a peer academically.

Jason:
Yes.

Doughlas:
On a first name basis.

Doughlas:
One, because it's an elder thing of how I was raised.
And two, status.
Yeah. Where I grew up,
I never had doctors around.

Jason:
Yeah.

Doughlas:
I think it's cool to say, you know, Dr. Shelton.

Jason:
Yes, sir.

Doughlas:
Dr. Jackson.

Jason:
-Yes, sir.

Doughlas:
Dr. Hunter.

Jason:
-Yes, sir.

Doughlas:
Representation!

Jason:
-Yes.

Doughlas:
How important is representation to you?

Jason:
It's a it's very important. When you see someone who looks like you, who's doing something that you think you want to do, then you know it's possible. And I can't speak for white America in that way, or I can't speak for Latino America in that way or any other form of American that way. But I know for Black America, not only for me, but a lot of people that I know, but I also imagine this translates to other groups as well. When you see someone doing what you think you want to do, you know, it's possible.

Doughlas:
-What does that do to you?

Jason:
It empowers you. It allows you to say what is possible until you see someone doing it, you don't know it's possible. And so that's why I think representation is important. One of those facts that I was I was going to say in answering a previous question is that so, I know the personal progress of black, of African American advancement, but I also know what research wise, one of the things that I study is the growth of the African American middle class. Black middle class has tripled in size as compared to the 1960s. Like, that's tremendous progress. We got more black doctors, we got more black lawyers, we got more black dentists, we got more black professors. We got more black folks living in suburbs. That's part of the reason why you got the outmigration of black folks from inner city communities who don't know the black doctors and professors that are out there, because those black doctors have moved out to the suburbs.

So that those black kids in, in any hood USA oftentimes don't see that growing black middle class because they've they've now migrated out to the suburbs. It's an access issue that yes, me included, I'm not going to sit up here in front. We moved out of the hood too. So that's the idea. And so, so yes, representation is key. And these young people need to see that. That's why you've got to take time to give back and to be involved in the community so that these young people see you. You cannot just move out to the suburbs and, and, and give up access and involvement and, in participation in the African-American community, you got to stay involved so you can inspire the young people behind you. So if you're going to move, you're going to move little J. Yeah, we did, and we weren't the only ones. But you got to come back and you got to invest in people so that they see the representation so that they see what's possible. That's a critical aspect of it. They have to see it. If they don't see it, they don't know what's possible.

Doughlas:
I knew you were a man of service when I first met you.

Jason:
Well, I come from a family where, I was taught that along the way. So, again, I'm going to be sociological. So as a kid in California, I grew up in LA. We grew up in you watch the movie Boyz n the hood. That's my hood, right? That's where I grew up as a kid. And, I had two parents that were college educated. I had two parents who had nice careers and were college educated. But there are a lot of little homeboys in the hood that my parents had more than. And my mom would buy pizza on Friday night for me and my brother, but she buy two pieces and she invite all the little homies that we were playing with outside into the house. Or at Christmas, she would tell us, Santa Claus, we got to go to the mall and buy some gifts us from people on her Christmas list. These are little homies on the block. Why are you buying them Christmas gifts? And we'd be like, mom, you know, don't buy them gifts. And she'd be like, you'll see why we buy them gifts because they don't have somebody

Doughlas:
-It's community.

Jason:
Well I'm like, mom, is Santa Claus going to bring them right, right, right. She's like, no, it don't work like that. And you know, and you realized later, here's what she did. And that's when we learn. And I'll never forget my mama told us, "to whom much is given, much is required." And it was the idea that we had more than the other kids on the block. You got to give more. You got it. Share it. And that's where we learned earlier in life. Yes, we did have more. My parents had nice jobs, but they gave more. And they didn't just give more out of their pocket. They gave through their involvement in church. They gave through their involvement in other ways, community involvement. And so that's that rubbed off on us over the years as well.

Doughlas:
Now, another question sparks in my head Dr. Shelton. Outside of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, the greatest fraternity in the world.

Jason:
-Yes, yes, it is.

Doughlas:
Outside of, Outside of, you know, being in a financially positive position, is there a duty to serve the community?
Is there a duty to serve your brother?
Is there a duty to serve the youth?

