

# MY LIFE IN PICTURES

**My Life in Pictures**

**Terrence Williams**

**Gender, Dress, and Society SBS 3201**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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I would also like to thank my wife who helped me out in remembering some things, and my friend for reading it and editing it for me. Thank you!

## **PROLOGUE**

When you meet a person, you never fully understand them without asking them how their life went. When you meet a person, you also never think of how their dressing may have shaped who they have become today. I am but one of many stories you'll read in your life. Thus, read more about who I am as a person, through what I wore. You'll see how my outfits have changed throughout my life. I definitely am not who I was when I was young, but I don't regret anything.

## **FOREWORD**

I've known Terrence for a few years now. To say we get along is a huge understatement. He and I have differing views, as well as different senses of fashion. I like my outfits tailored very fitted, and he like his casual. But getting to know Terrence is amazing. He always has my back, and I will always have his. In helping to read his work and editing, seeing him doing this book and finally completing it is a breath of fresh air for him and I. Guess he doesn't like drawing? In any case, it was also fun to get to know Terrence more through the years. I hope in

reading this that you know the man a little bit more. Terrence, I hope you succeed in everything you do, and I'm always here if you need me.

- Jondae T.

## **Chapter 1: Where It All Began**

It all began in the 1980's. I grew up in Bedstuy, Brooklyn. Brooklyn was, and still is one of the most fashionable hubs in New York City. Lees and Levi's were the trend, Adidas, name-pleated belt buckles, etc. It was an area with so many trends birthed. And in turn, I joined in on those trends. I was one of those kids that always wanted to know what the next trend was, trying to copy the cool kids with their new clothing.

Everyone in the city had something different. I had a *small afro*. *Men with orange beards, women with shaved heads, bodies with tattoos on them*. It was a unique experience to see in person. I was too young to do anything, but I knew that I wanted to be like them in their clothing. And it began with these new PUMA shoes.

Black suede and silver pumas were my best shoes. They were black leather with white soles and were trendy. I used to put these taps on the bottom as well. You'd hear me walking as the taps would hit the ground. My jeans had huge breaks on the hem. The silhouette of my shirts were loose-fitting, and dark. I wasn't the most ostentatious dresser, but I still tried to dress stylish.

This is where my style began. I was born in an era where fashion was important. And it showed how *fly* one looked. Thus, I had to dress the part. I had to rock the new trends of popular brands. I think it is important for me to start like this, as it helped me realize how expressive and important fashion is to me.



