

A photograph of Francis Atta, a Black man with short hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and brown pants. He is standing outdoors with trees in the background, smiling slightly. His hands are clasped in front of him, and he is wearing a watch on his left wrist.

FRANCIS ATTA

SPEAKER | AUTHOR | COMMUNITY WORKER

MEDIA RELEASE KIT



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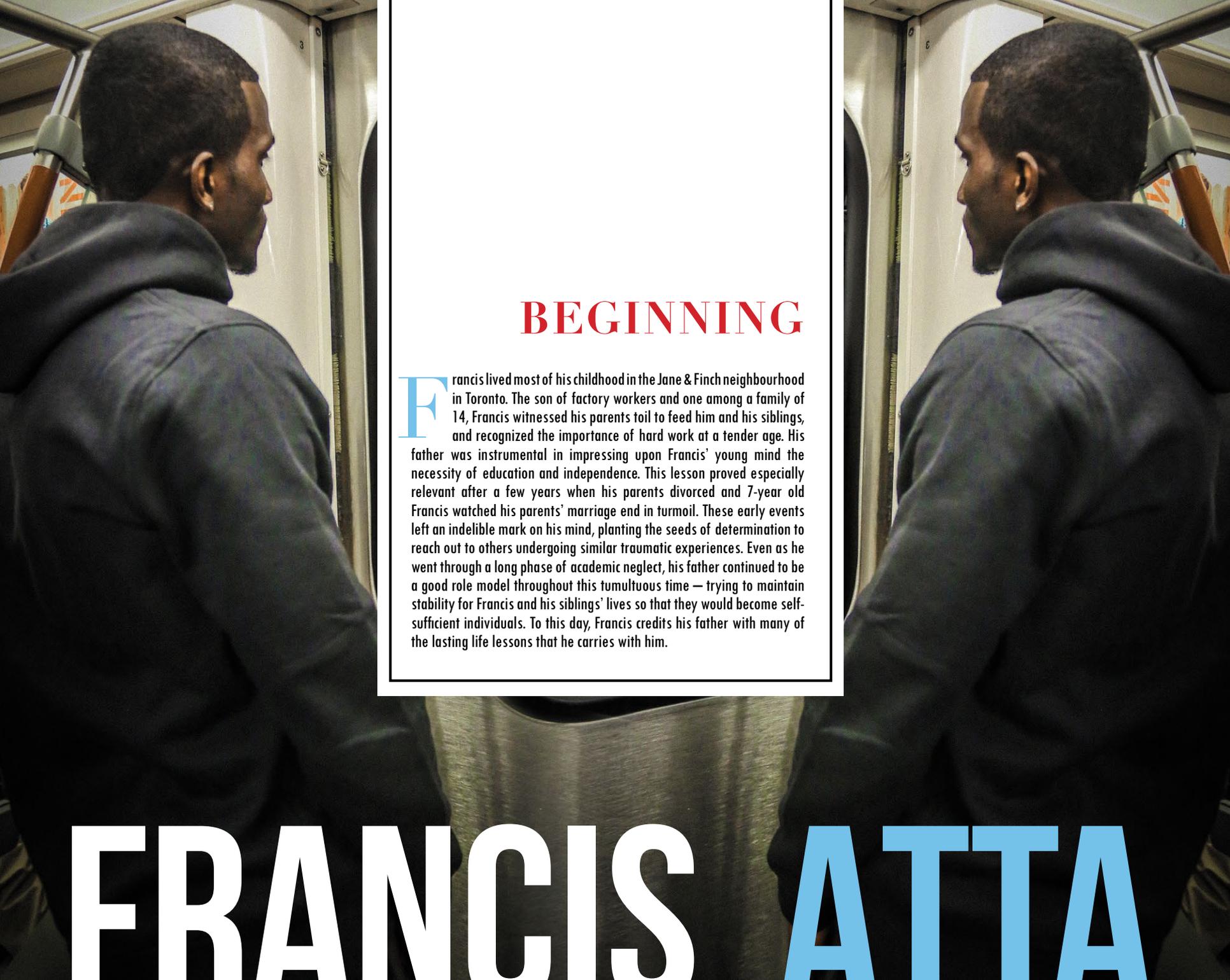
BIOGRAPHY

Francis Atta continues to be the most prominent and sought after speaker in Toronto in the past 5 years. Once homeless, failing in school, and in trouble with the law, he went on to post secondary studies and graduated with honours. He learned, and reminds others that we have to take the hands that we are dealt and make the most of it. Admired for his passionate and capturing approach, his thought provoking messages deliver an energy like no other.

