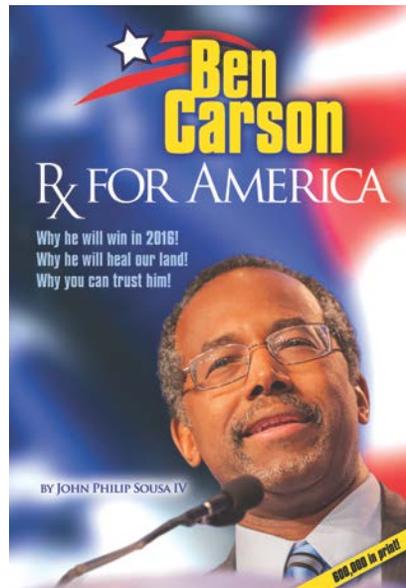


An excerpt from Ben Carson, Rx For America by John Philip Sousa IV, © 2015 John Philip Sousa IV, soon to be available at Amazon in softcover and hardbound editions, as well as Kindle and Audible versions. A Spanish language version is also planned.



Chapter 1

Ben Carson the Man

Long before he ever came on the political scene, Dr. Carson was well known and respected around the world for his skill as a pediatric neurosurgeon. But, his becoming a ground-breaking and world renowned pediatric neurosurgeon had a most unlikely beginning.

Benjamin Solomon Carson grew up in a single family home with his mother and brother in one of the worst areas of Detroit, Michigan. They lived just a short distance from the famous Ford Rouge River Plant. It wasn't exactly a recipe for success. In fact, the outlook was bleak.

When Ben Carson was in the 5th grade, his classmates called him “dummy” because he had terrible grades. He also had a violent temper. He threw rocks at cars, even police cars, and then, when they stopped, dared them to chase him. He was headed down the wrong path and his situation looked hopeless.

His mother married at 13, only to find out, after having two boys, that her husband was a bigamist. Being a woman of faith, she sent her unfaithful husband packing and set about raising her two children on her own. Because she was illiterate, the only work she could find was as a domestic, cleaning the homes of others.

Sonya, Ben's mother, refused to go on welfare. She may have been illiterate, but she noticed that anyone who went on welfare never got off of welfare. She did not want that for herself or for her boys. But, things were not going well for Ben and Curtis. She knew Ben was smart, but he was always getting into trouble, and he was not doing well at school, so she prayed about it.

Sonya worked very, very hard, often working two or three jobs to provide for her boys. She was cleaning the house of a rather wealthy individual one day and noticed that the television was covered with books. She said to the gentleman, *"How do you watch television with all these books on your TV set?"* He said he would rather read books than watch TV. Sonya went home and said, *"Boys, new rule in the house. No more than one hour of television in this house. You're going to read."* ...Thanks to that one change, Ben Carson and his brother, Curtis, were pulled out of poverty and put on the road to success.

So, except for one or two favorite shows each week, Sonya turned off the television and the boys read two books per week (from the local library). In addition, even though she could not read, she required Ben and Curtis to write book reports on each book they read and give them to her. She would even mark up their reports as if she was grading them.

At first, Ben especially hated not being able to go outside with the rest of the children, and he hated reading books. But, soon he was devouring books as fast as he could read them. And, in just two years, he was the star pupil in his class. He was no longer the class dummy, he was the class brain.

In high school Ben's leadership skills blossomed, especially in the ROTC where he earned medals for his rifle marksmanship. In just three years he was promoted to the rank of Colonel after receiving the highest score ever recorded on a field grade examination. To top it off, Carson was given the title of executive officer over all the high school ROTC programs in the Detroit public school system. In recognition of this achievement, he led the Memorial Day Parade in Detroit and met General William Westmoreland. He also had dinner with a number of Medal of Honor recipients. Most important of all, he was offered an appointment to United States Military Academy at West Point. In his own words, this is what he said about his ROTC experience...

*"I was thrilled by the whole ROTC experience. ...it taught me a wide variety of skills. It also bolstered my confidence to believe I might find a military career quite satisfying if I accepted that scholarship to West Point."*¹

However, after weighing his options, Ben Carson passed up the opportunity to attend West Point to pursue his dream of becoming a physician. As he put it:

"Not only did I remain convinced that God wanted me to become a doctor, but I had read many Bible verses telling me God would answer my fervent

prayers and grant the desires of my heart. My desire was to go to Yale, and I prayed for that fervently.”ⁱⁱ

Indeed, after graduating from high school with honors, he only had enough money to apply to one school, so he applied to Yale. He was accepted and attended Yale University on a scholarship. After Yale, where he met his future bride, Ladena “Candy” Rustin, he attended medical school at the University of Michigan. Ben always set his sights high. After graduation from medical school, he was hired by Johns Hopkins Hospital, one of the most prestigious teaching hospitals in the United States. When he became a neurosurgeon, there were only eight black neurosurgeons in the entire world.ⁱⁱⁱ

At the age of 33, he became the youngest major Division Director in Johns Hopkins history, responsible for running a multi-hundred million dollar enterprise.^{iv} Everyone recognized him as a brilliant and compassionate physician. But that was just the beginning.