## **Chapter 2: My First Graduation**

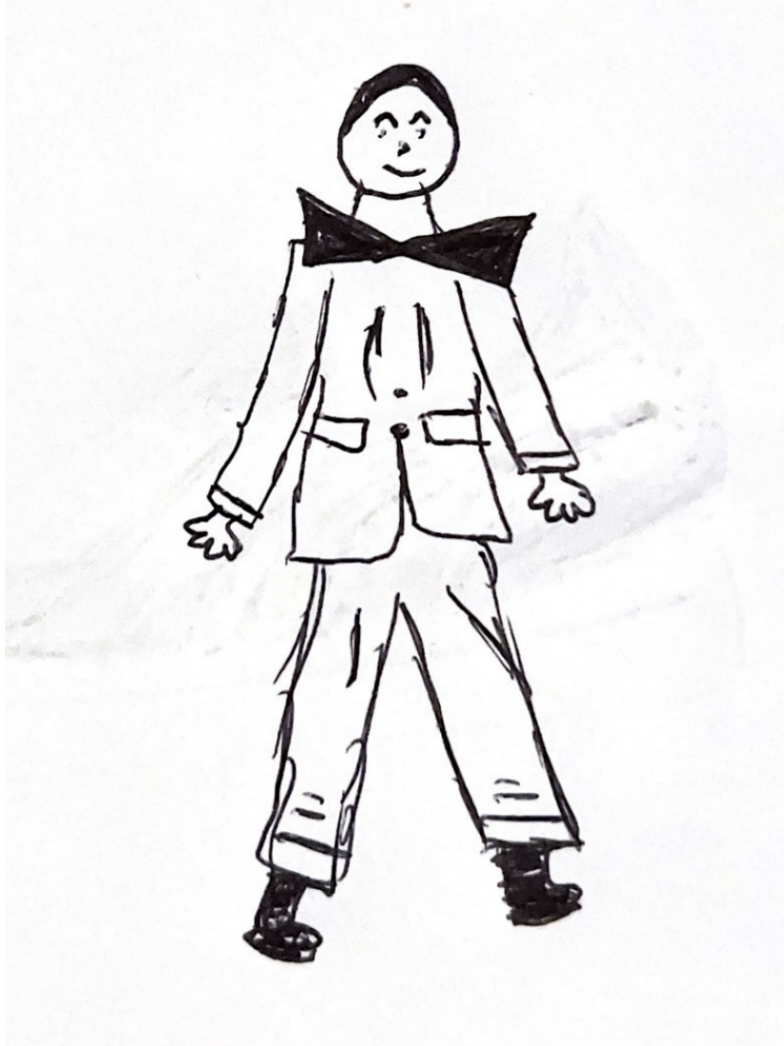
Graduations are an important part of everyone's life. I didn't really remember kindergarten graduation, but my first elementary graduation was something that I did remember. I graduated in 1985 at Public School 309. It was on Monroe between Ralph and Patchen. It was

right across the street from my house, so it was something I saw every day passing the neighborhood.

Formality is important at these events. I wore a classic black suit like every other student. Loose, with pant breaks going over my black shoes. It was the trend, and it was definitely the most comfortable. I But I didn't want to be like every other student. I remember my uncle loaned me this big black bowtie. It was classic satin, but it was big with sheen in it.

Wearing the suit with a big black bowtie in my graduation definitely held a lot of emotions. It was one of the most important events to me, especially since it was the first graduation I remember. We were singing "*We Are the World*" and "*Lift Every Voice and Sing*" I'm glad to have remembered it, as it was one of the best and most confident days of my life.





### **Chapter 3: Middle School**

Middle school made me nervous. After spending so much time at PS 309, it was time for me to move on. I went to JHS 35 or Stephen Decatur Middle School from 1985 to 1988. It was

one of the roughest and toughest middle schools in Bed-Stuy Brooklyn. It was a huge scenery change from the vibe of PS 309.

The students here were different. Some had *piercings*, others had *tattoos* already. The older kids had them. *Lions, their mother's name, pictures of people, there were tattoos everywhere.* Girls had *bellybutton piercings*. I wasn't nervous, but this was new to me.

I remember I was wearing these pants with suspenders attached to them. But the kids weren't using them as suspenders. We were using them as accessories. We attached them to our pants and never put them on our shoulders. That just made you a nerd. The cool kids let the suspenders hang, hitting the bottom of our pants. And I was definitely one of the cool kids letting them hang.

I remembered this outfit because it was one of the outfits that made me feel like I belonged. I wanted to be one of the cool kids and so I dressed like them. I wanted to be part of the crowd and people to like it. It was a nice feeling, and the outfit gave me style. It gave me confidence that I belong to this new school. I wasn't scared of no rough kids. As long as I dressed *fly*, nothing else mattered.



#### **Chapter 4: My First Prom**

My first prom was nerve-wracking. It was in JHS 35. It was my first prom, and I didn't know what to expect. Couples everywhere and I didn't have a prom date. I remember wanting to

wear jeans because I didn't take prom seriously. My mom called me crazy, that I couldn't wear jeans and sneakers to prom. But of course, I didn't listen, I tried wearing black jeans, but she insisted on something else.

