

Brandon Mychal Smith: He's So Brandon!

Interview with Kam Williams

Born in Los Angeles on May 29, 1989, Brandon Mychal Smith is a charismatic young actor best known for playing ladies man Nico Harris on the Disney Channel sitcom "Sonny with a Chance," which was renamed "So Random" earlier this year. Brandon discovered his love for acting at a young age when he stood in front of his 6th grade class and recited a crowd-pleasing rendition of a poem by Shel Silverstein. And after graduating from high school, he enrolled at Hampton University where he earned his degree in entrepreneurship while minoring in finance.

A versatile performer, Brandon recently competed on the ABC celebrity reality show "Skating with the Stars," and in 2010 starred in the Disney Channel Original Movie "Starstruck." His other TV credits include recurring roles on such shows as "Unfabulous" and "Phil of the Future." Brandon has also guest-starred on "Bones," "Without a Trace" and "That's So Raven".

Brandon's motion picture credits include appearances opposite Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson in Gridiron Gang, opposite Nick Cannon in Weapons, and opposite Matthew Perry in The Ron Clark Story. Away from work, he keeps himself busy between his many hobbies (especially roller-skating) and his charity work with organizations like

the "Magic of Healthy Living Campaign" alongside First Lady, Michelle Obama.

Here, Brandon talks about his work on "So Random."

Kam Williams: Hi Brandon, thanks for the time.

Brandon Mychal Smith: Thank you for giving me the time.

KW: What interested you in So Random?

BMS: What interested me about So Random was the great team of people that I knew were behind this project. My first love has always been drama and Brian Robbins, So Random's Executive Producer, had produced a film called Hardball that I had wanted to be in. I always wanted to work with Brian Robbins, so when the opportunity rang I was more focused and ready to do whatever it took to land the role of Nico. [LOL]

KW: Tell me a little about the show?

BMS: So Random is your SNL mixed with a splash of 30 Rock all geared towards the cool kids and fly teens of the new millennium!

KW: How would you describe your character, Nico?

BMS: Nico Harris has the charisma and charm of a Will Smith from Fresh Prince of Bel Air days with a dash of Denzel Smooth and a Kanye West swagger when it comes to getting fly! [Laughs]

KW: How similar are you to Nico?

BMS: Nico Harris is Brandon Mychal Smith at about 16 or 17 with much more energy and a way cooler job than I really had at that age. [Laughs] Nico and I share a love for the fashion world. And much like Nico, I've always loved vintage and unique clothing and cool jewelry. Nico and I also are very much ladies men. [Chuckles] The ability to charm the ladies has never been a sore spot for Mr. Nico Harris [LOL] But most importantly, Nico, as well as I, love to keep everyone laughing and having a good time!

KW: What would you say is the message being delivered by So Random?

BMS: The show's message is that with The Power of We, you can do it to with drive, persistence, commitment, breathing and smiling. [Laughs] The Power of We is the collaborative effort, everyone coming together to help contribute and or make a positive difference.

KW: What was it like doing the reality-TV series Skating with the Stars? How much of a skater were you as a child?

BMS: Doing Skating with the Stars was a very empowering experience for me. It showed me what I can truly achieve with drive, persistence and commitment. It felt good to become physically active and to push my body to its physical limits day in and day out. If I ever have to do a superhero movie, trust me, I'll be ready. [Chuckles] I am an avid roller skater, NOT ice skater.



[Laughs some more] Big difference! Ice skating is a much more physically-demanding sport, although my lifetime love and passion for roller-skating definitely helped my confidence and ability to create on the ice skates, during Skating with the Stars. I became pretty good at ice-skating by the end of the competition, which surprised me in a great way.

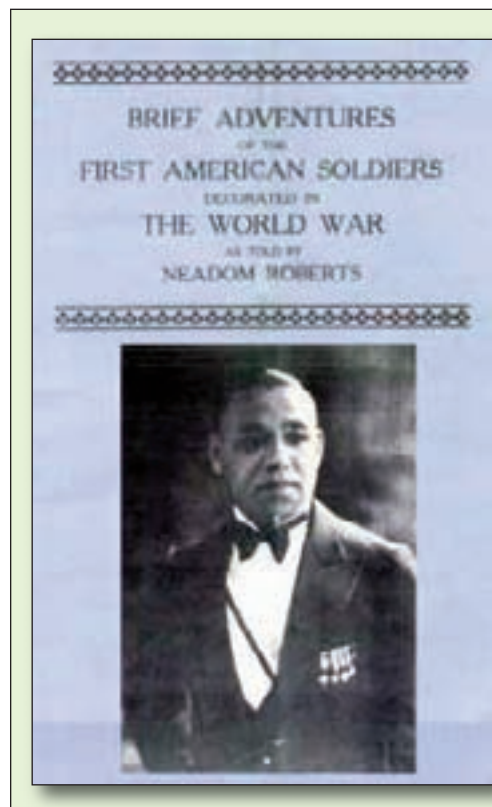
KW: You've been in showbiz since you were 8? How have you avoided the problems that have plagued so many other stars?

