

## Motivational Speech on The Importance of Reading

### ***“BECAUSE I COULD NOT READ”***

Good morning everyone,

My name is Donnell Wilson.

Thank you for inviting me here today. I also would like to thank my lovely wife Leslie and daughter Avery for supporting me in my efforts to reach out to all with the need to read. My life story is titled “BECAUSE I COULD NOT READ”. I’m going to read it to you today, not so much because I don’t remember. I remember it all to well. I’m reading it because I CAN.

When I was growing up on the south side of Chicago, I could not read and neither could my mom nor my younger brother and sister. Only my big sister could read because she caught on in school. We all went to the same public school. *(Gym and art were the only classes I got good grades in. My art teacher even took a couple pieces of my art work home with her, because she really thought they were very good. Drawing, painting and doing crafts were my favorite things to do in school.)* But the rest of school was a nightmare. I remember being laughed at and made fun of by my other classmates when the teacher would call on me to read out loud in class, because I stumbled over every word and on top of that I had a real bad stuttering problem. These were the most embarrassing and shameful moments of my life. I would get so angry, I would flip over my desk and run out of class. I got suspended a lot from school because of my bad temper. Sometimes I would ditch school to avoid being laughed at and made fun of. I failed two grades while in grammar school because I ditched too many days, got suspended a lot and couldn’t do the work. *Because I Could Not Read.* A couple of times I was passed on to the next grade when I shouldn’t have been. *(We did not have end of grade testing like you all have here.)* I wasn’t a bad kid -- I just was ashamed that I couldn’t read and I felt no one cared. I was headed down the wrong path in my young life.

My mom loved me with all her heart but she didn’t know what to do with me. She was afraid that I would become a menace to society so she sent me to live with my father, whom I had never met. *(As I look back on my life, I’m glad my mom made the sacrifice to send me away because I could have wound up joining the neighborhood gang just to fit in somewhere.)* My father and his family lived in Vicksburg, Mississippi. All of my half brothers and sisters could read and spell by the time they could talk. It was very hard living with them, being their big brother and all. I barely spoke and was even more ashamed that I couldn’t read a simple