I wore a pair of dress slacks with a button-down shirt and a cardigan. It was still formal, but at least I didn't have to wear a suit. I wanted to be more casual and comfortable. I wore a button-down and this brown/blue cardigan to match my shoes I also wore these brown suede British walker shoes. They weren't the best-looking shoes, but they were still nice to pair with my outfit. The pants were a loose-fitting silhouette, and the white button-up was super long. The cardigan was black and was baggy. A fitted silhouette probably would've worked better but looser was more my style.

I remembered prom because it was when I saw my first crush. Her name was Tamara. She always wore the best outfits and trends. I remember her wearing the newest Jordans, and these large bamboo hoop earrings. I wanted to ask her to prom, but my friends used to clown me for it because she was younger. So, I didn't have a date. But it was still nice seeing everyone dress so formally instead of the street clothes I'm used to.



## Chapter 5: Middle School Graduation

Time flies by! It was already my second graduation. Although everyone was looking forward to graduation, JHS 35 graduation was super un-organized. I couldn't even recall the songs that we had to sing. But I didn't really care. I mean who will? We're all finally going into what is considered the best years of your life... high school.

I couldn't wait to see a new environment and new people. I was expecting a different vibe. I know that in high school everyone discovers themselves and experiments. *Piercings, tattoos*, relationships, etc.

Wearing something formal during graduation is not important to me. It's covered by the gown anyway, right? My mom wanted me to wear the same thing I wore to my first graduation. I knew I wouldn't be able to say no, so I decided to sneak in a pair of black jeans and my sneakers. Who would notice anyway under the blue graduation gown? It was this big and baggy blue gown that never fit anyone right. All my friends did the same thing too. So, it was me, the tassel on my head, this large blue gown draping over me, and my black jeans/sneakers peeking right below.

You can never forget your middle school graduation, because after that comes high school. And I was definitely looking forward to moving to something new. I couldn't fully remember the experience because of how disorganized the event was, but I remembered how proud my family were. I was on my way to growing up and time was flying faster than ever. It was a good time, but something new awaits.



## Chapter 6: High School

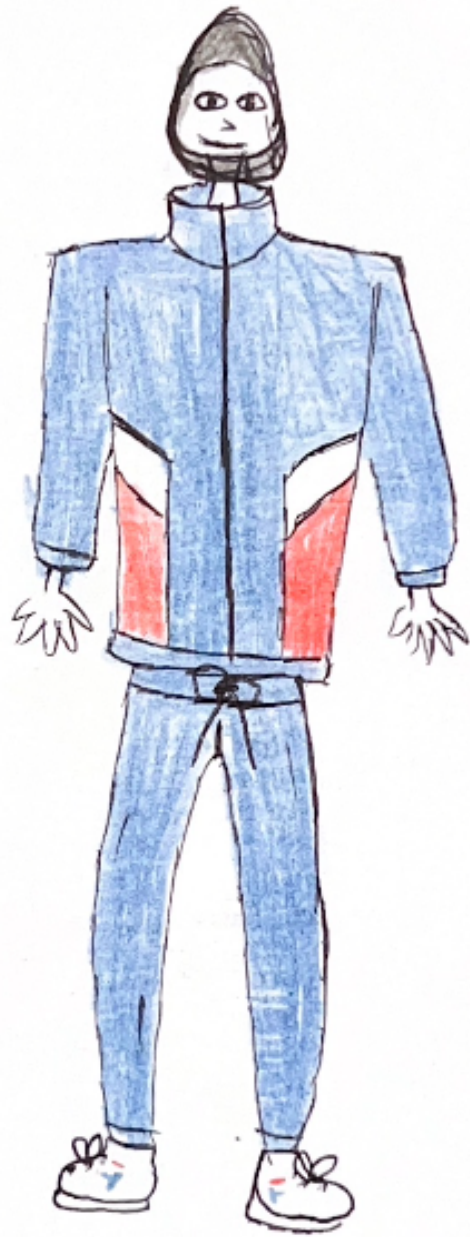
I went to Boys and Girls High School, the oldest public school in Brooklyn. The first day of high school was like a fashion show. So many people were wearing something different, something unique. Students were wearing baggy jumpsuits styled with bamboo earrings, gold caps, gold rope necklaces, etc.

