

Jason Altmire ([00:04](#)):

Hello, and welcome to another edition of Career Education Report. I am Jason Altmire. We have an exciting podcast today, because this was recorded before a live audience. You're going to hear Congressman Burgess Owens speak at our Career Education Convention. This took place on June 1st. So, take a listen. Again, this took place June 1st in Las Vegas at the Career Education Convention. Here we have Congressman Burgess Owens.

We are delighted to have Congressman Burgess Owens with us today. Congressman Owens is not only one of the most interesting members of Congress, but he is one of the most interesting people that you will ever meet. He is someone, he grew up in the segregated south. He made a name for himself through athletics. He helped integrate the University of Miami Hurricane football team, was one of the first four Black players on the team, was all-American, great college football player, first round draft pick of the New York Jets, played a decade in the NFL. He is the only member of Congress ever to also have a Super Bowl ring, which he is wearing.

He won the Super Bowl with the Oakland Raiders, now the Las Vegas Raiders. We could do an entire podcast on his athletic career and someday when we do a football podcast, we will do that. But what's amazing about him is that's not where the story stops. The story actually starts after he stopped playing, retired from the NFL. I wanted to start Congressman, can you talk a little bit about your upbringing, because growing up in Tallahassee, Florida in the 1960s, black family, what was that like and how did that alter your perception of the world and influence who you are today?

Congressman Burgess Owens ([02:09](#)):

Thank you, Jason. First of all, let me just say how pleased I am to be here. I think, as you guys get a little bit of my history, you'll see why I have such a passion for what you do, how proud of what you do, and how much you will influence the future of our country. So, I want to thank you guys, first of all, by saying that. Quick, before we get started, I want to congratulate Brad, who's the chairman, who's leaving Lanell, who's coming on a board. Steve's out here, has helped put this together here, and of course, Jason, CQ. Thank you guys.

My dad was a college professor for 40 years, also a very strong entrepreneur. So, I grew up in an environment where I understood education was very, very important. My degree was in biology, because I experienced watching him in the laboratory, working with him every summer, and so marine biology was going to be my future. Had no idea the football would end up being my pathway. But the point that education was so important is really, is where it all began with me.

Let me just start off, give you a little of history, because I think it's important to recognize how much we all have in common in terms of our ancestry. I just had a chance to speak with some of the leaders early today. What I grew up in as an environment, Tallahassee, Florida, days of KKK, Jim Crow, segregation, but a very, very proud community, just like every other community across our country. Even though we were not assimilating, whether it be Italian, Polish, Jewish, Black, what we had in common was our love for country. Our vets had just come back from World War II. They were proud of what they accomplished. They came back to build a great family, a great middle class, and they believed in a couple tenets that we have to get back to, that it's actually going to be up to you guys to teach this once again. I have faith that our kids will learn these basic tenets.

It's very simple. I consider it the American way. It's what makes it so that anyone who comes to this country, regardless of their background, regardless of how much they come to this country with, regardless of their culture or their faith, it doesn't matter. These four tenets define the American way, because they define the middle class. It's faith, family, free market and education. Faith, family, free market and education. Anyone who dives in, who commits to those tenets will become middle class and

above. It's just the way it is. My community was one of those. It was community in the '40s, '50s, and '60s, because we believed in faith, family, free market and education, led our country in the growth of middle class.

Led our country. Men matriculated from college, led our country. Men committed to marriage. Up until 1970, Black women could predict being married at a higher percentage than white women, up until 1970. We also led the country in percentage of entrepreneurs. Keep in mind, the community was totally segregated. We had to be self-sufficient. We had to have business ownership. So, around me, as I grew up, I remember Baker's Pharmacy, Speed Grocery Store, Perkin's Service Station, a Black hospital with Black docs and Black nurses. Self-sufficient, very proud, and a community that showed me as a young kid, what the possibilities were. It didn't matter what we were told outside our communities, what we saw within our community that made the difference.