Jason:
I think the answer to that

I'm going to be real with you. The answer is no. There's not a duty, but there should be. You should have it inside you to want to do something for someone else.

Doughlas:
-Why...?

Jason:
That's a good question. I think the answer has to be a morally... Morally, there should be a reason to do something for someone else. If you want it. But, see, I kind of hear where you're going Doughlas.

I would want to say yes. You should. It should be a duty. But the longer I live, I realize we do have more options. We do have more choices. And I see where a lot of us, middle class African-Americans as well, I'm talking about with us and black people in general,
we're making some choices for less engagement, less involvement. So, for example, now I'm going to use this to go into some of my research. And you know this, I'm a steal one of your questions, you were going to ask me about my new book that came out. Yeah, I've got a book that came out about six months ago called The Contemporary Black Church: The New Dynamics of African-American Religion doing great, man. Go buy my book, y'all for real. The Contemporary Black Church: The New Dynamics of African-American Religion. It's got great press.

Doughlas:
-There you go.

Jason:
It's been featured in the New York Times, The Washington Post, a bunch of websites. I'm going to show up on, news in Boston. It hasn't gone live yet. A whole bunch of different things. My point, though, is that what you see is a big decline in the sense of community in black America, a big decline of engaged meant a big decline of people moving away from organized religion in Black America. A big decline in black's beliefs about discrimination. A big decline in a bunch of different things.

Religion is the story that I'm telling, but religion translates into a whole host of other changes in Black America. At the end of the book, I have this chapter about community, and what you see very clearly is black folks are moving away from the traditional organizations, whether it's the church, whether it's the fraternities and sororities, whether it's political organizations like the NAACP, black folks are moving away from those organizations. And as a result, we're losing that sense of community. So my answer to your question is that more and more of us use engagement and giving back as a choice. I get that choice.

It's because they're making it in America, [To where] their lives are so complicated, there's less time to do certain things. But we got to find the time. You've got to do that. You've got to find it in you to make that choice. If you make that choice, you're going to serve with a smile. You're going to serve because you want to do it, not because you feel like you have to.

Doughlas:
-It's not something on the check list.

Jason:
You want people to want to do it, to do it with a smile, to engage when you do it with a smile and engaging and you're making the choice, then that means you want to be there. And that's what rubs off on other people.

Doughlas:
I think you hit the nail on the head that in today's world, in today's time, especially here in the West, in America, there's just less time to actually live.

Jason:
Oh yeah.

Doughlas:
Because I mean 24 hours in a day, eight supposedly have to go to sleep.

Jason:
-Yeah.

Doughlas:
Another eight have to go to work.

Jason:
-Yes.

Doughlas:
One, has to go to lunch. So we're left with less than, you know, seven, eight hours of the day to actually do things we need to do, things top of commutes on top of restroom breaks. And I wanted to ask, is that more of an an American thing or is that the world?

Jason:
I think the world is getting faster, but America is getting fast. America has always been fast. But with the going back to your point about technology, good Lord, it's moving so fast. Our kids grow up faster. My wife and I sit around and talk about this. We have a 14-year-old and a 16-year-old, and we compare when we were 14 and 16 to this. Good Lord, it’s night and day.

Doughlas:
-Different world. x2

Jason:
Yeah. Much faster. Social media has just made their lives so much faster. They grow up fast. Their sense of a whole lot of things are just much, much faster. You can't turn off the technology. When we were shorties, you hung up the phone. It was over. Now you're getting text messages at all hours of the night.

Doughlas:
-Track location. All of that.

Jason:
Yes. All of that. Yeah. It doesn't. And and so I think this is a fastness of American culture, of American, technology. That and it's happening across the world. But America has always led on some of these mainstream cultural aspects. Our music, our culture. It filters across the world. And I think that's what's happening. So the world is getting faster to the point that America's is we've got to figure out how to slow some of this down.

Doughlas:
Got to.

Jason:
And that's how you get some of that community back, right? That's how you get some of this back, or you got to find some other ways to to engage with this.

Doughlas:
Dr. Shelton, what's one key takeaway you hope listeners will gain from this conversation?