Tattoos were a very big thing. You saw *students with large animal tattoos and small ones like hearts and infinity signs*. Male students had *small stud piercings* on their ears. Girls had *customized nails* and gold jewelry like rings were the trend.

I remember on the first day of school wearing a blue and red velour FILA sweatsuit. It was still pretty big but it fell on me the right way, just stopping above my sneakers. Under it, I wore a FILA t-shirt and white, red, and blue FILA sneakers. I was dripped in the brand. My friend John had a black and white Adidas sweatsuit. His shoes were the white shell toe Adidas. I remember us being one of the best dressed freshmen in high school.

High school especially the first day is one of the most important days for every student. If you didn't dress nice or make a good first impression, it set up how your life will be during the school year. This moment was a memory to remember because we made friends immediately and made a good impression on upper classmen. I don't think I would repeat high school again, but I know what I wore was definitely something unforgettable in other people's eyes.





## Chapter 7 – My First Date

The year was 1989. I went to school with this girl named Tamara. She was my junior high school crush before I started high school. After we both graduated JHS, I was worried I wasn't going to see her again. I was in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and she just transferred to Boys and Girls High School in the 10th grade. Back then, she was the most beautiful girl I ever saw.

In my lingo, she was fly. Always dressing in the newest trends and styles. Her hair was black and long, going down her shoulders. She didn't have any tattoos, but she did change her hair style a lot. She chose different colors and even switched between hairstyles like braids. She wasn't the most popular, but her hair, her doe eyes, and her style drew my attention to her.

I remember being nervous about my first date with her. I didn't know what I was going to wear. But in the end, I remember wearing some black Guess jeans, a burgundy oversized silk shirt with a spread collar. And this 14k, 24 inch rope gold chain with a gold ring said T-nice. I also wore a pair of suede burgundy wallabee Clarks with the gum bottom. And this burgundy Kangol cap to compliment the burgundy silk shirt.

We saw this movie called "I'm Gonna Get You Sucka" starring Keenan Ivory Wayne, Damon Wayne and Chris Rock. While watching the movie with the girl of my dreams, all of a sudden, I heard a loud conversation behind me and believe it or not, it was my three best friends John a.k.a. "LJ", Dwayne aka "Black", and Sean aka "Fat Boy". Thank God they didn't notice me in the dark theater, because it would've been embarrassing. This core memory stuck with me because it was my first date, and with a girl I thought was the one. Who wouldn't remember a special day like this?



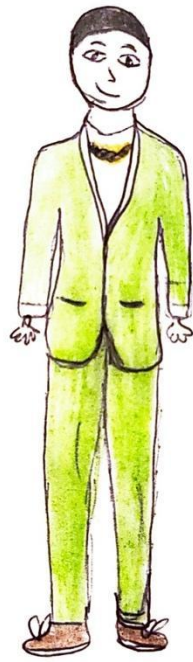
## Chapter 8 – Second and Final Prom

High was flying by. And what do you know? It was already my second prom. My last prom of my childhood! I regret not going though. None of my friends and I went at all. I was influenced by my friends. They thought they were too cool for prom. High school boys always think they're cooler than anything. In reality though, it was because my family was facing financial hardships. Prom was too expensive, so I decided not to go. My prom date, Tamara, couldn't go either because she had school dues. I regretted not going, but at least my crush didn't go either.

I did remember waiting with my friends till everyone came out. Seeing everyone come out and talking about what a good time they had. Everyone looked great in their attire. The girls had a face full of makeup. Their hair was done up too. Some of the girls had buns in their hair, others had it down but curled it. The guys were all wearing classic-colored suits with their hair slicked-back. The suits were all loose-fitting, breaking over their dress shoes. The girls wore all sorts of colors. You saw lavender, navy, red, pinks, every color of the rainbow. I was sad because I could've been a part of that.

