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2004

CHRISTIAN SINGLE

HOW TO
OVERCOME
YOUR
FEAR
OF **FAT**

Is **DOUBT** SHAKING
YOUR **FAITH**?

HIT THE BRAKES
ON YOUR
FAST & FURIOUS
RELATIONSHIP

4 QUESTIONS
TO ASK BEFORE
SWITCHING
JOBS

COMMUNITY
ACTIVIST

darren
WASHINGTON

LOBBIES FOR THE
INNER CITY

LIVING A LIFE OF

Darren Washington looks out the window of his office and gazes at the streets of the one-time murder capital of the United States — Gary, Ind. As his eyes move across the worn cityscape, he watches a young boy running home from school (“probably to an empty house,” he says out loud), and then he glares at the graffiti-splattered sidewalks, alleys, and overpasses, undoubtedly marked by gang members displaying their code and boasting their territorial rights. He’s seen drug busts, prostitution, and violence on these streets — streets that he knows all too well. He not only lives in Gary, he grew up here too.

Washington is a man of conviction; you see it in his wide, dark eyes and hear it in his firm, gentle tone. He’s tall — well over 6 feet and nice-looking. The 33-year-old is wearing a blue, tailored suit this morning — “there’s a Northwest Indiana race relations meeting I have to be at later today,” he says. His every statement seems calculated, in a good way. And although he grew up here in this now crime-infested neighborhood, by all appearances, he doesn’t seem to belong here.

Although his office is not surrounded by the often-coveted city skyline and his window’s view is a poverty-stricken scene, Washington seems unfazed by his environment. In fact, he seems hopeful about the future of this city and is honored to call it home.

“I’ve always wanted to see some positive things happen in the city of Gary. It’s always been in my heart to eventually come back home,” he says.

“Going home” became a reality when this well-loved public speaker assumed the position of director of external affairs for SBC Communications representing the company’s interests in Northwest Indiana through lobbying efforts, community involvement, economic development, and philanthropy.

In addition to being insanely busy working alongside the city officials of Gary helping ensure the future economic well-being of his

hometown, Washington works emphatically to also bring about positive change in the individual lives of the men and women who are his neighbors.

A community activist who is passionate about bringing hope and healing to youth and singles, Washington speaks to schools, churches, and community groups at every possible

opportunity. His message is somewhat simple: Service. Abstinence. Honor. All things he believes are essential in shaping future generations to build strong moral character.

Preaching that message in Gary is no doubt hard work, even for a well-educated man who overcame many obstacles before becoming a successful lobbyist and minister of morality.

HONORABLE ROOTS

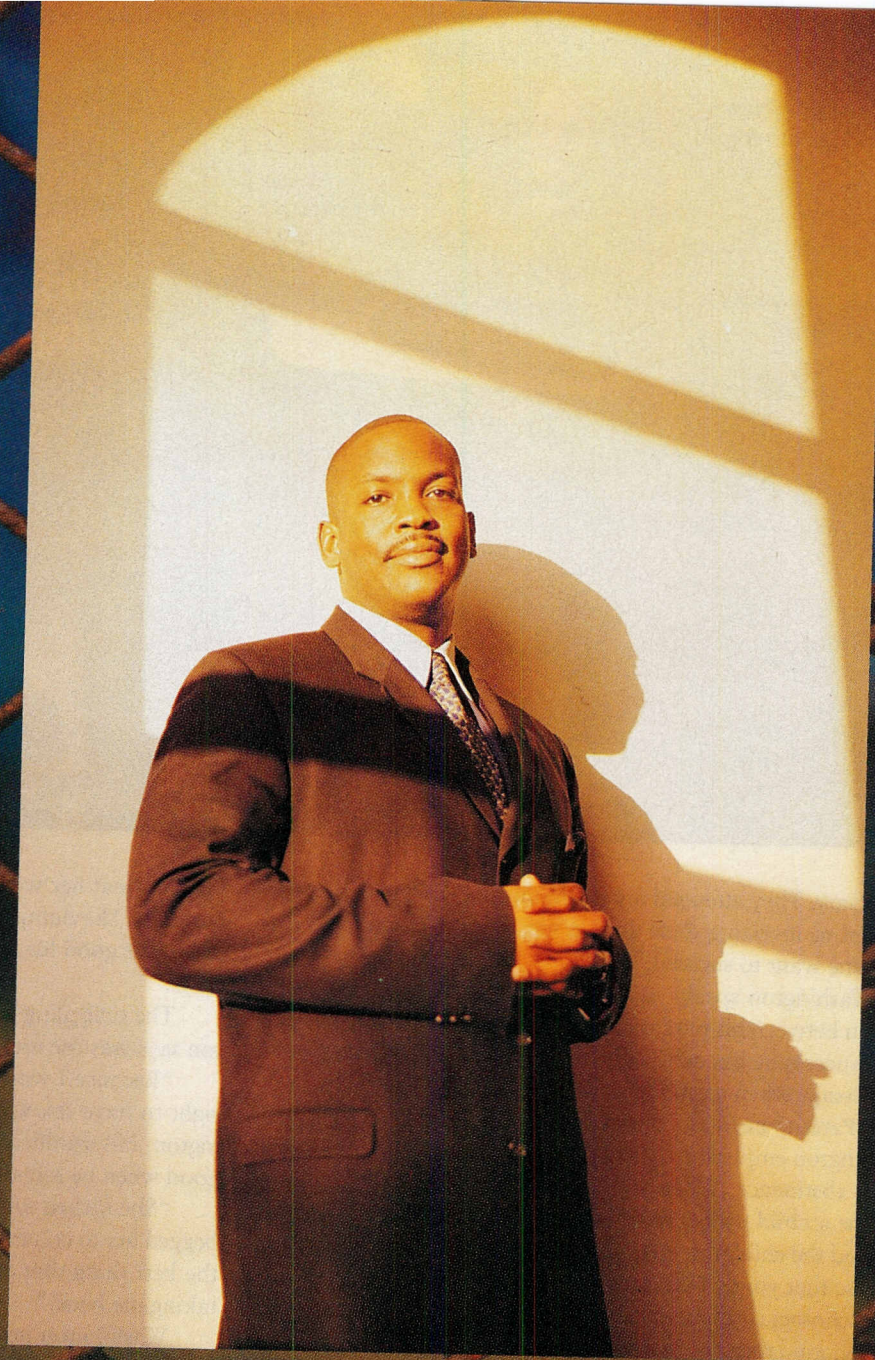
Having grown up in one of the more economically developed parts of Gary, Washington’s parents both worked at U.S. Steel, which made it possible for them to send Washington to Catholic school. Unfortunately, parochial education proved too difficult for Washington and he was placed in public school. His parents became somewhat discouraged when their son was diagnosed with a severe learning disability and placed in special education classes from the second through sixth grades.

“After I got in junior high and high school, I was an average student,” says Washington, with a grin. “I didn’t get straight As, but I was average.”

Despite neither of them having more than a high-school education and their son suffering from a learning disability, Washington’s parents were determined to see their “average” son go to college. Perhaps providentially for them, Washington was by no means an average high-school athlete. He excelled on both the football field and basketball court, the latter becoming his ticket to Millikin University, where he played for two years. However, Washington says the key to his success in school had much more to do with his parents’ investment into his life than any educator or sporting event.

“My parents have always been the type of people who got involved in my life,” Washington says, with conviction. “They came to almost every sporting event — even when I was playing at Millikin — a three-hour drive

Darren Washington is committed to investing in his community, living a life of purity, and challenging others to do the same.



ONOR

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