

Chapter 1 The Birth Path

From the moment we are born, there is a path set for us. Our parents were born with a path for them, and they set a path for us. Some parents want their children to go to an Ivy League school and go on to become a doctor or lawyer. Some parents want their children to go to a state university and go on to work a solid job. Some parents hope their child goes to community college. Some parents hope their child just graduates from high school. Some parents hope their child lives to see at least their eighteenth birthday.

We all have a path set in place for us from the moment we're born. The problem is, we don't usually question that path. We just hop on and follow it and allow it to lead us to misery. Sometimes we reach the destination and then finally get the guts to get off of the birth path and to go in a new direction. Right now, there are artists who can change the world with their art,

but they've settled for being a lawyer in their small city, handling routine cases. Right now, there are philanthropists who can help relieve hunger in thousands of lives, but they've settled for being an accountant because they were told that was a great major in college. There are so many people living beneath their dreams, walking the path set for them and never questioning it.

You have to question the path. We all need to write our own road map that will lead us to where we want to be, not where we were told we should be. Are you extremely happy doing what you're doing for a living? If not, you're on the wrong path. Are you at peace with your current lifestyle? If not, you're on the wrong path. Can you help others in the position you're currently in? If not, you're on the wrong path. If you were fired today, could you start your own company? If not, you're on the wrong path. As I was transitioning into entrepreneur life, I tweeted a quote: *If you don't build your dream, someone will hire you to help build theirs*. The quote went viral around the world. Others were quoted saying it, but I knew I wrote it. It came from my heart. It came from my spirit. It was deep inside of me, and I was feeling the pain of the truth in it. I feel that even if we work for someone else, that job should be our dream job. If it's not our dream job, then we should build our dream job, which will eventually replace our day job. Let a computer or robots do the meaningless, pencil-pushing jobs. A human shouldn't be doing meaningless work in the world. We all have a purpose to fulfill and filing papers just isn't enough. I used to file papers, so I know what it feels like; I used to stock groceries, so I know what it feels like. I used to work in a warehouse stacking heavy items on a pallet and driving it around on a forklift, so I know what that feels like too. I've done mindless work and it's a waste of time and energy. But yet that's the path that was set for many of us.

I remember my mother saying to me once, "Baby, I'll be happy if you just graduate from high school." I know you may think that's sad, but I didn't because I knew that's where her bar was.

All she did was graduate from high school, and her parents were happy about that. Where I'm from, dropping out of high school wasn't shocking. A lot of my cousins never graduated. Some family and friends died before realizing their potential. To graduate from high school was a real accomplishment in my family, and it was the most that most people did. On my mother's side, I knew only one family member who graduated from college. So the likelihood of graduating from college wasn't very high. That was the path.

Later in life, while in college, I said to my mom that I might become a schoolteacher and a high school sports coach. She told me she would be so very proud of me if I did that. She was always supportive of my dreams, but she didn't set the bar too high for me. She didn't want to see me reach and fail. She didn't want me to get hurt. She saw a certain level of reality around her and that was as far as she could see. My dad was the same way. He loved and supported me and gave me anything I needed to succeed, but he never set the bar high for me. He always told me to get good grades, but he never told me to try to become a doctor or a lawyer. I'm not sure that was possible in his mind. Often, we can only see as far as we've gone. It takes faith to see beyond that, and faith isn't as easy to come by as we think it is. My dad tells me often now that where I am is beyond his wildest imagination. I believe him. To be honest, I've actually surprised myself a time or two. It's because we weren't shown these possibilities growing up. Of course, we can't fault our parents for not seeing in us what we should see in ourselves. They may not be able to see more than what they are. They may want better for us, but they may not know how to help us get better. No matter what your age or where you are in life, you have to realize the path that has been set and start questioning why.

Ultimately, if you want to go where no one you know has gone before, you have to start leading yourself. You have to take control of your life and be willing to walk by faith. There's more in you than your parents know about. You have abilities and

gifts that no one around you knows the full extent of. You can shock them, and you just may shock yourself.