We were told that anything could be possible in a country like America, but all you have to do is get up every single day, work hard. Make sure you have a good name, focus on those kids, man up, for men, man up. I mean, I tell you what. If you were not a man, if you were not doing the things that men did in my day, you were not taking care of your kids, making sure you had a good name, producing and not taking, you were not considered a man, period. I know that might not be politically correct, but I'm just not politically correct when it comes to that. It's something we got to get back to, big time. So, that being said, and Jason, let me know when I need to shut down, all right?

Jason Altmire ([06:17](#)):

No, you're good. Have at it.

Congressman Burgess Owens ([06:20](#)):

So, that being said, let me just say this also, because I've had a chance to talk with... I'm trying to say, I know Lanelle had chance to said last night then I think it was Sally. We were talking about the way we were raised and what we saw having our country. I was raised in a day when, I remember the movie, Guess Who's Coming To Dinner? You guys remember that movie? Well, grew up in down South, that was a big deal, because it was about Spencer Tracy. It was, it was Sidney Poitier meeting with his white fiance, with her parents. The whole movie was around a dinner table. It was a big deal, because in my days in the '60s, that just wasn't happening.

We were not integrating. We were not. I didn't have friends that were a different color. It was a very different time. Well, my family today, six kids represent Black, white, Hispanic, American-Indian and Trinidadian, and we call each other family. Isn't that kind of cool? That is a, I'm telling my friends, that's where we were heading, until about a few years back. We were heading to a country in which we saw ourselves as the color of the rainbow, that we truly looked at each other from inside out, not outside in, and it comes down to education, to how we get back to getting on the right trajectory. We need to teach our kids about our history, about what we've done together, how far we've come, and in fact it has nothing to do with color. It has to do with what comes from within, and what used to be the case was on sports and military, we found that.

Sports and military is all about winning, my friends. I mean, it didn't matter the size, the color, I mean we wanted to win, and when you want to win, you look from within. What makes up that character of the person that is next to you? You can get respect from the person next to you if they add value to who you are. So, we have to get back to that. That's going to happen through teaching meritocracy once again, to teaching free market once again, which we got away from decades ago, on purpose. So, those are things we're going to be doing, and I cannot wait for the new Congress, because you have friends in this coming year, 2023, we have people who understand the power of the business

ownership, of free market, of education, and we're going to have, start to change the way we move our country, move forward.

So, I know that's a long answer to short question, but I'm very excited about where we're heading off to, and I'm very excited about the time I grew up in and how far we've come, and to know that our country continues every single generation, gets better and better at it.

Jason Altmire ([08:55](#)):

The Congressman has visited 12 schools since he's been in office. He's traveled all over the country to visit with many of the people in this room. This is the Career Education Convention, career schools, and a lot of the students have gone through hard times. Single moms, veterans returning to the workforce, people who are in transition, lost their job, looking for a different path, maybe have tried another educational setting and it didn't work out. You've been very open that you also went through some hard times after leaving the NFL. Can you talk a little bit about that? How does that shape your life?

Congressman Burgess Owens ([09:31](#)):

What, I've been, again, I was very, very fortunate to have been raised at a time in which you were taught very simply, failure's part of the process. It's what you do afterwards, that really makes us Americans, actually at the end of the day. So, when I left the NFL, I left with the idea of one day helping to bring back those kids that I saw we were losing in my community. My dad was a remarkable mentor. Not only again,, was he a college professor ... Can I do this real quickly? I got to give you a little history of my dad. Okay. Dad went to World War II, came back, living, kind of came out of Texas. Because of Jim Crow laws, when they came back from war II, they could not get their postgraduate degree down South because of Jim Crow laws. I didn't, I ran across a box of letters after he passed away, rejection letters of college across the country, particularly Northeast that were rejected as applications to go to get this post-graduate degree.

