

Bio Richard Williams - 4'20

Richard O. Williams has a Ph.D., from the University of California, Berkeley, and a M.S., from George Washington University, Washington DC. He spent 20 years in the medical sciences in academia, doing research and teaching at the University of London, the Pasteur Institute, Paris, France, the University of Karlsruhe, Germany and with the World Health Organization in Africa. He also has had a career in business development helping to start small companies. He is author of 85 peer reviewed research articles on the molecular genetics and microbiology of infectious diseases. His interest in the world of autism started with his daughter who was adopted in 1979 from Thailand at the age of two. Her lack of eye contact and significantly delayed speech was cause for concern for numerous professionals but none provided a diagnosis. She began to talk only after her first grade teacher mused that she may not be talking at the age of 6, but it was time to start teaching her to read anyway. As she learned to read she began to talk. Her speech ability grew at the same rate as her reading developed. It was clear however there were issues about carrying on a fluid conversation.

Following the struggles of dealing with learning disabilities and impatient teachers, Dr Williams began researching the subject of learning disabilities while at the same time the usual ASD child advocacy struggles began. After his personal intervention in many schools his daughter finished high school with a mixture of good and bad grades. College was uncertain but clearly there were underlying abilities that made it potentially possible if the right setting and school could be found. Throughout the development of his daughter, Dr Williams read all that could be found on child development and developmental delays. At no time were Autistic Spectrum Disorders considered until a small unaccredited college, Beacon College, was found in Leesburg Florida. Beacon

College works specifically with students with learning disabilities, ADD and autism. Dr Williams was impressed with the approach, the administration and especially the teachers. His daughter attended and graduated in 4 years with a Bachelors degree in Human Services from Beacon College. Following her graduation his daughter stayed on at the school to work in the school library while Dr Williams was elected to the Board of Trustees of Beacon College. As chairman of the Board he over saw the full accreditation of the College, the development of new curricula and worked with the administration to expand the school and importantly, the degree offering. Following his retirement from the Board after 12 years, he devoted his time to researching the subjects of ASD and learning disabilities. The background was an excellent match when he met his coauthor, Jeffery Freed. Freed had the clinical and counseling background on the subject of ASD, had published on the subject before while Williams had the recent research background in ASD along with a career in the medical sciences.