The path that our society has given us is to get an education. You get out of college with more debt than our job affords us to pay. Then, you get a job in a major company or be the major in a minor company. Then, you try to climb the ladder in that company, so you can earn more and pay more taxes to keep the system going. Essentially, we are told to follow the set path to misery and debt; in turn, we compromise our happiness, peace, and prosperity.

The most ironic thing about the path set for us is that we are often told to get a formal education to work for someone who started a company without a formal education. The formally educated people start working to help build the dreams of the entrepreneur. You'd think that after paying tens of thousands of dollars for an education, you would have been educated in a way that allows you to buy your peace and happiness. Instead you're miserable while getting the education, and then still miserable after the education because along the way you never questioned the path.

I love formal education and I think it's necessary, but what's also necessary is that you get to know yourself along the way. What's necessary is that you question the path that was set before you, and that you start to tweak the road map so it leads you to a more desirable destination. Don't follow a path to misery. I was on that path because it was set for me and it cost me a lot. The wrong path was handed down from generation to generation. The American Dream became a nightmare for many because they didn't realize that the dream they were pursuing wasn't their dream. It was a dream someone else had created for them.

While studying in school, you should spend just as much time studying yourself. Get to know yourself. Fall in love with yourself. Write your dreams from the bottom of your heart. Question the path that you were put on. Don't be afraid of a detour. Don't be afraid to map to a new destination.

When I came to an age of understanding, I looked around me and I saw three options: I could be overworked and underpaid like my parents. I could be a pro athlete like Tracy McGrady. Or I could be a drug dealer, thief, or criminal like some of my friends and family. What would I choose? What could I choose? Published author wasn't a choice. International speaker wasn't a choice. Celebrity life coach wasn't a choice. Business consultant wasn't a choice. Business owner wasn't a choice. Everything I am today was not an option presented to me as a child, not at home, not in school, not in church. There was a path set in place, and until I questioned the path, I was lost.

It's interesting to see what happens when you question the path. When one person gets the courage to venture out, others do too. You can break a generational curse. You can start a ripple effect. I was on the phone earlier today with one of my cousins. He didn't finish high school. He dropped out at about 14 years old. He spent 20 years living the street life before he went down a new path. Today, he was on the phone with me asking how to publish an e-book, become a speaker, and turn his mess into his message the way I did. He's questioning the path. He sees that there are other options than what we were shown growing up.

My father is highly gifted. He writes, thinks outside of the box, and has a profound amount of wisdom. Even though he's never been where I've been or where I'm going, he was able to give me wisdom along the way. He's been writing all his life, but never questioned the path. He wanted to be an author, a filmmaker, and a speaker. He didn't know it was possible for him to do those things. He saw the path that was set before him and he followed it. Like my mother, he also was the baby in a family of 12 children. His mother was murdered when he was 8 years old. His father was a very wise man, but being one of 12 kids, my dad didn't get as close to his father as he would have liked. My father dropped out of high school, got his GED, and then went into the Army. Some of his older brothers had gone to the Army and fought in wars, so he was following the path. He left the Army

after three years because it wasn't what he wanted for his life. He then went on to work several different jobs: a police officer, a mail carrier, a lineman fixing power lines. He worked in the hot sun 8 hours a day. He saw friends fall to their death from the power lines. His life flashed before his eyes many times. He didn't know that what I'm doing was possible for people like us.

I believe each generation should go a little further than the one before. I went as far as he had gone and then tested the possibilities. I laid new road. I found a new path. My parents were happy for me and they supported me, but they didn't hedge their bets and put up their life savings to assist me in my dream. They didn't know anything about the world I ventured into. But once I questioned the path it led my father to question his as well. A few years after I became an author, he became one too. Now he's written and published two books.

