

# SHOWNOTES - Tony Reddick (24/50)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Tony Reddick (Guest), Scott Hilton (Host)

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Scott Hilton (Host) 00:14

Welcome again to the last my dad podcast. thrilled to have Tony Reddick here today, Mr. Reddick as I like to refer to him, he, he told me as we went in, and we can be informal. Tony is the superintendent of schools and guests and city schools and Gaston, Alabama. And, Tony, this podcast goes literally all over the world. But you know, I'm I don't think everybody all over the world watches it. But we did have people from several states and several countries actually that chime in and told us they're watching. So for those of you who have heard not from guest, and let me just tell you that the the school system here has seven elementary schools eight Elementary, okay, got that right. I missed one. Three middle schools, one high school, and roughly 5000 students. Yeah, just 1000 How many employees 625, you got your work cut out for pretty much so yeah, that's quite a big job. Tony is a well known and very highly respected guy in our community. You know, one of the things we're trying to do here is, we realize that a lot of kids don't have the good fortune to grow up with a father in their home. And in my opinion, that is, fatherless homes are the worst epidemic or pandemic that we have in our country today. I think a lot of our social problems can be related to that. You have you have a heart for children, even even though you're the superintendent, I know this, I'm gonna tell a secret on you. Because I've asked people watching you, you didn't know that. Even though you're the superintendent. Yeah, you still slept down to the to the to the parents center. I do and mentor is one on one. I do. I don't know that a lot of school superintendents actually still take the time to do that. I do tuck Why do you do that? What What's your motivation with?

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 02:09

Well, you know, I grew up fatherless. Sharing, my mom shared with me that I saw my dad, which I wouldn't remember when I was 18 months old. And I didn't see him again until I was 17 years old. And I saw him once again at age 18. And I have not seen him since then. So I was I was raised fatherless single mother. She gave birth to 13 kids, nine of which lived. So I was raised in a home with a single mother, and eight brothers and sisters. And so I learned a lot in that relationship that I had with each of them, each of them having their own respective needs. And so I grew up really wanting to be an example of what a person could do. without a father, I was shared with a little bit early, I started writing a book about that, because I hear lots of men,

especially men from my particular background and community lament over how difficult life has been for them. And they attributed to not having had a father. So I thought, Well, no, I mean, you can learn a lot from not having had a father just based on the things that you wished you had. If had you had a father, so you become that kind of father, you know, and one of the things I'd like to talk about is providing for my kids in particular, not what they want, or not what I didn't have, but what they need. And so I discovered that there are a lot of other needy children out inside the community as well. It's just not my kids. And I reflect back on anyone who ever did anything for me. When I was most in need, and I vowed even as a child that I would I would I would pay that back forward for the rest of my life. Wow. So you write 18 months, we Sorry, that was he just they just abandon you or Well, yeah, that's the way I would describe it. You know, my mom and he had, you know, I don't know if it was a rocky relationship between the two of them other than just he was just a wayward guy. You know, he just my mom described him as having come home and take off her tent and taking off his overalls on a Friday night. She might not see him again until Sunday evening. No. And so my older brothers and sisters probably had a little bit more experienced with him and perhaps a little more fondness for him. I didn't have an opinion one way or the other other than realizing that I got here through the union between my mother and my father. So I always made it a point to call him on his birthday, which is August the 25th. And on Father's Day, every year, I may have missed a year or two, but he passed away just a few years ago, about about 556 years ago, he passed away, but I never had a real relationship with him other than you know, talking on the phone, and I got the sense that he was very proud of me for the accomplishments I had made. Up until that point in my life. He lived in Cleveland, Ohio. And I think I stated that I never assigned enough importance to trying to go and see him there. Much like, you know, he may not have assigned enough importance to come to see me either, where I grew up in Boston, Massachusetts.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 05:24

So you saw him and when you were 17, what were the circumstances of that?