I knew that if I was to go to prom, I wanted to out-do everyone. I was planning on wearing a lime green suit with a pair of brown suede dress shoes. I was going to wear my ring and gold necklace too, shining brighter than everyone. But I didn't. I stayed in the car with my friends, wearing these black jeans, my Adidas shoes, and a baggy oversized Polo.

For a lot of people, prom is one of the biggest events you don't want to miss. And I missed it, a regret I'll have to live with. Tamara and I stopped talking after that. She probably was mad that her and I didn't go to prom together. But I didn't want my family to struggle. Plus, prom was just one random event.



## **Chapter 9 – My High School Graduation**

June 1990, a warm day in Spring. And it was my high school graduation already. My father, mother, and grandfather all went to graduation with me. We drove in my grandfather's 1981 Cadillac. It was a big day for everyone.

When we arrived, it reminded me a lot of our prom. The boys were all wearing suits under their gowns. You couldn't see much except for their dress pants and chunky shoes. Their faces were clean-shaven, and their hair if they had was slicked to the back. The girls had on dresses under their gowns, wearing either nude or glittery heels. Their hair was done up like prom. But their makeup looked better here. It looked like they spent a little bit and went to a makeup artist to do their makeup. Everyone was very formal, even under the layers of clothing they were wearing.

My mother and father though not the most financially stable, bought me a suit and dress pants to wear. It was a midnight blue suit with a peak lapel, black buttons, pick stitching around the lapels, pocket flaps, and a charcoal lining and cuffed pants. I also had on a white button-down spread shirt with a navy necktie. I was wearing these black leather dress shoes, and thought to myself that this was the most professional I ever dressed.

I had to go to the lunchroom to meet up with the other graduates. In the lunchroom, I saw my best friends – the guys who stood by me all these years. Funny thing is, they all was dressed up in suits as well. We stood next to each other looking like we were lawyers and businessmen. After graduating, we went to Juniors in Brooklyn. I was happy to finally be graduating and moving on to college and bigger things.



## **Chapter 10 - First Job Interview**

My first job interview I must say I was really nervous. I was nervous about the questions that I was going to be asked, but especially what I was going to wear. I wasn't the most professionally dressed person. I preferred comfort over anything, and I as a young adult did not know much about suits. A friend of mine named Tim, got me an interview with a store called Pottery Barn. It was an upscale household store selling everything from cookware to furniture.

Back then, things were definitely more professional. Upon entering, I remembered everyone looked very upscale. The hair of the girls was curled down and had no bright colors to them, it was just natural colors like brown or black. The guys had slicked back hair and no facial hair at all. Back then, it seemed unkept, so the guys had no mustaches or facial hair. Skin wasn't exposed as well, and definitely tattoos had to stay hidden.

I entered the interview wearing a black V-neck fitted V-neck sweater with blue slack pants. Underneath, I was wearing a white spread collar shirt, and black Reebok sneakers on my feet. I definitely wasn't feeling the most professional, as the other interviewees had blazers/suits. But I knew I tried my best and that was it.

I remember this memory because before I left, my father pulled me to the side and told me to wear black shoes and a nice black tie. He told me to remove my shoes and to look more professional. I definitely did not know how to tie a tie, let alone own one. But he got out from his drawer anyway and showed me how to tie one. I actually looked more confident and stylish wearing these suits. I think it made me discover how much I like suits a lot. And yes, I did get the job!





## **Chapter 11 - Job Dress Code**

Remember how I said I preferred comfort over everything? Yeah, I definitely not in trouble on my first day. I wore plain blue jeans with a black sweatshirt and some sneakers. When I got there, it was so embarrassing. I didn't really expect much, but as I arrived, everyone had on dress pants, button down shirts, and blazers. I didn't expect much as a guy working in the back with stock, but we definitely had to follow dress code there too.

