

| FRI                               | SAT                                     | SUN                                    |
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| Partly sunny<br>High 81<br>Low 56 | Afternoon T-storms<br>High 78<br>Low 58 | Possible T-storms<br>High 75<br>Low 60 |

# Charlotte WEEKLY

Dinos take over Discovery Place!



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ABOUT THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY

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## Community

# The gift of powerful public speaking

Native Charlottean teaches speaking secrets to world leaders

by Lynn Grayson  
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T.J. Walker wants to do for public speaking what Martha Stewart has done for home decorating. A lofty goal, but one that's not too far-fetched for this native Charlottean, who's already made it big in New York City as chief executive officer of Media Training Worldwide, a company that coaches its clients on public-speaking techniques. Among those clients are Bank of



T.J. Walker

America, Miss Universe, the U.S. Army and prime ministers. Not too shabby for a former Myers Park High School debate-team member.

### From Myers Park High to MSNBC

Before he was on the speed dial of celebrities and world leaders, Walker attended Bruns Avenue Elementary, Quail Hollow Middle School, and South Mecklenburg and Myers Park high schools. He got his start in public speaking as student-body president at Quail Hollow and continued honing his skills in high school.

"Life experiences such as being on the debate team are what led me to my career path of training others how to make memorable presentations and speak with authority," Walker said.

He went on to study philosophy at Duke University, graduating in 1985 with magna cum laude honors.

That philosophical background resurfaced last month when he spoke to the Public Relations Society of America about the qualities of an excellent speaker. He offered his theory on speeches, discussing what constitutes genuine knowledge and the principles of reasoning involved in assuming what your audience hears.

"Every public-speaking opportunity makes you a better communicator," he told the audience at South End's Design Center of the Carolinas. "You do not have to have an innate ability to speak. It just takes practice."

And practice he's had.

Since graduating from Duke, Walker has amassed more than 20 years of media-related experience. He worked for Congress as a general aide and public relations manager, and on a number of political campaigns across

the country. He also served as director of communications for the Florida Department of Banking and Finance. Now, he is CEO of a company with offices in six countries.

Walker has appeared on MSNBC, Bloomberg Television and FOX News Channel. He previously hosted a syndicated television talk show called "Walker Roundup" on Florida Public Television.

For several years, Walker's media commentary was heard worldwide each week on the Voice of America radio network. He has been a guest on NPR's "Jim Bohannon Show," AP Network Radio, NBC Radio and WABC in New York City.

His columns have appeared in The New York Times, Investor Relations Magazine and National Review Online. He has written two books and produced more than 100 training manuals, DVDs and CDs.

### Comparing the good, the bad

Walker sees himself as a sort of political analyst, comparing the habits of good and bad speakers.

He introduced his presentation to PRSA with a clip from Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. "The reason this speech is so effective is because he speaks so slowly," Walker said.

He compared it to speeches by Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, who also speaks slowly and deliberately.

Walker also critiqued other notable politicians. "John F. Kennedy uses great hand gestures such as pointing at the audience. Hillary Clinton speaks too loudly when she's in front of a crowd but does a better job in small settings."

Although he leans to the left politically, he thinks Ronald Reagan was one of the greatest speakers of our time. "A lot of people think Reagan was a great speaker because he was an actor," he explained.

"Actually, he was a great speaker because he practiced all of the time. Sometimes he would rehearse his speeches for three hours a night. Not to memorize them necessarily, but rather to make sure he could connect with his audience and not read from the teleprompter."

Walker divulged several tips during his presentation, but his most important advice was to always communicate

with the audience on two levels: the intellectual and the emotional.

"Speakers need to understand what is truly important to their audiences," he said. "Then you must present it with emotion, passion and through interesting stories."

### Carolina on his mind

Walker returns to the Queen City at least six times a year on business and to visit his mother, who lives in south Charlotte. Some of his fondest memories of growing up here include playing on the train at Freedom Park and visiting his family's former restaurant Tio Montero, which was located in what is now Brixx Wood Fired Pizza on East Boulevard.

"I miss being able to wake up at 9 a.m. and decide I want to go play tennis around the corner," he admitted. "It's not like that in New York. You need reservations two weeks in advance. You make sacrifices living in downtown Manhattan, but it gives my company global recognition." □

### Want to know more?

For tips on public speaking or to record your own speeches and have them critiqued, visit <http://SpeakingChannel.tv> or [www.mediatrainingworldwide.com](http://www.mediatrainingworldwide.com).

## BECOMING A BETTER PUBLIC SPEAKER

Tips from media trainer T.J. Walker

- **Speak slowly.** Don't be afraid to pause.
- **Use hand gestures.** Hands clasped in front look awkward and hands hidden behind your back look too formal. Use your hands and expressions to tell the story.
- **Don't use a podium.** Podiums are training wheels for speakers. Get out from behind the podium and connect with your audience. If necessary, place copies of an outline in different locations throughout the room.
- **Great speakers consistently tell stories.** Relate every important point to a story and your audience will better remember it.
- **Eliminate jargon.** The simpler the message, the better.
- **Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.** You can tell when speakers haven't practiced. If you know your speech, you'll appear more sincere, more conversational and more believable.