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 05:28

Well, he was he was he asked to come and see his children. He asked to come and see his children, my mom agreed to it. They never divorced, they were married into his death. And so he did come. When I was 17, he only stayed a day or two. And then the following year, on his birthday, my oldest brother invited him to Boston back to Boston to celebrate his birthday. And that was the last time I'd ever seen of him.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 05:54

So growing up without and without a father in your home, you had older brothers and sisters. So I have

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 06:00

four older brothers, three older brothers, I'm sorry. And one younger brother and three younger sisters one older older sister but my older brothers were older enough then I to kind of be out

sisters, one older, older sister, but my older brothers were older enough, then I to kind of be out on their own striking out on their own. So there wasn't a great relationship. And we loved each other, obviously. But they were busy trying to make make ends meet and, you know, work on their own lives. And so I was the middle child. So I spent a lot of time really just developing on my own. You know, in a family that size, you find that that different siblings kind of pair off a little bit. So my two older brothers kind of paired off a little bit, my oldest sister next older brother, he kind of paired off a little bit, then it was me in the middle. And then the next child was five years, six years younger than me. Okay, so I had twin sisters have twin sisters, still, they pay it off a little bit. It's my youngest sister and youngest brother, they paired off a little bit. And so they I was in your

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Scott Hilton (Host) 07:01

home, oh, you know, where you were? Was there somebody in your life? Or was there a man in your life and a mentor her?

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 07:07

Well, we grew up in a neighborhood where, I don't know the exact number, but there were three men in the neighborhood who live with their wives and biological children. And so we would often, you know, just idolized them as fathers in the neighborhood. Now, they weren't the best of men, but they weren't the worst of men, you know, they had their faults, like many did growing up where we grew up, but they were the ones who will kind of look to as, as father figures for us. Certainly my mom, you know, had some friends had some male friends. And, you know, they served their purpose in as far as being father figures as well. But that wasn't always a long term relationship. And so I dependent for the most part on just those few men, and just dreaming really just dreaming more than anything else, you know. I mean, Fred Flintstone was man, he was the father of the year.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 08:06

So you would actually watch something like Fred Flintstone, and he would you would visualize what these things look like, Well, between

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 08:12

that and Leave It to Beaver, and dig Van Dyck and shows like that you get this image of what a family should should look like, with a father in the home. And I thought all my life Well, yeah, no, that's, that's, that's what I want. You know, I want that kind of lifestyle as well. So what

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Scott Hilton (Host) 08:28

do you think it was about you that that some people now don't get that? Well, it's kind of picked up on stuff?

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 08:35

For sure. Yeah. Well, I'm a pretty modest person. You know, it's funny that you'd ask that question, because we were part about theme for in service this past year, was to introduce myself to some and reintroduce myself to others, you know, so I think that when, when I'm out and about being an administrator, or just an educator in general, everyone knows that I have an open heart. I work with anybody. You know, I love kids. And I'm a servant. You know, I'm a servant. And so, I feel like people have a great deal of respect for that, but maybe they don't really know me from a background point of view. So most of my life from college on the perception of me was that I was just raising them in a well to do household, which was actually the opposite of that now was a loving household. But you know, you can imagine with eight kids and a single mom, very difficult, you fought a lot to, you know, get the last piece of meat or whatever happened, if there were any leftover at all, you know, our family loved each other. You know, we knew that we were limited in terms of resources, but as long as we cared for one another, we were gonna be okay. You know, there's some qualities and having a big family. And so we took advantage of every one of those qualities like you know, having friends. For example, you know, having someone to talk to someone to teach you how to defend yourself or stand up for yourself. You know, my older sisters and brothers were really good at that. My older brothers, you know, joined the military. And so they were away for a while. So they were they were kind of out of the picture until I got to be a teenager. But I had the pleasure of being recruited to attend a very prestigious private school in Massachusetts called St. Sebastian's Country Day Preparatory School for Boys. And I remember, Mr. John, I think it was John Moran came to visit me at a local public middle school and asked me if I was interested in going to a private school. And I thought, well, you know, I think Michael Jackson goes to a private school. So yeah, a little I know, he'd gone home after he met with me and two others, had gone home to our home and spoke with my mom about it. So when I got home from school that day, she just said, Hey, a man came and talked to me about you going to a private school, do you want to go? And I immediately say, Yeah, I want to go. And sure enough, that fall, fall of 1973, I was headed to Newton, Massachusetts to attend St. Sebastian's. We were told what the school was like, we had not had a previous visit. So we just, you know, got there the best way we could, which in our case, meant a one mile walk, three buses, a train, and then another one mile walk. It's about two hours each morning to get to school that of course, the same two hours or more getting home from school.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 11:41