Let me tell you about that generation of Americans. They looked at obstacles as motivation. You told them that you could not, they can't, and they showed you why they could. He ended up, he and his brother continued to go through the process until he got accepted at Ohio State. So, dad got his PhD in Ohio state in Agronomy. My uncle got his PhD in economics at Ohio State. They both were a college professors, 40 years, one University of Houston, my dad at Florida A&M. They were both entrepreneurs, real estate. Dad, when he retired from education, he had a 500-acre farm with fire spring-fed lakes, and tried to convince me to be a farmer. I decided I couldn't do that. Too hard. 24 hours a day. Oh my goodness. But I respect so much, so much. You talk about a true entrepreneur, go to rural America, and you'll find out what true entrepreneurship, what true America's all about that.

That culture is about hard work, about faith, about a good name, and a vision to have their kids to have to follow in their footsteps. It's a remarkable culture. So, I just wanted to put that out there, because I was taught early in life that failure's part of the process of succeeding, and everybody in here knows what I'm talking about. So, I came out of NFL with a real strong desire to have an impact. I was a very cocky liberal, and let me just say this by, by the way. We have a vast audience here. I think our country is great because the conversation we have on all sides of the aisle. Democrats, Independents, Republicans, we do so much together when we're talking, and I think we're finally at a place we're talking again, because there are people who hate our country, and we got to make sure we understand who they are.

The ones who hate faith, family, free market and education, the Marxists and Socialists out there, and they hide behind good people to get their agenda done. So, I just want to make sure,

understand that I'm very vocal on the way I think, so I don't want to offend anybody, but just know that together we will actually win this thing again. So, left NFL, very cocky liberal. Nine years later, I was very humbled, humbled, conservative, because the business I left the NFL to do, that I just knew was going to succeed, failed mightily. We lost everything. I remember standing in a basement apartment in Brooklyn, New York, after leaving a beautiful home in Long Island. Pool, nice cars in the garage. Four kids in the basement, one-bedroom apartment, and I remember looking outside on the street window. I was thinking, "How did this happen?"

Seriously, I mean, give me a break. But I remember also this little bit of a voice my mind saying, "You know what? This is for your good. This will, you'll look back, and this will be a good thing." I'll say the best thing that ever happened to me was failure, because at that point, not only did I learn a lot about the humble process, but I learned that this country's a place of second chances. I can now go to colleges across this country and when these kids push back and say, "Yeah, you say what you're saying, because you're an NFL player." I said, "Yeah, I was a NFL player, but I also was a chimney sweep for a while. I was a security guard for a while. I had to start all over again." The great thing about our country is this is a place of second chances.

And you guys give people across our country that opportunity to experience that, they can literally, no matter what they've gone through before then, that they can be the first coming out of their generation, of getting an education, of getting a degree. They're building upon that degree, to when they look back and pull others back with them, because the most powerful nine words that Americans can give to each other is, if I can do it, you can do it. That's what we have a chance to do to each other. So, I'm glad I went through that. I mentioned to a group earlier, one of the things I learned playing football, I played for ... the 13th season is when I got to the Super Bowl Championship. But I talk about the 12 before that, were years there were total, they were losing seasons.

One year in high school, four years of University of Miami, seven years of the Jets, all losing seasons. But I learned this about that process, so I look back on it. It's not the scoreboard that counts, it's the hustle. If we can control the hustle, then at the end of the day we win. We just have to hang in there, fight to the end, continue to hustle, make that the determination of whether you're winning or not. I tell you, you do that, when we teach that people don't, they won't give up. They know they just got to hustle, hustle through the defeats, and things will turn around and be okay with them.

Jason Altmire ([15:15](#)):

That is what our students do, and that's why your story is so inspiring. Can you talk about, the Congressman represents the State of Utah. You didn't have any connection to Utah growing up or in the NFL. How did you end up there? What's the story?

