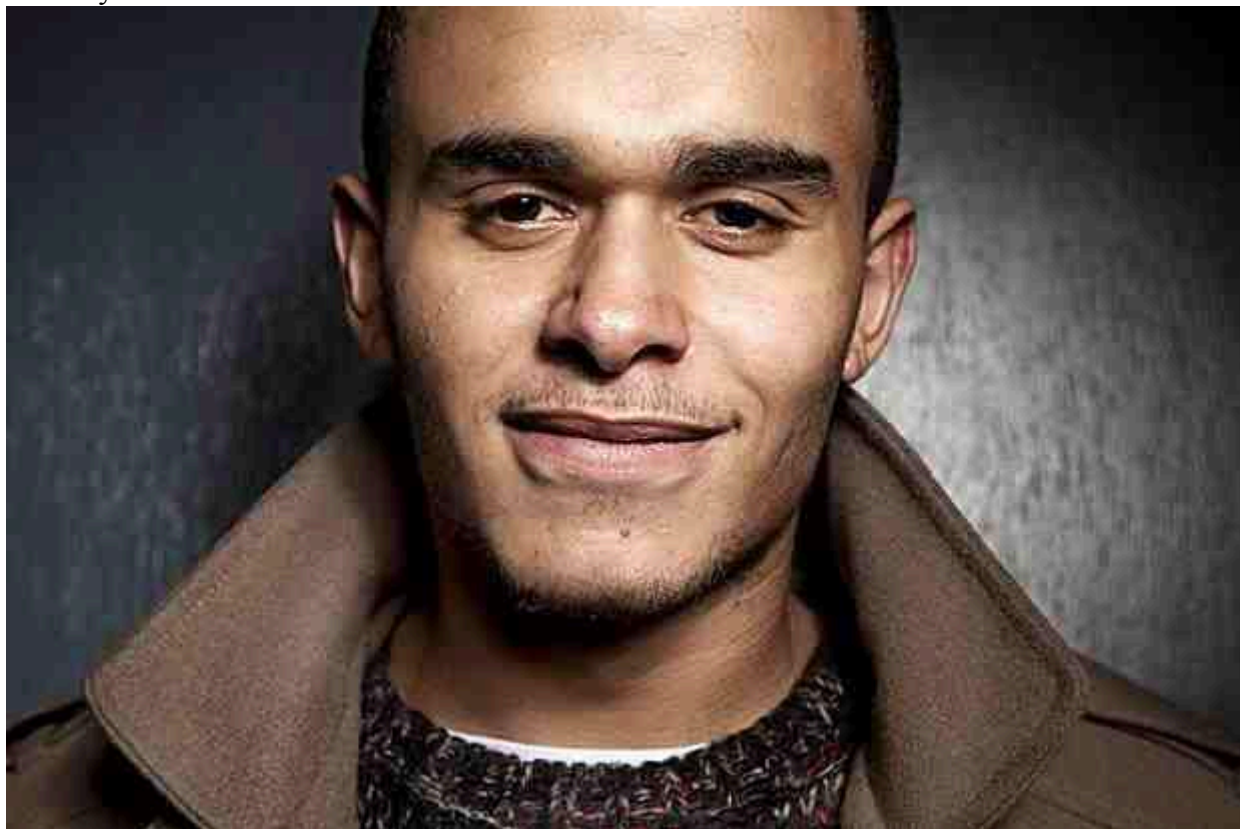


Ashley John-Baptiste inspires Brunel students

Tuesday 5 March 2013



On Monday 4 March 2013, the Placement and Careers Centre welcomed Ashley John-Baptiste to Brunel to share his story. Known nationally as 'the boy from *The Risk* who quit X-Factor', Ashley's personal journey is one of triumph over adversity and succeeding against the odds. We asked Employability Rep, George Coates, to share his expectations and impressions of Ashley.

Meeting Ashley John-Baptiste

George Coates

I met Ashley John-Baptiste with one thought in mind "Oh, he's that guy off the X-Factor that my girlfriend likes" and so couldn't be sure as to what I might expect. While there was no song or dance, and definitely no Westlife-esque standing up on a key-change, I did meet a showman. Ashley gave his talk to

the entrepreneurs and students of Brunel University with a relaxed demeanour and strong rhetoric that one might expect from a politician, except he was cool.

Wearing a jacket I wish I had, he started with some audience interaction and I found myself sucked into his show and that's exactly what it was. With natural charisma and charm Ashley could well have been putting on a show, but instead of greatest hits the audience were treated to Ashley John-Baptiste - The Life Story. Touching on areas of his life that he spoke about in his recent hit BBC documentary, we saw a very vulnerable but inspiring and motivated Ashley.

Fostered from an early age, Ashley has known three or four different homes throughout his life and with this unstable background even Ashley admits it affected him deeply, leading to a continual sense of rejection which bled into his school life. Suspended seven times before his final GCSE year, Ashley didn't have high hopes for his exams, until he came out with a string of As and Bs, a feat that he himself wasn't sure on the origin of, in his talk he exclaimed "I turned around and thought, 'I'm smart! Wow! Who knew!'"

From there Ashley's academic life took off, invites to universities, endless hours studying, a lot of heart break, and all of a sudden Ashley found himself at Cambridge University studying History, not bad for a South London kid who was never given much hope.

The X-Factor audition was a dare by his mates a week before graduation, then he just kept getting called back, before he knew it Ashley was in the live finals with the rest of *The Risk*, but when presented with a contract tying him down to six to ten years with the band he declined. With no creative control over what they would be doing Ashley decided to take a step back and think about what we wanted.

Less than a year later and Ashley has made a documentary for the BBC, has been hailed as a 'Champion of child care' and continues to make waves on



television and in media, I asked him what he saw his future as, what it might entail, he said to me, "I don't know exactly, it has to be people though, whether it's television or music, I want to be talking to people, helping them in any way I can." Call me optimistic, but the 'trouble kid' who made it to Cambridge would be my ideal candidate for someone who can help motivate and inspire people.

**For further information on Ashley please contact us on
01753 632 800 or email info@room54.co.uk**

For ten years we have taken away the pain of finding the best business speakers, sporting personalities, hosts and facilitators for events of all kinds. We have a proven track record for helping event organisers make the perfect selection. Our judgement is trusted.