In 1987 Dr. Ben Carson did something that had never before been done in world history. Leading a medical team of 70, he successfully separated twins conjoined at the head, keeping both alive. In the past, one twin had always died, but Dr. Carson developed a new technique that enabled both twins to live. Subsequently, Dr. Carson successfully led medical teams that separated 11 pairs of twins connected at the head.

As a physician, Ben Carson was known for his compassion. In spite of his intense schedule, he would take as much time as needed to talk with the parents of a patient, or the patient himself, to fully explain the procedure he was planning to undertake, and the risks involved. He patiently answered questions and did his best to reassure his patients and their parents that everything possible was being done to save their life or solve their problem. It was not uncommon for him to pray with his patients. And he always urged them to pray about the procedure the night before surgery, telling them that he would be praying about it, too.

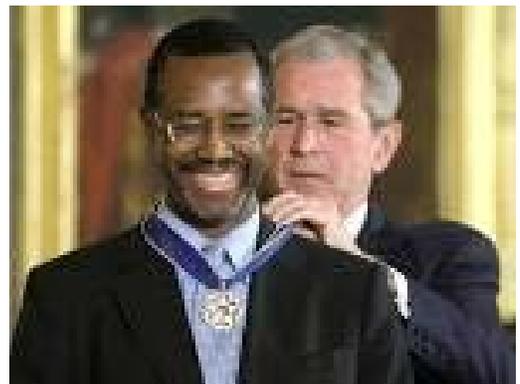
Dr. Carson’s achievements have not been limited to the operating room. When Carson and his wife, Candy, read a research study about education in the United States they were alarmed by the findings. The study showed that our nation’s students ranked 21st out of 22 countries, next to the bottom of the list in science and math. In order to do something about this decline in educational performance, he and his wife, Candy, established the Carson Scholars Fund in 1994.^v Its purpose is to provide encouragement and support to talented young people living in poverty as well as to address the education crisis in the United States. Open to children of all backgrounds and all races, this scholarship program operates in all 50 states, and has received worldwide recognition for its successes.

The Carsons also noticed that while high school sports stars received high praise, great attention, and huge trophies, those students who excelled scholastically only received a pin or a certificate. So, in light of the study, and the lack of encouragement for students who do well in school, they established programs to celebrate and honor academic achievement.

The Carson Scholars Fund awards scholarships to students in grades four through eleven who not only excel in school, but also exhibit humanitarian qualities. Scholarship winners receive a \$1,000 scholarship toward a college education, and recognition that includes attendance at an awards banquet. The objective is to make these top performing students role models at their schools.

The second program of the foundation started in 2000 and consists of creating attractive Ben Carson Reading Rooms all across the nation. The goal is to encourage young children to read. Carson understood that reading is the key to learning and knew it was the reason for his success in school and ultimately becoming a medical doctor. Today there are more than 110 of these reading rooms across the nation.

For nearly two decades Dr. Carson has served on the Board of Directors of two multinational corporations, the Kellogg Company and Costco. In 2001, Dr. Carson was named one of the nation's foremost scientists and physicians by *Time* magazine and CNN. Also in 2001, the Library of Congress selected him as one of the nation's 89 "*Living Legends*." In 2006, the NAACP awarded Carson its highest honor, the Spingarn Medal. Carson was also the recipient of the Horatio Alger Award, whose other recipients include Bob Dole, Dwight Eisenhower, Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan. The Horatio Alger Award is given to "...*extraordinary self-made Americans*."^{vi} For his brilliance, his leadership, and his compassion, Dr. Carson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2008, the nation's highest civilian award.^{vii} Ben Carson has also been awarded thirty-eight honorary doctorate degrees.^{viii} A December 2014 Gallup poll found that Dr. Ben Carson is the sixth most admired man in America.^{ix} No other prospective Republican candidate for president made it into the top ten of this prestigious listing. Another Gallup poll revealed that Ben Carson is the only Republican candidate for president who is more popular with the American people than Hillary Clinton.^x He is also a *New York Times* best-selling author of seven books, his book, *One Nation*, released about the same time as Hillary Clinton's highly touted biography *Hard*



Choices, far outsold the Clinton book and was on the *New York Times* nonfiction bestseller list for five weeks.

A major motion picture starring Cuba Gooding, Jr., was released in 2009 about the life of Ben Carson. The movie, “*Gifted Hands*,”^{xi} describes his upbringing, his early anger, his triumph over anger, and his medical successes. The movie was particularly well-received by African Americans who have been aware of the doctor’s many accomplishments for years. Young African Americans have been told the amazing story of Ben Carson for generations. Dr. Carson has been used as a role model by parents to encourage their children to work hard, overcome challenges, get a good education, and achieve the American Dream. It is not an exaggeration to say that Dr. Ben Carson is revered in the African American community, especially by people of faith.