Jason:
That's a good question, Doughlas. What what I always think about in the context of Black History Month and why we're sitting down here talking today. What I want people to know is that possibilities are available to them. I want here we are on a college campus. We have more young African-Americans getting college degrees than ever before. As I mentioned earlier, the growth of the black middle-class. It has tripled in size since the late 1960s. I want my students to be a part of that number. I want my students to see what's possible for them. I've been here 17 years. I got students that are they have gotten lot that are at law schools across the country that started here. I got students working on PhDs across the country, and they started here.

See what's possible for you. There's so much that is possible for you. And that's when I have to go back to again what my grandparents and their lives. There were things that they never thought would be possible in their lives that later in life would come to them. This is not Birmingham in 1942. This is Arlington in 2025. That's not to say that
every door is open to us, because remember, my grandmama said we got a long way to go,

but I want my young people to dream about what's possible for them. And I don't want dreams to stop them. I don't want you got to. I always think I have my head in the cloud, but my feet are on the ground and you figure out what's possible for you and you move in that direction.

We're always going to be told no, but you got to get up to the door to let them slam the door in your face. And there's probably somebody inside that room that's going to open that door for you at least a little bit. But you got to get up to the door to find out. And so what I want people to do is I want them to go for it. I am a professor who always you can probably pick up on this Doughlas, I'm optimistic. I'm going to let you tell me No, but I'm going to make it hard on you to tell me no, I'm going to go for it.

Doughlas:
-Yeah.

Jason:
You got to go for it. And that's what I want these young people to do. I want you to go for it. You're going to be told no, but you got to go for it anyway.

Doughlas:
In other words,
eliminate your fear of failure or success?

Jason:
Yes, we're all going to fail. We're all going to fail. But you got to keep it moving. Remember to step forward one step and step back. You got to keep moving. You're going to get the step back, but you got to keep it moving. And that's what I have tried to do over the course of my life. And that's what I want my students to do. To realize life ain't going to be easy, but you got to put yourself in a position to let the doors open.

Doughlas:
There's a famous quote,
I believe, by Frederick Douglass.
“Without struggle, there can be no progress.”

Jason:
Exactly.

Doughlas:
I find that to be at least more
and more as I get older in life, more accurate and very, very true.

Jason:
It ain't easy. The other thing that's funny to me is that young people think they can. It was good lord, this is about 7 or 8 years ago. Young person said that he was going to make his first million in five years. And I'm thinking to myself, good Lord, he ain't got no idea. It don't happen overnight. You got to play the long run. And I hope that young brother made his first million in five years. Maybe he did.

Doughlas:
-Maybe he did.

Jason:
But it ain't going to happen for most of us like that.

Doughlas:
-Fair.

Jason:
You got to get ready to play the long run in life. And the funny thing about is you play the wrong, the long game, of life. It happens quickly. If you'd have told me. My daughters, my oldest daughter is 16, it looked like she was just born like a couple of years ago. It happens fast. So you got to play the long game. It's going to happen faster than you think, but it ain't going to happen in five years. It will happen. You just got to give it time. Make smart decisions, get in the game. Stay humble, stay hungry and go for it.

Doughlas:
Awesome. Well said. Well, wrapping up our show, I did also want to give you some time to promote some events we have coming up in Black History Month. We have a special guest coming.

Jason:
-Oh yes, oh yes.
So all rights, all the Center for African American Studies.
Every year we have our annual conference. This year our featured speaker is the legendary --- Erykah Badu. She will be on campus on Thursday night, March the 6th, from 6 to 8 p.m. in Texas Hall. Tickets are free. Go to UTAtickets.com to secure your tickets. Y'all. The legendary Erykah Badu.

Doughlas:
And there we have it. Dr. Shelton, thank you again for your time. Thank you again for your insight, and thank you for all that you do in the community. Within Alpha, within the school and within your life as a human being. We really appreciate you [and] as a courtesy of our thanks and gratitude. If you look underneath your couch, we have something for you. It’s not goin’ bite you!

Jason:
Oh man, good looking out brother.

Doughlas:
Yessir, we really appreciate you again. And we look forward to the future success of your academic and professional life.

Jason:
-06 bruh 👍🏿

Doughlas:
06 to the good bruhs 👍🏽

Outro:
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