Wait a minute, so you did this every day, every day, every day, every day. Yeah. So I'm wondering, when this gentleman came to your school, what did they see in you? Why do you think he picked you?

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 11:51

Well, we he was looking for the three top performing students in the seventh grade at at the Theodore Roosevelt school. And myself and a gentleman named Alvin Wilkins. And Carl for RA, who is now deceased was one of our best buddies. Now to CSUN. He went on to be a lawyer for the Nuclear Regulatory Agency, we would have top three students. And so we will each offered at the time \$11,000 scholarship. Now today, it costs \$45,000, to go to that same school, and we were determined that we were going to go the other two gentlemen took a hiatus one for

about two years, the other four year, and I stayed for the entire five years. And I think, you know, it made a lot of difference in my life. The one thing about my father that I, I was very proud of certainly after the fact that is when he died. And my my brother went to to, I want to say the funeral and brought back some of his belongings, I learned that my mom had always sent him newspaper clippings, you know, I'm fortunate enough to be featured in a newspaper quite quite a bit, either for my, you know, basketball or something else that I've done with maybe some children's theatrical groups and those types of things. And my father had all those clippings.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 13:13

So he was proud of, you know, what does what does that mean to you now to know that you met your father?

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 13:19

Yeah. Well, it means the world to me, because I think about the number of people who I've encountered in my life who grew up fatherless. And rather than accept the challenge of going it on your own, you know, they maybe find fault with the absentee father in the absentee father should not be a reason not to accomplish something in your life.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 13:44

So tell me about the fatherhood book, what is your purpose in writing that?

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 13:49

Well, I heard a young man lamenting over not having what what actually what I heard was him just it was on Facebook, he was just posting on Facebook, that he was really just really upset about his, with his father for some reason. And I got to thinking to myself, well, I mean, man, you know, you have at least you have a father that you know, to be mad at. And I knew this gentleman had gone through some some hardship. Because he was a former employee with us in the school system. And I, you know, we don't visit each other's homes, but I consider us good friends. And so I was curious as to the fact that we're curious about the fact that there are a lot of men, it transcends race and ethnicity and those kinds of things. But I was particularly concerned about an African American community where the absentee father seems to be an epidemic, you know, and some may disagree with that assessment. But I was I was concerned as to what what it was that made him so upset with his dad that he would say that things that he did on Facebook, and I started thinking about the fact that I I didn't have a father to to speak about that way. My relationship with my dad was long distance. Again, I only met him to my knowledge twice in my life. And my mom shared with me about the 18 month old. And I thought, you know, I need to try to help somebody, I need to use my, my success, I would call it the time as an example of what one who is raised without a father can accomplish.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 15:29

SCOTT HILTON (Host) 15:15

So your book is going to go from your childhood, to your grandchild grant. And that's, that's what we call breaking the site. That's exactly right. Generational break away at 18 Point 4 million children growing up and fatherless homes just in the United States, according to the census bureau, so so your book is is a story of your life, and I can't wait to I mean, I've heard it, but now I'm sure there's gonna be more detailed stuff in there. You know, there's probably a lot more than we can miss gay or anything. Yeah, there's more than we can unwrap in this podcast. So I'm so thankful to you for for trying to do Inspark, I want to ask you a couple of short questions as we kind of close for that young man that's in the Gaza, city school system or anywhere for that matter, you struggling with your situation with a situation that you are in without me. How does he overcome that? What's he gonna do

