

Lydia Jones Cole, Author QBP Media Interview with Doug Williams and Will Downing

You Must Be A Jones: A Family Memoir – by Lydia Jones Cole

Doug Williams:

All right, it's time to have our interview segment. And well, we got a special guest on the phone. As a matter of fact, she's a former colleague of mine. She's a media specialist who was at one time, Vice President at Black Entertainment Television. Great, great person. And she decides, all of a sudden, she wants to write a book. We want to talk about it. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Showgram. The one and only Lydia Cole.

Lydia Jones Cole:

Thank you so much. It's an honor to be here. Thank you so much. And it's certainly great. hearing your voice again. Hey, it's

Doug Williams:

Good to talk to you. And I'm glad I get to talk to you. My friend Will Downing and because what I was telling him about you, I said, does the name Lydia Cole ring a bell.

Will said, yeah, why? Why

I said, yeah, BET. He's like, right! And he was writing the book. He's like, Wow,

Will Downing:

It makes me sound like I'm not doing enough with my life. When Doug started this segment off, he had mentioned, as he just mentioned, a second ago, BET. Take us back there just a little bit. Tell us about how you got there. And the some of the amazing things that you've done, I want you to toot your own horn for a second.

Lydia Jones Cole

Well, thank you. Well, I, when I arrived at the BET, I had already worked for 11 years in the local TV market in Washington, DC. And I've worked in some of the best professionals in advertising and promotion at the local TV station. When I arrived at BET, the network was still working to expand its distribution and gain widespread national visibility. So it was it was a great opportunity for me to take all the knowledge that I had learned in the local market and apply it to what was at that time, a burgeoning national network. And so it was, you know, I really got to expand and spread my wings. And my first big opportunity was where I pitched the network on doing a major branding campaign – 35-millimeter branding campaign. And I brought in a crew from Los Angeles and the result of that was that we were able to raise the network's visibility and

professionalism in the eyes of advertisers and cable system operators. So that's positioned me for a lot of growth and a lot of opportunities. As the network grew, I gained more responsibilities. Eventually, as Doug said, I became a vice president and oversaw the program, production for music programming and acquisition of programs, Creative Services, graphic design, program management, for two networks, well actually three networks, for BET, for the jazz channel, and BET radio, which is where I met Doug.

Will Downing:

Wow!

Doug Williams:

Man, she handled that.

Will Downing:

Yeah, all that to say, BET wouldn't be what BET is, and what it became, had not been for Lydia Cole?

Lydia Jones Cole:

Well, I certainly had the opportunity to have a role – we had a, we had a really good, small team of people that – in leadership positions, that we gave 150 percent, and you know, were just excited to be a part of watching the network grow into something that, you know, was really impactful and powerful. And not just the African American community, but in the culture of America.

Will Downing:

Wow. Wow.

Doug Williams:

Speaking of culture; what made you decide to write a book?

Lydia Jones Cole:

Well, you know, I, as I got older, you know, I had a lot of – as we all do – you know, we go out to the world, and we have lots of different experiences, then I realized, I met people who (pause) you know, who kind of had, some of them, a different kind of upbringing, than I. And at the time, I thought that, sort of, my life was pretty boring, my upbringing. But as I grew older, I realized that one – it was a story that wasn't often told and that also had so much, it's so, spoke so much to the heart of the black community. And, so I felt like it was a story that that needed to be told that there were few stories about real lives of real black folk. And our stories seem to be hidden, and too often our lives were characterized as lacking love and a sense of security and warmth. And that wasn't my experience or experience of anyone I knew growing up. So I wanted to share

our story and show the story of many African American families. So, I wrote my family story.

Will Downing:

Well, tell us a little bit about your brother. One of your family members, your brother played a very big part in history. Just tell the audience just quickly about that.

Lydia Jones Cole

Well, my, my brother, Michael, was one of four students that integrated the first school – integrated the first white school in the state of Virginia. It was a really, really big deal. And it was a culmination of years long struggle between, with citizens associations, and my parents and the parents of other people in three small Black communities in Arlington, Virginia. Two of them were in – are in South Arlington. And then the community where I grew up in Halls Hill was the only African American community in North Arlington. And they fought with the county, for oh man, I guess, into the 40s and the actual integration didn't happen until 1959; to get the county to integrate the schools or to give, you know, equal resources and books, and all of that.

And so, there were lots of court cases, the NAACP lawyers, Thurgood Marshall was on some of the teams at some point, that, not the one that won the case that my brother was a part of, but over the years, he was involved in fighting the state of Virginia to integrate the schools. And so the culmination, as I said, of that was four students, and there had been many, up to 30, I think the newspaper said that in Arlington, in Arlington area that had petitioned the court and gone to court to be allowed to go to schools that actually were closer to us than the schools that we then the high school and junior high school in particular where we had to attend at the time. I didn't attend it, but my brothers and my oldest brother did. But we had to actually go by those schools on the way to get to the school that only Black High School in Arlington. And eventually, in 1958, the judge decided that four, they picked four students. And my brother was one of those four, and he and three other students that lived in our community, integrated, what was called then at that time, Stratford Junior High school. They actually since changed the name of the school to one of the people who live in our community who was a really, very, very vocal and present in the fight for integration. So now named after a Black woman. All right, but yeah,

Doug Williams:

We got two minutes left Lydia, why should a person curl up and read a good book called, You Must Be A Jones?

Lydia Jones Cole:

Well, anyone that likes memoirs about family dynamics and history, they would like my book. You know, they, they would, it's something that they would enjoy. It gives you a glimpse of the dynamics of growing up in a family, and how what was going on in the country at that time impacted African American families like mine. So, it's full of stories that will warm your heart, make you laugh, cry, and give you hope.

Will Downing:

And how can people stay in contact with you as well social media wise?

Lydia Jones Cole:

On social media – Instagram, my handle is @lydiacole2. The number two, and on LinkedIn is at its Lydia Cole, as well. And those are my two main social media platforms for, for interacting with, with people.

Will Downing:

Great and where can people find the book, Amazon best

Lydia Jones Cole:

The book will be available on Amazon. It's is scheduled to be released December 7.

Will Downing:

Yeah.

Lydia Jones Cole:

Yes, yay. December 7th is the scheduled publication date.

Will Downing:

It sounds like a great Christmas gift for someone. Great Christmas gift. Someone great

Doug Williams:

Congratulations, to you.

Will Downing:

Congratulations.

Lydia Jones Cole:

Thank you so much. Thank you. Yeah. Thank you.

Doug Williams:

Let me say publicly that my experience with BET. I'll never forget, and I learned a lot in the music in industry, but how to handle music execs, I learned from the one and only, Lydia Cole. Thank you so very much.

Lydia Jones Cole:

Oh, thank you. And just so thank you for the opportunity to talk about my book and to and to reconnect with you as well, Doug. Thank you. Will.

Will Downing:

Thank you.

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