

Image Architect

By: B. Whyte

A few months ago I got to pick the brain of one of Atlanta's most fashion forward individuals. Here are the highlights of a 40 minute conversation with the very articulate Dr. Courtney A. Hammonds.

JM: Please begin by introducing yourself to our JMariie audience

CAH: Well my name is Dr. Courtney Hammonds, I'm Lead Faculty over the fashion, retail and management program at the Art Institute of Atlanta (the Decatur Campus). I've been there full time since 2010. Before that I was the Assistant HR Manager for Neiman Marcus for six years and before that I was a lead sales associate for Luxxotica Eyewear (manufacturer of eyewear for companies such as D&G, Coach, Chanel, Burberry, Polo & Prada) at Neiman Marcus for a year. Prior to that I owned a high end women's boutique in Phipps Plaza for two years and before that I taught Special Education for three years.

Dr. Hammonds then proceeded to explain that he never studied fashion. His undergrad is a B.A. in Special Education, his M.B.A. is in Business Administration and his Doctorate is in Business Administration Consultations/ International Business. Fashion to him is basically a birthright. He was born in Columbus, GA to a high end model that worked with the likes of Beverley Johnson and spent six years of his early childhood in Berlin. With fashion in his blood and a background in business as well as education, Dr. Hammonds combined these elements to create the mantra "build, educate and style" which is in his words "...my light in life." When working with a person one on one he first builds them up from where they are then educates them with the tools needed to succeed. The style, as Dr. Hammonds goes on to explain is not necessarily how you dress. It is the intangibles such as proper etiquette, how to interact with people and shaking a hand correctly.

When asked to explain his personal style of dress Dr. Hammonds simply replied "...I never think twice about an outfit. I'm delivered from people and I really believe that what I do others would like to do, but they are afraid to do it. I do not follow trends I set trends and there is a big difference. Contrary to popular belief I don't pay a lot of money for clothes but my accessories yes, because my feet can't hurt and I will always have a fabulous bag and a nice pair of glasses." Clothing that is transcending however

is worth spending money on. A nice white oxford shirt, a black suit and a blue blazer are pieces that Dr. Hammonds believes every person should have in their closet. Spending good money on these items is worth it because they are multi purposeful. One can wear a blazer to church on Sunday and then put on that same blazer with a nice pair of jeans on Monday because that's a reversible piece.

As the interview progressed I asked Dr. Hammonds how he gets someone to trust the vision he has for them as far as wardrobe is concerned.

CAH: A lot of times they don't see it at first, but I tell them you have to dare to be square in a round world. It's more to it than just dressing and I tell people that. It's a mindset, a lifestyle change and it won't happen overnight. What I ask is that they give me the opportunity for change and to embrace the change. If they don't give me the opportunity and they don't embrace it then they're just setting themselves up for failure and I'm just taking their money.

Now the services provided by Dr. Hammonds are not free, but he does believe in giving back which is why he serves as the Fashion Ambassador to the charitable organization Easter Seals. He also believes in strategic partnerships and has no problem referring clients he may not gel with to others in his profession. What does separate the Dr. from a lot of his peers is the fact that he is not just a stylist. He is a licensed Image Consultant. Having studied at the London Institute of Image Consulting allows him to put on dress for success seminars for major corporations such as AT&T, AFLAC, Earthlink and Comcast.



Photo by: Calvin Evans