Born in Kumasi, Ghana, Francis Atta immigrated to Toronto, Canada at 6-years old. Despite tremendous struggles, he managed to flip his life from negativity: failing in high school, and getting into trouble with the law, to: graduating from George Brown College ("GBC") at the top of his class, and embarking on a career as a Child and Youth Worker, and Motivational Speaker through his company, K.E.Y.S. (Knowledge and Effort Yield Success), founded in 2010.



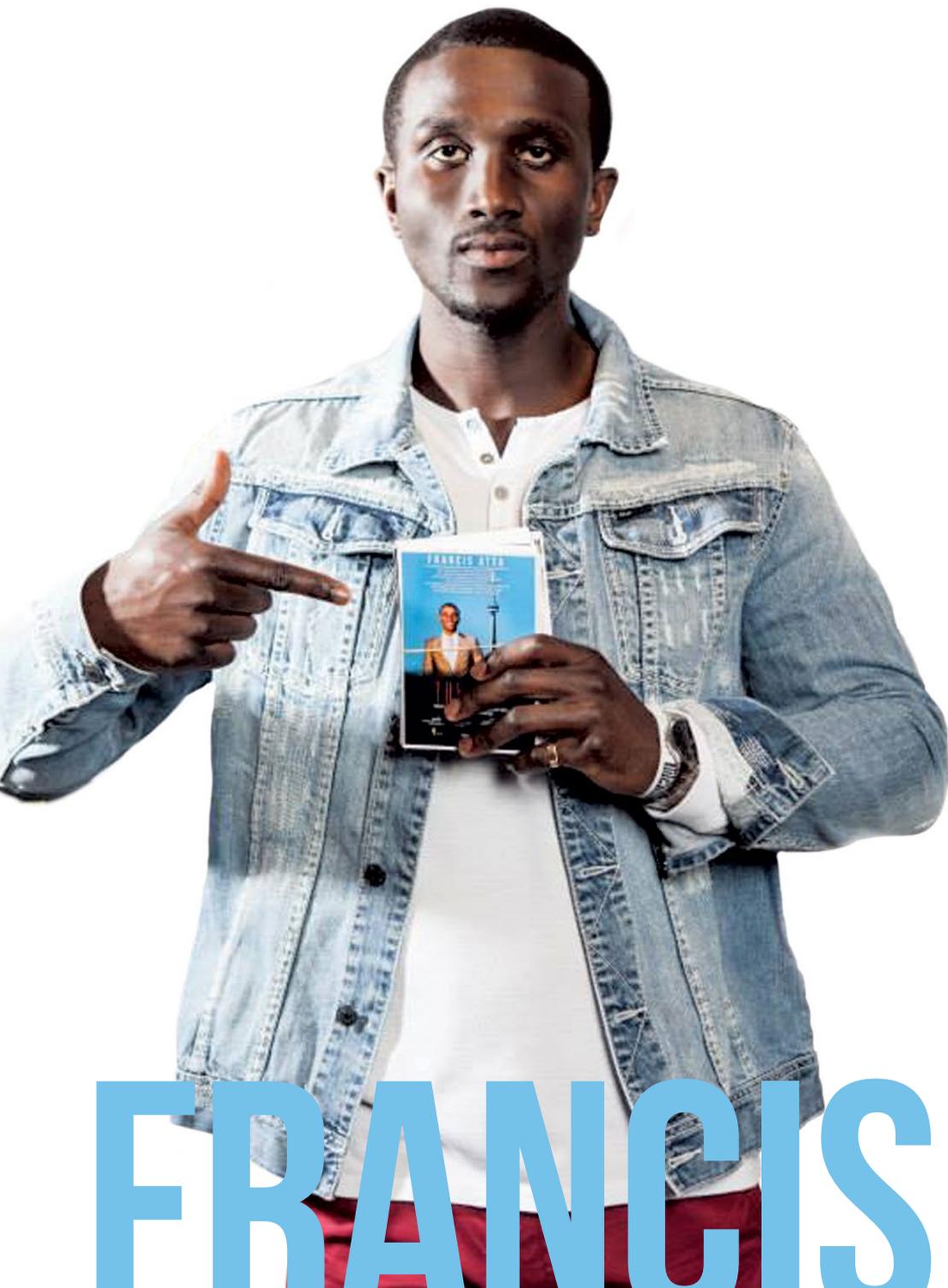
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A man in a dark hoodie is shown from the chest up, looking out of a train window. The background is a blurred city street. The image is split into two panels by a central text box.