By midday, the store manager called me into the office. I was so nervous hoping I can't get fired on my first day. She went over the employee handbook with me again. Every day regardless of position, we had to dress professionally, which meant blazers, dress pants, and dress shirts. Tattoos had to stay hidden. Hairstyles were to be kept and not all over the place. Makeup had to be light and earrings had to be minimal like small hoops or studs. Men had to have no facial hair and had to stick to minimalistic hairstyles. It was crazy hearing all of the policies, but I needed a job so I followed.

The next day I came in, I made sure I had a pair of dress pants on. I also wore a navy-colored dress shirt and a navy blazer. I wore it pretty much every day. It fit right to my body shape. The sleeves weren't too long and the jacket length sat at a perfect length for my height. The shoulders weren't so oversized and my lapels sat in a good position.

This core memory further boosted how important it was to be professional. I will still always prefer comfort, but it doesn't mean I can't dress once in a while.



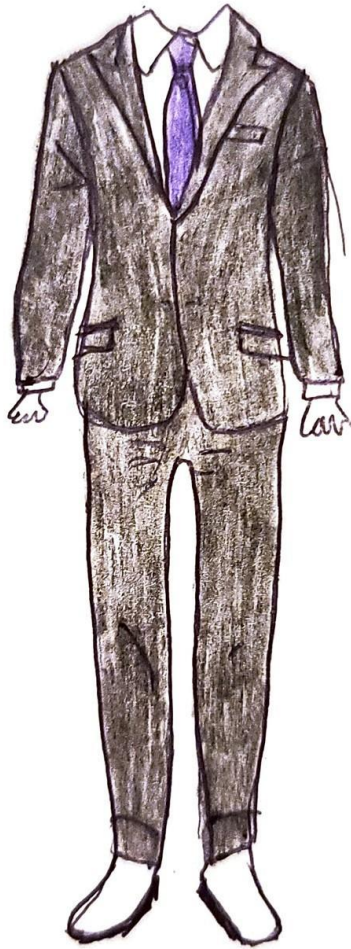
## Chapter 12 - Groomsmen

Time flies by fast! At one point, I was in high school, now I'm going to one of my friend's weddings! I was invited to be his groomsman, and dare I say he was way too young to get married. I guess back then it was normal, considering marriage was a top priority for many.

Like any wedding, everyone dressed formal. The bridesmaids had their hairs in different hairstyles. From buns, to curls, waves, blowouts, it was all different. The guys were able to be a little bit more casual, able to have facial hair and messy hairstyles. The crowd wore hats, polos, etc. It wasn't anything new I haven't experienced. The groom had on a classic black tuxedo. He had black satin lapels, with satin pockets and satin stripe running down his pants.

All the groomsmen including me, wore black suits with a peak lapel, slanted pocket flaps, and a funky lavender paisley lining inside. We wore a classic white shirt and a lavender bow tie to match to bridesmaids' dresses. The groom definitely stood out from the crowd, shining with his black satin tuxedo. All our suits were a little bit more fitted, as the baggy silhouettes were going out.

It was definitely a fun time! The more I wore suits, the more I wanted to become professional. During this time, I was actually considering getting another job in the retail industry this time. Whether it was to sell basics, or upscale suits, I wanted to focus on fashion. It was a new discovery that sticks with me to this day.



## Chapter 13 - My Wedding

3 years later, and now it is my turn! My wedding - one of the most memorable times in my life. I was 28 years old, and I never thought I would get married this early. At that age, I thought that I would get married in my early to mid 30's. 40. But those years I was smitten with one woman, and I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her.

My whole family, her family, friends, members, everyone was there. We got married in a church. Everyone was wearing light-colored outfits. It wasn't very formal, and it wasn't a huge crowd. Therefore, we didn't have a strict dress code. My mom had her hair down, with a small hat covering it. My dad wore a suit with a barrette. Everyone else wore something very similar. And the bridesmaids wore silver satin dresses

I remember renting a one button tailcoat black tuxedo. I figured renting would be cheaper and I didn't need to re-use a tux. The coat had 2 long tails in the back, with wide peak black satin lapels. The pants were black with a satin side stripe going down the sides of the pant. I also had on these shiny black patent shoes. The groomsmen wore traditional black suits. I definitely wanted to stand out, which is why a tailcoat tuxedo worked perfectly in my favor.

