

Bridge Builder Conversations: Songwriter, Artist and Philanthropist Dennis Reed Jr. Talks Diversity in Gospel Music

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, April 7, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Award-winning gospel music artist and Inspire the Fire CEO Dennis Reed Jr. joins Charlotte community leader David "Dae-Lee" Arrington for episode seven of Bridge Builder Conversations, [now available on YouTube](#), to discuss his experience as a Black man in the Christian music industry and the importance of maintaining the heritage and culture of gospel music.

Since early January, Dae-Lee has used the [Bridge Builder Conversations video series](#) to encourage dialogue and

action among leaders, no matter their background, to build bridges and form relationships across differences like race and socioeconomic status.

“

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Dennis Reed Jr.

“With this being my first Bridge Builder Conversations episode with another Black man, it was refreshing, and even therapeutic, discussing the opportunities and challenges of learning how to navigate white spaces as Black performers,” Dae-Lee said of his talk with Dennis Reed.

Reed, who grew up on the east side of Charlotte, North Carolina, started navigating diverse spaces during his time at Northwest School of the Arts. There he recognized the importance of staying true to himself.

“There's power in being authentic. You'll set the trend if you have the courage to just be yourself,” he said.



Dennis Reed Jr. and David "Dae-Lee" Arrington.
(Photo by Harris Jeter)

“That is what I needed to feel completely comfortable—being around a diverse group of people,” Reed continued. “That was the next layer of affirmation that I needed in knowing how to navigate white spaces.”

Proud of his upbringing in the Black church, Reed has produced songs for the GRAMMYS, Oprah Winfrey Network, President Joe Biden's inauguration and more. His work through Inspire the Fire, the nationally-acclaimed youth nonprofit he started when he was 17, also earned him a Lifetime Achievement Award from President Barack Obama.

Reed and Dae-Lee, who is a musical artist and producer himself, share their individual experiences with inherent bias in the industry. They also discuss the longstanding tension between typical “Black gospel music” and “white contemporary Christian music (CCM).”

To Reed, it's less about blending the two, but rather, allowing them to naturally co-exist without losing uniqueness or taking from the other.

“I don't mind the crossover of CCM and gospel. [The problem comes] when you turn on the radio and that's all there is,” he explained. “We still are not able to have full diversity. Is there not enough space for everybody to do this?”

Reed's Bridge Builder talk comes at a point where he says there's some change and “redefining” in his life, which he believes is OK for any leader.

“There's so much inward searching that needs to be done on behalf of every person that sits



Episode 7 of Bridge Builder Conversations, featuring Dennis Reed Jr., is now available to watch via the Bridge Builder YouTube channel. (Photo by Harris Jeter)



Bridge Builder Conversations is an effort of Bridge Builder Consulting, a people-centered agency focused on cultivating meaningful relationships that bridge divides, value others and addresses oppressive systems. (Photo by Harris Jeter)

down to make the next step,” Reed said.

“Forgive yourself, love yourself and give yourself permission to change.”

Visit the Bridge Builder Conversations YouTube channel to watch Dennis Reed Jr.’s full episode and others.

BRIDGE BUILDER CONVERSATIONS LINEUP

[Available to Watch Now:](#)

- Hugh McColl, former chairman and CEO of Bank of America
- Myloan Dinh, multidisciplinary artist and former refugee
- Kyle Mosher, multidisciplinary artist featured by Forbes, The New York Times, HBO and others
- Maria Howell, accomplished actress and singer
- Veronica Calderon, senior vice president of diversity, inclusion & equity at Truliant
- Michael Marsicano, president and CEO of Foundation For The Carolinas
- Dennis Reed Jr., award-winning songwriter, recording artist and CEO of Inspire the Fire

Upcoming:

- April 21 – Molly Shaw, former president and CEO of Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg
- May 5 – Harvey B. Gantt, first African American elected as mayor in Charlotte

ABOUT BRIDGE BUILDER CONVERSATIONS

Bridge Builder Conversations is a nine-part, unscripted video series featuring various leaders and artists sharing their personal journey and discussing the opportunities and challenges of building bridges across difference within their industries.

The series debuted Jan. 13 with a meaningful race talk with former Bank of America CEO Hugh McColl. The series, sponsored by Bank of America, HUE HOUSE, Urban Outfitters and Mansion, can be viewed on the Bridge Builder YouTube channel.

Bridge Builder Conversations is a creative resource from Bridge Builder Consulting™, an innovative, relationship-centered consulting agency, engaging organizations and their leaders as they navigate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) work. Dae-Lee’s Bridge Builder Motivational Journal is now available, as well as the Bridge Builder Patreon and Bridge Builder Motivations podcast on all podcast platforms including Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

Bridge Builder Conversations release bi-weekly through May 5. Details for the series can be found at WeBridgeBuild.com/BBC.

ABOUT DAVID ‘DAE-LEE’ ARRINGTON

David “Dae-Lee” Arrington is a Norfolk, Va., native who now calls Charlotte, N.C., home. Summarizing his journey “from the corner to the cul-de-sac,” Dae-Lee experienced a 180-degree racial, cultural and socioeconomic shift that changed his life and inspired his work today to

bridge divides that keep us from experiencing our collective best.

Dae-Lee is a 40 Under 40 Business Journal Winner, GRAMMY-nominated producer, recording artist, co-owner of Black-owned creative agency HUE HOUSE, founding member of Fair Play Music Equity Initiative and serves on many boards and community organization committees.

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