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 16:24

perseverance and let me share if I may, a couple of success stories. And I use these gentleman's name, they've given me permission to use during my tenure as a teacher, and it ended when I became a principal, I had the pleasure of operating a program called Reach out, you know, sponsored by quality of life health services, and I went into the Cali homes, and also the housing development on 11th. Street Jack, Jack think is Jacksonville court. And we had the Reach Out program. And there I think every kid there was fatherless. You know, every one of them. So they had an opportunity to to I had an opportunity, I should say, to be a father to them as well. In fact, I was sharing a story where a disgruntled mom approached me about something and although she was mad at me, she was mad at the child. And I remember her saying, These are my kids. And I said, Ma'am, they're my kids, too. And I saw her just kind of back down a little bit, because she realized I had been a father to her kids as well, you know, there was nothing those kids needed a one that I didn't provide for them within means, including, you know, I'm gonna say outside of my role as an employee with quality of life health services. So that that for me, you know, laid the foundation for for being a father figure for so many kids. There were two young men in particular, there was a it was a two boys and a family of five. The names are Dirk, and Jerome forbs. And drums, the oldest, and those kids really struggled to the point to where, when they were in school, they were ostracized. They close weren't what everybody else had. They, they weren't as well groomed as most everybody else. You never went into their apartment, I got a peek in one time and it was just just bare minimum. They're the longest show the story is today, and they've come to my home a few times. And you know, throughout their lives, they've always invited me to the special events in their life. Jerome was the first to call when I was principal at Litchfield. He said, Mr. Reddick I want to invite you to my graduation. I assumed he was talking about high school because it since left Gadsden and moved to Birmingham. I assume he was talking about his high school graduates at gray wood High School. He said no, I'm graduating magna cum laude from miles college with a degree in computer science. Next call I got from he was graduating from Tuskegee, I believe it was long short of a Jerome for is now a senior electrical engineer for the Raytheon Corporation. And he's a two time by narrative minority Engineer of the Year, he proposed to his wife on the Eiffel Tower. I mean, you talk about so

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Scott Hilton (Host) 19:23

this is a kid that was disenfranchised, or whatever we want to call it. Yes.

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 19:28

His brother Dirk is the owner and president owner of innovative home builders, the company that rebuilt Pratt City after that 2011 hurricane. He's also a movie producer, an actor. All they grew up in Jacksonville court and Sixth Street housing community. And each time those kids accomplish something, they would call and say Mr. Reddick we want to thank you for all you did for us. So after a while, I started to get a little uncomfortable as I'm thinking, guys, y'all did Probably all of this on your own. Yeah. But what they were saying is when no one else believed in us, you were there, you were there providing for us whether it was a meal, or low money here, their clothing, a hair cut a trip, you know, to someplace they've never gone into this day, I can call those guys on the phone, and just to see how they're doing, and they say the same thing. We wouldn't be here without you. And I have to tell them, now you guys had it in you the whole time. Baby, I contributed to helping you find it. Maybe you saw in me something that you want it to become. And you use your steadfastness in achieving that. And so there are others but but those two are the two that I talked about.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 20:52

The message there is that if you want to make it in life, you want to have a better life. There's a way and there will be people just like you are you stepped into their life. But you didn't. You recognize something, somebody recognized something than you when they came to you and said, Do you want this scholarship? That's right. And I think the message to the young people out there is if you'll give it the effort. And you'll look for the people, there are people who will come along and help you absolutely, if you're really willing to do your part. And you're an example of that you're not only example of a recipient, but your example of paying it forward. I want to I want to give you the opportunity to say something to your mom. Yeah. I mean, she must be an incredible lady to a third raised are you guys, you know, by yourself and just do this, look into this camera? I came with it. Okay, give you a chance to dress your mom. And then we've got a little gift we want to give you Okay, great, great.