My mother, being the baby of 12 children, saw a lot growing up. I looked into my mother's side of the family, and I saw way more dysfunction than on my dad's side of the family. There was a lot of pain, and I didn't know where it stemmed from. There was abandonment, abuse of every form, crime, pain, and death. There was so much to get past. Relationships were a pain point on my mother's side. My mother followed her path. She told me that her teachers didn't teach her much in school. She said it wasn't long after integration when she started school, and teachers were still reluctant to teach black children. She said she didn't do any work really, but she always received a C from the teacher, just to pass her to the next grade. By the time I was in the fifth grade I could read and spell better than my mother. She wasn't illiterate by a long shot, but there was a lot she didn't know when it came to academics. That birth path limited her greatly because it told her what she could and couldn't do, and she didn't question it. She's said to me more times than I can count that she never applied for a promotion at work because she's insecure about her reading and spelling. She worked at a major insurance company for 15 years, so she was fortunate to

be there, she felt. She watched those around her go higher in the company and make more money but she never tried. Even after her ceiling was made a little higher, she didn't try to reach it. I couldn't blame her because that's how she was conditioned.

As I was growing up my mother would always say to me, "Baby, you're so smart." She was so captivated by my writing, reading, and spelling. I was just a little above average in our school system but nowhere near the smartest. I was always touched that she was so impressed with me. She would tell me, "Baby, you need to be writing for Hallmark cards." That would make my day. All my life she kept saying, "You need to be getting paid for your writing." She wasn't talking about this type of writing; she was referring to my poetry. It wasn't that good, but it was off the beaten path for us. It wasn't common in our family, neighborhood, or city. Those words of encouragement my mother would give me ultimately played a large role in me becoming the entrepreneur I am today. Although she didn't venture off her path, her words gave me some courage to get off of mine.

It's deeper than just having parents who knew themselves and what they could become. I look around and I see some people who were given everything. Their parents graduated from college and became successful in life. They received the best education and attended the best college. Their parents supported them every step of the way financially, but still failed to advise them to get to know themselves. Now, though they are well off, they are lost. They have money, trust funds, business connections, and the world at their feet, but they don't know where to go from here. They have bachelors, masters, and some even doctorates, but they're still lost. Yes, their path led them further but it still didn't lead to peace and happiness. I've seen some of those individuals still end up in prison, on drugs, and as failures. It's mind-boggling to think that a person whose path seemed to have so many advantages could be led to the same destination as a person who was perceived to have no real options. It all comes down to if you question the path and get to know yourself.

Think about your path. List 10 people you know and analyze their paths. What path was set for them? Did they stay on it? Did they get off of it? What became of them? Now what are you going to do? Are you on a path that leads to nowhere? If you're not on the path that was set for you, how is the one you're on? Is it where you want to be? If it is, are you going to show others how to get on it?

To be honest with you, I still struggle today with the path that was set for me. It's always there. It's in my mind. It's all around me. I'm not on that path in my professional life, but what I realize is that our birth path is made up of many roads, and we all struggle with different aspects. One person may reach their goals professionally but suffer socially. Another person may reach their goals financially but suffer spiritually. Some suffer emotionally, financially, or physically. You have to recognize your weaknesses and pick your vices wisely. Question every path you're going down and make sure the destination is desirable.

Think of your path as a road to success. Each lane on the road has to lead to success. It will do you no good to make a million dollars and then die early from liver problems because of your drinking habits. It will do you no good to make a million dollars and then have a short miserable life filled with toxic relationships. Think about your paths. You don't have to be just what your mother or father were. You don't just have to be what your grandparents were. You can be more. Even if they are all great people, you can still be more. You can be better. You can grow and further the possibilities for generations to come.

Take some time to really think about what it is you want to become. Think about who you have already become. Confront the issues in your life. Look at the things you picked up without even realizing that you were taught how to settle or how to hurt yourself. Be willing to start fresh and new. Be willing to go alone and make a new path that your children can follow. Don't be mad at your situation. Don't blame your parents for what they didn't teach you because they could only teach what they knew.

Be thankful for what your parents could give you, and learn from their lessons, as well as their mistakes. It's time to make adjustments and get on the path you'd like to be on.

Anything is possible if we want it to be. We can start way behind the rest of the pack and still finish first. There is a lot of power in the human will. There will be distractions, setups, and setbacks, but you have to keep going despite everything else. There are those who will doubt you and count you out, but if you have a real desire to succeed, then failure is not an option.

We've heard so many stories of people who overcame obstacles that seemed unbearable and still made it. You can be one of those stories.