BMS: Honestly, there truly is no way to avoid the inevitable. No one's perfect and, as they say, "Things happen." People make mistakes. When you're in the public eye, sometimes mis-happenings are amplified and misconstrued. I keep my family first and try to keep my personal business out of the media. My main focus is to continue doing fun work and meeting cool new people to collaborate with.

KW: At the beginning of your career, you were in a Nike commercial with Tiger Woods. What effect did that have on you?

BMS: Yes, the infamous Nike Tiger Woods Commercial. That commercial was definitely my light bulb of, "Hey, I think I might have some success at this." [LOL] It was my first audition ever and on top of that it was a "cattle call" which means they wanted to see anyone and everyone who in anyway resembled Tiger Woods to play one of the kids saying "I am Tiger Woods" in the commercial. I remember there were probably about 5,000 kids at the audition held at this huge golf club in Burbank. When I booked my first audition ever I knew that was a sign. [Laughs]

Read the rest online at www.theskanner.com



Honor

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Precedents do exist for the Medal of Honor to be assigned long after the fact. On May 2, President Barack Obama awarded America's highest honor to Pvt. Henry Svelha and Pvt. Anthony Kaho'ohanohano. These two young soldiers fought and died heroes 60 years ago during the Korean War. Svelha, with the 7th Infantry, led a charge into enemy fire, throwing grenades at enemy bunkers, continuing even when wounded. When a grenade landed in the midst of his men, instead of running, Svelha jumped on the grenade, saving others' lives by sacrificing his own. Kaho'ohanohano, a native Hawaiian, stayed behind alone to confront a superior force, all the time laying down fire cover to allow his comrades to retreat to safety.

Awarding the medal to Kaho'ohanohano's family, President Obama thanked the campaigners.

"After his death, Tony was awarded the Army's second highest award for valor -- the Distinguished Service Cross," Obama said. "But his family felt he deserved more. And so did Senator -- and World War II vet -- Danny Akaka."

The Medal of Honor citation says the award is for, "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty."

The Johnson family, Sens. Schumer and Wyden and Portland Commissioner Fish believe that was exactly what Sgt. Henry Lincoln Johnson displayed that long ago night in Northern France.

Review: Overcome Any Obstacle, Finish College, Get a Degree

Book Review by Kam Williams

"Almost half of the students who get into college do not graduate... Students who succeed have what is known as Emotional Intelligence. This means that they are resilient and know how to face obstacles, manage time, take advantage of resources, build networks, become self-aware, become self-confident, learn from every experience, focus on personal aspirations, and take responsibility for themselves..."

You can succeed and finish college if you learn how these institutions work and how they can work for you. This book is meant to help you do just that. The goal is your graduation."

Excerpted from the Introduction (pg.7)

At my college orientation way back when, an administrator intimidated the freshmen by having us look at the person sitting on our left as well as the one on our right, before soberly prophesying that "one of the

three of you will not graduate." I was sitting between my roommates, both of whom, as it sadly turned out, did eventually leave the university without getting a degree.

Today, I can't help but wonder how much their prospects might have been improved by a book like I Can Finish College. For this handy, how-to guide supplies plenty of great tips about identifying and dealing with the array of potential pitfalls lying in wait to torpedo the promising careers of unsuspecting undergrads before they even have a chance to blossom.

The author, Dr. Marcia Young Cantarella, is a veteran in the field of student affairs, having done long stints as a Dean on the campus of prestigious places like Princeton, NYU and Hunter College. Such ivory tower



trappings notwithstanding, she nevertheless has a knack for breaking down her sage advice into readily-digestible layman's terms.

Dr. Cantarella fields practical questions on topics ranging from how to pick and pay for college; to how to select your major and courses; to how to study and manage your time. Designed more as a utilitarian resource than as light reading to be consumed in one sitting, I Can Finish College is ideally approached as an academia encyclopedia to be returned to at any time during college that a higher education issue suddenly surfaces.

To appreciate the degree of the author's selfless dedication to the next generation, one only need consider that she is the daughter of the late Whitney Young (1921-

I CAN FINISH COLLEGE: The Overcome Any Obstacle and Get Your Degree Guide

by Marcia Young Cantarella, Ph.D.
Lulu
Paperback, \$17.85
248 pages, Illustrated
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1971), the venerable Civil Rights Era icon who served as the Executive Director of the Urban League for over a decade. Ostensibly inspired by her father's lifelong commitment to the disenfranchised, Dr. Cantarella conveys on these pages the sense of a person sincerely committed to alleviating the escalating, minority student dropout-rate, a crisis she refers to as the "Silent Epidemic."

A common sense, college survival guide designed with the most vulnerable demographics in mind, especially the endangered black male.