BEGINNING

Francis lived most of his childhood in the Jane & Finch neighbourhood in Toronto. The son of factory workers and one among a family of 14, Francis witnessed his parents toil to feed him and his siblings, and recognized the importance of hard work at a tender age. His father was instrumental in impressing upon Francis' young mind the necessity of education and independence. This lesson proved especially relevant after a few years when his parents divorced and 7-year old Francis watched his parents' marriage end in turmoil. These early events left an indelible mark on his mind, planting the seeds of determination to reach out to others undergoing similar traumatic experiences. Even as he went through a long phase of academic neglect, his father continued to be a good role model throughout this tumultuous time — trying to maintain stability for Francis and his siblings' lives so that they would become self-sufficient individuals. To this day, Francis credits his father with many of the lasting life lessons that he carries with him.

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“2000–2010: *From 25% to College Scholar*”

Involvement in sports was another aspect of Francis' life that has had a huge influence on shaping his character. Sports taught Francis self-discipline and determination. In grade ten, he took the team to the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations' Championships and this proud accomplishment cemented his interest in steering people onwards through concerted team effort. During this time, Francis also noticed that those among his friends who did not take up constructive activities ended up as school dropouts or gang members. This got him thinking of the numerous children in priority neighbourhoods who have very limited access to the resources required to engage in fun and meaningful pastimes. It was this realization that led to him volunteering at community centres so that he could share his thoughts and time with children who needed a role model or maybe just a patient ear.

FRANCIS

ATTA

Two consecutive “turning points” in Francis’ life occurred shortly thereafter. It began when Francis tore a knee ligament and was rendered unable to participate in competitive sports for close to 4 years. With what seemed like the end of his future and an ensuing loss of purposefulness came an aimless wandering as Francis took up a few different courses of study but found he had limited interest in each one. A larger vision of building a stronger community and directing youth along fruitful endeavours pervaded all that he did. This included visiting his former high school and coaching students interested in professional basketball, for free. This was when he won a Lions Club scholarship and enrolled in GBC for the Child and Youth Worker program. The second pivotal moment in Francis’ life started when he began attending a youth church group where he embraced the power of faith and believing in something greater than oneself that could guide him towards his goals. The high level of strength and positivity he gained through church mobilized him further.

Cumulatively, these influences passionately drove Francis to lay the foundation for his company K.E.Y.S., a motivational speaking company that conducts workshops to inspire and motivate people of all ages. Francis’ life has been an embodiment of the simple fact that the things we do today will determine our future because we had the KEYS all along. He teaches that no matter how many obstacles lie before us, it is our attitude that will shape our ultimate achievements.

Starting out from a modest upbringing — often going days without enough food and limited parental attention — to receiving over 25 prestigious Canadian awards such as Canada’s Top 25 Immigrant Award (2012) and the Urban Hero Award (2010), and being on the Dean’s Honour List for three consecutive years at GBC. These accomplishments have humbled Francis and have shown him the true power of people and groups “reaching out” to each other. With this in mind, Francis has utilized various social media platforms to convey inspirational messages so that he can continue to help motivate and inspire others.



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TODAY

F Francis is a Youth Advocate and presently works with the Toronto Catholic District School Board and at Covenant House in Toronto. On October 10th, 2013, Francis released his first book titled “The Flip”, that proposes different techniques for parents and youth to reevaluate their lives and change what is negative into something positive. The book addresses current situations youth often face, and provides a realistic outlook on the trials, which plague them. The Flip provides examples from Francis’ own life experiences, emphasizing the importance and benefits of hard work, honesty and positive influences. To date, over 5000 copies of this book have been sold through various agencies; schools, such as GBC; community and rehabilitative centers; and other organizations.

Francis is also an official United Way of Toronto spokesperson and interacts with community leaders to effect a visible change in the low-income areas of Toronto. His company implements varied fundraising activities such as selling T-shirts with the proceeds going to school supplies for underprivileged children. He knows firsthand the feeling of being unable to pay for basic necessities and does his best to ensure that he can help as many children as possible to avoid such circumstances. Francis is in the process of starting a subsidiary company called “Future Keys” focused entirely on mentoring grade 8 to 12 students and to this end he is already conducting life skills workshops at James Cardinal McGuigan Catholic High School.

Francis Atta’s life is a shining example of how the human spirit truly is stronger than anything that ever happens to it. It is up to us to take the hand that we are dealt and make the most of it – with a little help from the right societal and community resources. As Francis takes firm and guided steps towards giving back and building a well-rounded base that youth can fall back on, he feels a great sense of accomplishment when he maps where he started from and where he is today. And this is exactly why he knows and believes with all his heart that if he did it, so can you!!