Congressman Burgess Owens ([15:32](#)):

Well, when you have six kids, which I have six kids, and all, I sent them all to go to school out there, because I believed in the culture. I wanted them to leave a home, and have ... I went to the University of Miami, and the University of Miami, in those days, I think even today is known as the party school. I didn't want them to go to the party school. So, I figured, don't have to dig themselves out of this big big hole. So, decided to send them out to Utah, BYU, UVU, and they decided to stay. I mean, I really had planned those six kids going there and coming back home. I had their rooms all set up. They were going to come back, and we're going to continue on the way we had always been. Wake up one day and they figured out they weren't coming home.

So, what's a dad to do? I joined them in Utah. The greatest move I've ever made. By the way, for those who visit Utah, let my friends always know if you come to Utah too often, stay too long, you'll become a Utahan. All right? It's the way it works. So, no, I love it. I love it because of a couple things. It

truly is about ... the culture I grew up with and grew up in, I cannot speak high enough about. I'm so proud to have been raised when I was raised, so proud of the community I was raised in, and what I found in Utah is the same community. It's a community of service, entrepreneurship. 98% of the small business businesses are small business owners. Of education. If you want to a place to find a place with innovators, people think outside the box, talking about whether it be technology, whether it be rural, [inaudible 00:17:06] farmers, sheep herders, it doesn't matter.

We're just thinking about how to become better, and we want to pass that on to our kids. So, it's a place I'm so proud to represent. I really am. My hopes are that the things that we can. I'm ... Education and workforce will always be a committee I'll be part of. By the way, education has become one of the top priorities of our conference. So, know you have friends, advocates in the new majority that's coming on board. We know education is where our future is, where we have to fight to get our country back, but it will be, instead of education and labor, which is the highlight and the priorities of the left, I'll be education and workforce. What we get out, we can do to get our kids as young as possible, as early as possible, with as less debt as possible, with as much faith in themselves and our country as possible, to begin part of that workforce. We start to do that, then we will get our country back in a big way.

The other thing that I'm, I'll be part of is transportation infrastructure. I going to make sure that business owners across our state, no matter where, how far into rural area, have the infrastructure, have the broadband to be able to run a business, to be able to educate ourselves. We should never be at a lack of access, because of where we are in distance wise. No matter where we are in our country, where we are in our state, we should have the same access to business opportunities and same access to education. So, those are two things that I think will be my legacy, not only for our State of Utah, but for our country. I believe we'll do some things in terms of modeling in Utah, that the rest of the country could benefit from.

Jason Altmire ([18:49](#)):

You, I mentioned you visited a dozen schools traveling around the country, and you care so much about education. What have you learned? What are your takeaways from those visits?

Congressman Burgess Owens ([19:00](#)):

It's interesting, because I've always known education was important. I was not really as aware of this particular niche of for-profit, and it gives me so much optimism to know there are, there's a niche that cares about outcome. There's a niche within education that's more than just getting a piece of paper. It's more than just seeing how long you can keep a kid in college, how much debt they can have, and how much endowments funds they can put together. There really is an industry of people that care about the outcome of our kids, and that's really what makes our country what it is. If you have people with the good heart, of empathy, and allow them to be, they take their entrepreneurial spirit and put that into education, as opposed to separating it, see, the downside of our educational system is there are too many, leftists who have no clue about how to build anything.

But they do know how to be in a position of making a good income, and have no accountability, and just feeling free to just indoctrinate. That's what our education system's been for way too long. If you wonder why we have the issues we have, where literally kids that have gone through graduate school, out in our streets, rioting, that's because they've been indoctrinated to not understand or love our nation. So, what I love about what you guys are doing, not only your educators, but your entrepreneurs, you're thinking, how can I make sure this experience is a better experience for my kids? How can I make sure that when they're on my campus, that they have a place where they can come together and talk.

They can actually agree to disagree, and know that's healthy. That they can actually know that when I get from this, whatever I'm doing, I can get into the workforce. There's a demand for what I'm doing. I can actually start my career, start a family, build a home. Those are things that has always been the American way, and I'm so excited that this is a niche, a place in our country that does it. Again, it's just now a matter of raising the standards for the other side to kind of meet what you guys are already doing right now to compete.

