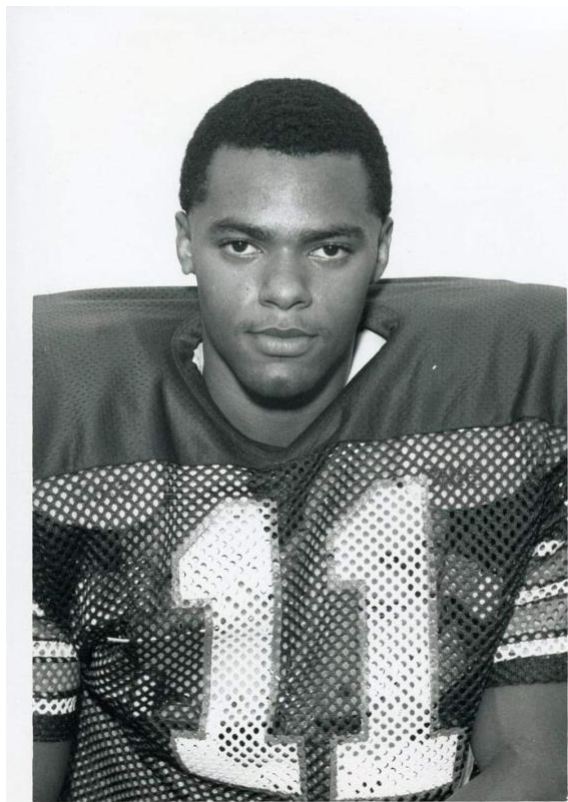


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How BC football player Quentin Williams, an ex-NFL exec and FBI agent, brings communities and police together

By [Tara Sullivan](#) Globe Columnist, Updated September 4, 2020, 12:25 p.m.

Quentin Williams played for Boston College in the Doug Flutie era.



M. Williams

Quentin Williams was deep in conversation with Devin and Jason McCourty, his guest appearance on the Patriot brothers' [June 4 podcast](#) delving into the painful aftermath of George Floyd's death May 25. As the three men talked about Floyd's killing at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer 10 days earlier, and the tidal wave of social activism it touched off, the flashes of hurt, anger, and sadness each was feeling radiated through the screen.

Suddenly, there were smiles.

Just as they were passing the one-hour mark of their discussion, Williams was interrupted by one of his children, her small voice wondering when a promised trip for ice cream would happen. Laughing, Williams pulled the child onto his lap. Then he said

something he knew would resonate with the McCourty brothers, something that should resonate with anyone paying attention to the state of the world.

"This is why I do it," Williams said. "This is it right here."

Williams is the founder and CEO of Dedication to Community, a national nonprofit aimed at creating a better world for all of our children, not just his own. D2C, as it's known, has spent the better part of two decades offering educational and training tools for bridging communication between local communities and law enforcement.

Which means Williams, the owner of one of the most diverse, impressive, and fascinating résumés you can imagine (one that includes a stint as a cornerback and special teams stud for the Flutie-era Boston College teams) is uniquely positioned for this moment. He offers precisely the type of proactive, solution-oriented framework these turbulent times demand.

And in partnering with more voices in the world of sports, including an agreement announced Thursday with the Miami Heat and the Miami Police Department, Williams is taking the many threads of his life — his mixed-race upbringing in New York poverty, his football scholarship to BC, his work as a nightclub bouncer in Manhattan in the late '80s, his graduation from St. John's University Law School, his work as an FBI agent and then as a federal prosecutor, his stints as an executive in the NFL and the NBA — and stepping into the void.

“Dealing with all the issues going on today is tough,” the McCourty brothers shared via text, “but we commend Quentin for diving in and using his experiences to help find a solution.”

His experiences. Where to begin?

Williams's professional bona fides are easily detailed, but it is the world he saw through those experiences that led him to work for change. He authored the book, “A Survival Guide; How NOT to get Killed by the Police,” in 2015, thinking it a guide for his then-unborn son.

The book recounts his own interactions with police, which included being stopped for driving while Black, one time being mistaken for a suspect and handcuffed while he was an FBI agent, complete with badge and gun.

Seeing the dire need for understanding from both camps, he developed an education platform, known as the recipe for reconciliation. It's built on eight ingredients: listening, learning, understanding, acknowledging, acknowledging our history, acknowledging where we are, where we came from, and why we're here.

“Our major focus for us is to save lives and then have those lives thrive,” Williams said in a recent telephone conversation. “We have a public safety initiative, working with law enforcement and community at large to bring them together as one community with the result being that we live in harmony, a more harmonious existence, a culture shift to do this. We do it all through education.

“We train law enforcement on how to serve better, not to police better, and we also service the community with that better-educated law enforcement. We connect them through vulnerability and pain. The community is in a lot of pain right now, and has been for some time. So has law enforcement as an industry, and none more than now.

“That pain is the connector. It reveals to everybody, more than the differences we all have, we have this sameness.”

To participate in his program is to show a willingness to learn, to grow, to hear each other, to communicate, to move beyond a moment of reaction that is rightfully rooted in anger and move toward a moment of action that can hopefully bloom into hope. From individual people to boards of major corporations, there is renewed focus on finding ways to act, to effect change, to find healing.

Enter Williams, who will remember Monday, June 1, for the rest of his life. One week to the day after Floyd’s death seemed to mark the opening of the activist floodgates. Williams’s phone rang nonstop, an avalanche that grew with each passing day.

“Before George Floyd, we were chasing after people to get them to listen to us,” he said. “We haven’t chased after people for months; they’ve been chasing after us. That makes me hopeful and inspires me.

“I am so optimistic, overwhelmed with joy about what is happening here. This movement is for real, and I’m very pleasantly surprised that it’s become a global movement. I would have never imagined that to happen. But the way people are making each other accountable, knowing action is the only thing that is acceptable, that silence is not acceptable anymore, that has never happened before, especially on a global scale, in my lifetime. I’m overjoyed.

“I feel there is so much change we have because of how we go there and I’m determined, and we are determined, not to allow George Floyd and those who came before him have not died in vain or suffered in vain.

“Looking at the sacrifices folks have made to get us here, I now genuinely believe we have bright days ahead of us.”

With more people like Williams standing at the intersection of time and circumstance, we have a chance. Inspired by his own mother, a white Jewish woman from New York abandoned by Quentin’s biological Black father from St. Kitts and then abandoned by her family, elevated eventually by loving grandparents and supportive community members, buoyed by committed educators and coaches, Williams learned to value relationships above all. He knows that the forging of them is our best hope for harmony.

“I always thought he could have been an executive in the NFL or NBA, but he didn’t want to do that,” said Jay Brustman, one of Williams’s mentors. “He is doing this out of the goodness of his heart, because he believes in the cause.

“And he’s not just doing it for the last four or five months. He was doing this 10 and 15 years ago. He’s not just talking the talk, but walking the walk. He had to scrape, he wasn’t born on third base.

“He struggled and he survived. And now he’s helping others.”



Williams, like many Black men in America, experienced racism at the hands of police. He recounts in his book an interaction in which he was mistaken for a suspect and handcuffed while he had his FBI agent badge and gun.

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