My wife wore this beautiful white lace maxi dress. It was embroidered in rhinestones and hugged her hips well. It made her look elegant, the star of the show. The dress flowed outward, like she was a mermaid. I'll always remember this special day. We celebrated the only way we could. Good drinks, great food, and amazing conversations. A core memory I'll always treasure forever.



## Chapter 14 - Motorcycle Jacket

A random chapter in my life, I've always wanted was a motorcycle jacket. I saw it on people walking down the streets when I was young. And I saw it on TV too. I don't know if it was the confidence it gave, or that it made me look tough – but it was my goal to get one.

In movies, the men wearing it wore bandanas to cover their foreheads. The greased silvery pepper hair dancing in the wind. Their body ridden with tattoos, and muscles protruding from their biceps. Did I want to be like them? No. However, I did like their style, and having this part of my capsule wardrobe was important.

I remember one Christmas, my wife surprises me with one. A black motorcycle jacket in this distressed leather. It gave off a moto/ rugged worn look with a cool, laid-back vibe. The jacket also has shiny silver zippers in the front of the jacket and flattered my silhouette. It wasn't baggy at all, slimming down my build.

I remember wearing it to a Christmas party that one of her coworkers posted. When I walked in the place that they were hosting the party, everyone she introduced to me, complemented me on how nice my jackets looked on me. But what made my motorcycle jacket so cool to me, was that my wife had my name monogram inside of it. I think that was a really nice touch and was from the heart.





## **Chapter 15 - First Tailored Suit**

One night, my wife and I were invited to this special black-tie event. I remember it was around the era of skinny fitting garments. I was always and still used to comfortable silhouettes. This meant my suits were much larger than what trendy suits were. My wife told me that I should look somewhere for a better fitting suit. All I had was this off-the-rack one from Macy's. So, I guess it was time.

I decided to go researching and came across this store called Indochino. I went inside and was a little intimidated. All the workers wore these amazing suits. I was hesitant though. It fit them very well, a little too well. The workers' hair was kept very well. Their faces showed professionalism with their clean-shaven faces. Meanwhile, I didn't shave my mustache or anything. I was nervous especially since I was by myself. But the workers were really nice.

I waited 4 weeks and my black suit arrived to my house. I wore it and showed it to my wife. She said it was the best suit I ever wore. The shoulders fit right at my chest, and the body tapered really nicely in my chest and stomach area. The pants fit great at my waist and were really comfortable in the seat. I did go back to adjust the length, but everything fit perfect. Inside the suit, I was able to monogram and showed me and my wife's name on it. She smiled and was so happy that I finally got a good suit.

And guess what happened next? I went to another event wearing this black suit. And everyone loved it! My whole family asked where I got it from. They weren't used to what I was wearing. They were used to shoulders that were far too wide on me, and pants that touched the floor. I've been Indochino now for about 5 years and I don't think I'll ever go back to the baggy silhouette. The suits aren't super tight, but they're comfortable and fitted, without being too skinny or too big.



My name is Terrence Williams. I was born in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. I'm a native New Yorker at heart! I love to wear suits when need to be, but can also wear sweatpants to get comfortable. I've been married to my beautiful wife for over 20 years now, and have three beautiful children. I've always been working in retail for too long – I have tons of experience selling. I graduated from Medgar Evers College with an Associate Degree in Business Administration. I am currently enrolled at New York City College of Technology, working towards obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Business and Technology of Fashion. In my free time, I like to go out and have barbecues in the backyard with everyone. My goal is to one day obtain my own suiting company and continue to expand my knowledge as a marketer and entrepreneur in the fashion industry.