How respected and highly regarded is Dr. Ben Carson? Even those who disagree with him on public policy issues speak glowingly of his achievements and his character. For instance, the endorsements on the back of the book *Gifted Hands* include these warm words...^{xii}

“Some say he would be a great man even if he never picked up a scalpel.”—
Parade Magazine

“He works miracles on children others have written off as hopeless.”—
Barbara Walters

As noted in the Introduction, Dr. Ben Carson erupted onto the political scene as a result of his speech at the 2013 National Prayer Breakfast.^{xiii} Prior to that event, Dr. Carson and his wife, Candy, had co-authored the book, *America the Beautiful*, which expressed his concerns for the future of our nation. But, it was not until he spoke at the National Prayer Breakfast, with President and Mrs. Obama, along with Vice President Biden sitting nearby, that the public truly took note of Dr. Carson’s political views and his ability to explain complicated issues in simple terms.

In that speech, Ben Carson respectfully, yet directly, addressed the dangers of a growing National Debt to future generations. He also talked about the non-Biblical idea of income and wealth re-distribution. And, finally, he gently suggested that there was a better approach to universal health care other than the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) that would be less costly, less intrusive, less bureaucratic and would not put the government between a patient and his doctor. Dr. Carson called for Obamacare to be replaced by a health savings account program that would strengthen the patient-doctor relationship and eliminate the need for a massive new government bureaucracy. He realized that Obamacare would grant unprecedented power to the federal government and ultimately reduce the freedom of American citizens. He later wrote of the move to government run health care...

“I think this shift is beginning to wrench the nation from one centered on the rights of individual citizens to one that accepts the right of the government to control even the most essential parts of our lives. This strikes a serious blow to the concept of freedom that gave birth to this nation.”^{xiv}

While the White House was angry about Ben Carson’s speech at the 2013 National Prayer Breakfast, the response of the American people was an outpouring of support greater than for any speech since Ronald Reagan’s “*Time for Choosing*” speech.^{xv} More than 4.3 million people have viewed Carson’s National Prayer Breakfast speech on YouTube™. That was the beginning of a coast-to-coast, border-to-border outcry for Dr. Carson to run for president of the United States.

Endnotes

ⁱ Benjamin Carson, *Take the Risk, Learning to Identify, Choose, and Live with Acceptable Risk* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2008) p. 85

² Ibid, p. 86

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, p. 149

^{iv} This is an estimate based on the following information. As defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics, pediatric care begins with pre-natal and continues through the age of 21. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approximately 1.1 million Americans are treated for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) each year. CDC notes that 475,000 children, ages 9 to 14, suffer from TBI each year (note that this statistic does not cover pediatric care between the ages of 15 and 21). According to that statistic it is reasonable to conclude that approximately 50% of all TBI occurs in children between the ages of 9 to 21. Johns Hopkins Children’s Center consistently ranks among the top three hospitals in neurology and neurosurgery. According to information provided by Johns Hopkins department of Neurology and Neurosurgery they “provide over 30,000 outpatient consultations and perform more than 4,000 brain, tumor, vascular, and peripheral nerve operations” each year. The typical cost of brain surgery in the United States costs between \$50,000 and \$150,000 depending on the hospital, and the type of surgery. It is reasonable to assume that considering its high ranking, Johns Hopkins University Hospital would be among the more expensive places to have brain surgery. Nevertheless, if you assume a median brain surgery cost of \$100,000, ignore the revenue from outpatient consultations and assume half of the 4,000 brain surgeries performed at Johns Hopkins were performed in the pediatric division headed by Dr. Carson, the total annual amount of billings for brain surgery would be \$200 million per year.

^v Carson Scholars Fund, Inc. (<http://carsonscholars.org>) 305 W. Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 310, Towson, MD 21204

^{vi} Daniel Foster, “Five Things You Didn’t Know About Dr. Carson,” *National Review Online*, February 13, 2013, www.nationalreview.com/articles/340618/five-things-you-didn-t-know-about-dr-carson-daniel-foster/page/0/1?splash=

^{vii} Ben Carson. (2014). The Biography.com website. Retrieved 02:26, Nov 10, 2014, from <http://www.biography.com/people/ben-carson-475422>

^{viii} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Carson

^{ix} Frank Rich, “Sixth Most Admired Man in America,” *New York Times Magazine*, February 24, 2015

^x Andrew Prokop, “Poll: The Only Presidential Contender More Popular than Hillary Clinton is Ben Carson,” *Vox*, www.vox.com/2015/3/13/8207935/hillary-clinton-favorability March 13, 2015

^{xi} *Gifted Hands* movie, Sony Pictures Television, Inc., 2009

^{xii} Benjamin Carson, *Gifted Hands* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1990), back cover

^{xiii} Ben Carson’s 2013 National Prayer Breakfast speech, Reprinted in its entirety in chapter 10 of this book

^{xiv} Ben Carson, “Political Correctness and the Slavery of Obamacare,” *The Washington Times*, March 18, 2014

^{xv} *A Time for Choosing*, Ronald Reagan’s speech on behalf of the presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater, Los Angeles, California, October 27, 1964