Jason Altmire ([21:03](#)):

I'm going to ask one more question for the podcast, and I wanted to point out, and then we're going to open it up for questions. There are microphones, you'll see across the center aisle here. So, we'll have about 15 minutes for questions. So, those of you that have a question for the Congressman, please start to congregate at the microphones. For the last question, we've talked about the politics of the country, and the expectation that Republicans will win, at least the House, perhaps the Senate as well. What does that mean for public policy? Not just education, what kind of change will the country see if Republicans are successful?

Congressman Burgess Owens ([21:44](#)):

My goal, whenever I have a chance to speak to individuals or groups is to let you know how excited I am about our country right now. I've never been more excited about our future than am right now. Now, it might sound kind of crazy, but I do believe in those first three words of our mission statement, We, The People. I think the most powerful thing we have going for ourselves when we start talking, there's nothing more powerful than that process, and that's what's happened right now. What's going to happen in 19 and 2023 is not so much what we will be doing as Representatives. It's what you'll be doing to make sure that many of us are there. You guys will make sure, as a country, as we are the people, as Republicans, Independents, and Democrats, that we represent what we want for the future, not what we're experiencing now.

We now know what it looks like to wake up one day, and it's [inaudible 00:22:34] this freedom bubble that we've lived in, and which we have big, big dreams, and all the things. We wake up one day, and realize we can't go to school. We can't go to church. We can't open up our businesses and say, "Where did this come from?" Well, the freedom bubble, we realize it's very fragile, that we got to fight every single year, every single day, and our fight is make sure our kids understand what their legacy really should be to continue this process of freedom that we have moved forward.

So, we have a new Congress coming in that I believe will, will ... I would say this, not, the Congress will be very unique, I think will highlight something that we've never seen before, but it'll be actually the engagement of the people that will look back on history and say, "We've never seen anything like this before," where Americans are waking up saying, "You know what? I just, I got to do more. I can't be too busy anymore. I got to come out off the sideline, out of the stands. I got to get on the field of action and do something." It doesn't matter whether it be to give some dollars, whether it be give some time, give some leadership, whether it be show up like this, we're saying we can't stay home anymore, and that's the greatest thing that can happen. We're going to have a Congress that's going to reflect that. Not only will we be focusing on making sure that the free market is working again, but we're also going to be a country that wants to make sure that the power is put back in the hands of we, the people.

So, you're going to start to see, we're coming up with something called Commitment With America. Commitment With America, in which we've had these task force going on for last year, education, border security, economics, those things that we know that we can represent for the people.

We're going to leave DC to come out into the country to talk about it. We're going to, as of next year, we have committee meetings that you have to go to C-SPAN, and take a look at what we're doing in DC. We're going to come out into the country, and have these committee meetings. We're going to get closer to the we, the people, so you understand. You can talk to us, make sure you understand what we're trying to do, and we understand what you want from us.

It's going to be a totally different approach, and I'm very, very excited about being part of that. So, just know guys, personally, I think, I don't think anything's by accident. I think we're in a country built on the concept of freedom, by God or freedom from the very beginning. It's not by accident we had the Constitution, the people, the founders, and this is a time where our country can really say we stood up. We came to the very edge of losing our country, our freedom, but we came together and realized how close we were, and we pulled ourselves back. A I say it's going to be very, very exciting time to say to our grandkids that we were there when it happened. We took part in it.

So, I want to, once again, thank you guys, because you're truly on our front line, and sometimes you don't quite get it, because you're fighting the bureaucrats on your own sometimes. But just know the curtain's been pulled back, and we have advocates who see who you are and what you represent for us, and we can't wait to be part of helping you be part of the solutions as we move forward. So, thank you so much for everything you guys do, for sure.

Jason Altmire ([25:53](#)):

So, I think you saw that was a great conversation. We had very interesting person and leader in higher education and in the political world, Congressman Burgess Owens. Again, that interview took place for the podcast before a live audience in Las Vegas on June 1st, at the Career Education Convention.

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