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Tony Reddick (Guest) 21:53

Okay, well, listen, Mom, I absolutely adore you. Everything that I am today, everything that I aspired to be. It was not just for myself, but in celebration of you, a strong matriarch. And despite all of the odds that face you as easily as a young girl, yourself growing up in Preston, Georgia, you overcame that you you put your dreams aside, because of your way with husband, my father, and you just still persevered, you, you love your children, each one equally. And I know that there have been times when some some have asked you, well, who's your favorite child, and all of us could have stuck on chest out and said, It's me, it's me, it's me. But that was not the case, all of your children have always been your favorite child. So it's almost as if we were grouped in one. And I'm so proud of you for enduring all of these years to hard work through the work and three jobs through caring for folks, but at the same time, enjoying life for yourself. And I want to tell you that every step of the way, I've understood everything about you every decision you had to make for your children, and I've appreciated you being somewhat independent in your own right to enjoy life for yourself. I know it wasn't easy. I know it's not easy now. But I'm so proud that you think enough of me to call me from time to time and say, I need something. And you always tell me, I wouldn't call you if I didn't need it. I want you to call me if you don't need it. I just enjoy being in a position. Now. Thanks to you, to be able to give back to you. You always said that, that we didn't ask to be here. And

to a large degree, that's true. But just because we didn't ask to be here doesn't mean that we shouldn't take the opportunity to celebrate you, as we have all of our lives. And so I love you to the end. I'm wishing that you fulfill that goal, to live to be 100 years old. And you look like you're well on your way. And so I wanted to just take this opportunity again to just tell you that that I don't know if I even have enough love to give you but what I got along with our family, our immediate family, Belinda and Evan and Lindsey and even the grandchildren who you haven't gotten to know just yet. We'll pour it out to you to the very end. I love you. I hope you have a great day and had a great birthday.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 24:43

That's awesome, you know, generational blessings? Yes. They go on for generations. And your mom passed one down to you and you've passed one down to your kids. And we kind of went behind your back and go



24:59

hey, my name even read IQ. And I feel honored to be talking about my dad. So one of the main qualities that I like about him is his selflessness. He's the kind of individual that goes above and beyond in anything he commits himself to. He has a dedication to his professional life, his community and his family. I feel honored to have a father like him. I just want to say thanks, dad, and I love you.



25:29

Hi, I'm Lindsay Hardy. And Tony relic is my dad. For as long as I can remember, my dad has been a guiding force in my life without saying a word, and he has plenty of words to share. His example showed me everything I needed to know. My dad's always been there for others in the community. But he has always been one of his family's biggest supporters, interior leaders. Even after a hard day, it would seem to be saving the world. He always had time to spend quality time with us. Sometimes we went on those world saving missions with him. But that was just the beauty of his care. Again, he showed us through his actions, the proper way to do things. Seeing him now with his grandkids is such a delight. He's still such a big kid who will just get down and play with them until he takes a much needed nap. I'll throw that with the babies. I'm thankful to have a dad who shows his love and commitment every day. We love you, dad.



26:32

My name is Belinda Redick. Tony and I had been married for 38 years. He has always been a wonderful husband, father, and now grandfather.



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He's overly generous with his time for both family acquaintances. And basically he has a way of making everyone he encounters filled with your special





27:05

he's extremely dedicated to his colleagues, students, and basically anyone who needs his assistance I can honestly say that he has been exactly the same man since I met him in college 40 years ago.



Scott Hilton (Host) 27:24

Okay. So how does it make you feel?



Tony Reddick (Guest) 27:33

I feel accomplished. You know. That's what it's all about. You know, perpetuation, you know, to the passing down because he's gonna be a better dad to his son than I was able to



Scott Hilton (Host) 27:50

be for me more people like you. Thanks. Thanks for coming and sharing.



Tony Reddick (Guest) 27:54

Thank you. Thank you. It's been a pleasure. All rising pleasure. Thanks.



Scott Hilton (Host) 27:58

I hope we've inspired somebody we're trying to break cycles of generational fatherlessness trying to inspire guys to be the next Tony Reddick. You know, if you're watching, you can be the next Tony Reddick. There's nothing to stop you. There'll be people that will come and help you and this inspiring young fathers to be great dads. It's what it's all about. So thanks for your story. We'll look forward to seeing you guys next week.