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HIGHLIGHTS

2014

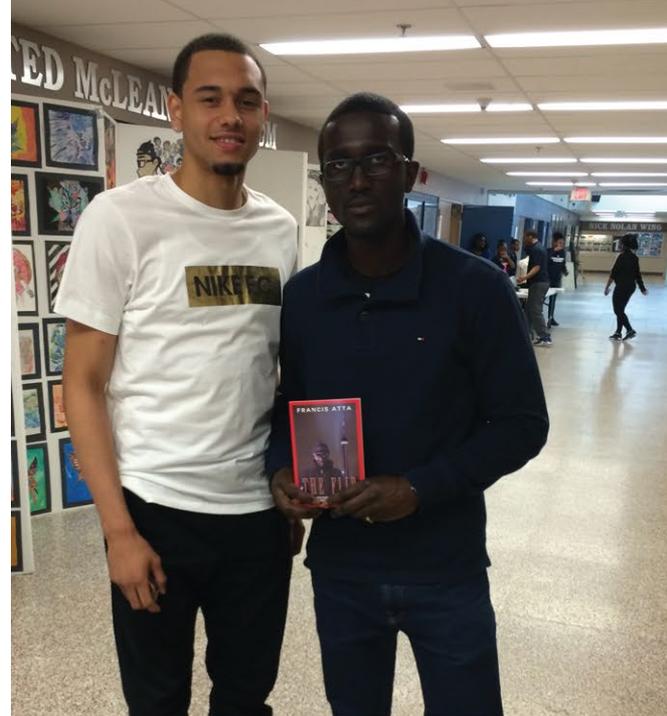
- Where's Your Heart At, video by Francis Atta and Adam Ali

2013

- The Flip, book, published by Francis Atta
- Dear Hard Work, poem, by Francis Atta
- Acknowledgment by Robert Herjavec in "The Will To Win"
- Award winner starts company to inspire youth published by Good News Toronto

2012

- Named one of Canada's Top Immigrant, article, CBC News



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Canadian IMMIGRANT

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4 THE PHILIPPINE REPORTER 1 NOV. 23 TO DEC. 13, 2013

YOUTH MULTICULTURAL PROGRAM FOR DIVERSITY AWARENESS

No Colour, One Blood

By Beatrice S. Ponz

Francis Atta teaches children "to get along with everybody, not just their own kind."

Francis Atta recently graduated from a youth and child worker program.

Never, ever give up, 'top immigrant' says

Francis Atta admits to hanging with the wrong crowd when he was younger, but said his commitment to God changed the first person to arrive in the morning.

Individual winner: Francis Atta

Mentoring is recipient's passion

Francis Atta is not ashamed to admit he made some wrong choices in his younger years.

Growing up in the Jane Street and Finch Avenue area, the star basketball player at James Cardinal McGowan Catholic Secondary School didn't pay much attention to school work and focused solely on shooting hoops.

When Atta graduated in 2004, it was expected his athletic talent would continue to grow, but knee surgery cut short his dreams.

"I couldn't play like how I used to play," he said. "I was working and chatting with the wrong crowd. If you surround yourself with negative people, negative stuff will happen to you."

Atta's life began to change when he was in the eighth grade. Three people were involved in his life, he said.

"They were God and I, the first time I said, 'This something me.'"

Atta soon began seeking assistance at JVS.

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Entrepreneurs celebrated

Progress evident

Canadian dream 'very much alive'

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SAVE A CHANCE TO WIN

VICTORIA MUTUAL

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Education recognized as 'key to success'

Hey Everyone... Sid is Back!

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FEATURES

NEWS



AWARDS

- Toronto Community Housing Corporation Recognition Award for Community Service, 2013
- Identify 'N' Impact Award for Community Youth Worker of the Year, City of Toronto, 2013
- African Entertainment Award for Community Service, 2013
- Young Black & Gifted Award for Community Service, 2013
- Lincoln Alexander Recognition Award, 2013
- Canada's Top 25 Immigrant Award, Canadian Immigrant, 2012
- Black Business and Professional Association Award for Best Lifestyle, 2011
- Erma Collins Award, Jamaican Canadian Association, 2011
- Herbert Carnegie Future Aces Citizenship Award, 2011
- Garfield Weston Scholar, 2011
- Agent of Change Award Recipient, Center For Social Innovation, 2011
- Urban Hero Award, Toronto Mirror Newspaper, 2010

2014 PUBLIC APPEARANCES

"The Pursuit of Greatness" with Eric Thomas, Orlando Bowen, Shaun Boothe, Karen Donaldson, Victor Beausoleil and Akil Augustine.



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