

#ThinkABILITY

DARYL "CHILL" MITCHELL

Daryl "Chill" Mitchell has lived all over the United States. About two years ago, he temporarily relocated to New Orleans while he films his role as a tech savvy agent called, Patton Plame, in the television series NCIS: New Orleans.

In 2001, Mitchell was in a motorcycle accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. Prior to his accident, he was a successful actor and rapper with no health conditions or disabilities. Despite not knowing what life would be like as a wheelchair user, he did not let that stop him from pursuing his dreams and furthering his career. Many say that he is now an even more successful actor due to the success of NCIS: New Orleans.

There have been quite a few actors who have sustained injuries similar to that of Mitchell's during their career. The difference is that the majority of those actors are barely ever really heard of again. In other words, they let their injury stop them from acting and furthering their career. On the other hand, Mitchell refused to let it stop him. He actually landed a role in a sitcom only a year after his injury and continued to



Daryl "Chill" Mitchell as the main speaker for the University of New Orleans Fall 2016 commencement ceremony.



land future roles. On many occasions, producers tweaked the role of the character to fit Mitchell in as a wheelchair user.

Following is a quote from Mitchell during an interview with People Magazine:

"It was totally my fault. I took off in the dark without a helmet on a road I didn't know. The doctors told me that I had messed up my spinal cord and that I was paralyzed...It was more amazing than scary. Me, the most mobile person in the world, and I couldn't move. I'd played basketball and baseball and wrestled in school and done a whole lot of swimming. And Dance? Oh, My God, I was a great dancer."

Mitchell credits humor in helping him transition into life with a disability. He believes that making jokes about the wheelchair makes everyone else a little more comfortable. Sometimes people will look at another person in a wheelchair and hesitate to make conversation fearing they'll say the wrong thing. Therefore, he makes jokes about it so people will feel more at ease.

Mitchell says he knows many people in the industry view people with disabilities as more of a liability than an asset, and he has dedicated his career since the accident to change that.

He has become a major advocate for people with disabilities! More specifically, those with spinal cord injuries. He even started his own organization that focuses on helping minorities with spinal cord injuries called, "The Daryl Mitchell Foundation." The main goal of the organization is to help this group get all the necessary resources they need to be able to live a full life after an injury. A very memorable moment in his life happened the same year as his injury. His close friend, Denzel Washington, was nominated for an Oscar and invited him to join him for the ceremony. He flew out to attend the ceremony only to be turned away because the Kodak building did not have adequate wheelchair seating. This is what he had to say, "That's gonna change. Everyone's going to know about wheelchairs now that I'm in one. I promise you that."

Mitchell has become an inspiration to many people with similar disabilities. His life is a reminder that anyone can become disabled at any time. A disability can affect anyone from any race, gender, and age.

References

<http://www.newmobility.com/2015/01/ncis-new-orleans-wheeler-real/>

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