



## Devon Harris

### International Motivational Keynote Speaker

Three-Time Olympian with the Original Jamaican Bobsled Team and Retired Jamaican Defence Force Captain; Leading Audiences to Visualize Success with an Olympic Mindset. You may not know his name or recognize his picture. Yet his grit and fortitude helped inspire a movie you likely have viewed more than once. The 1990s feel-good blockbuster *Cool Runnings* sugarcoats the real story behind the original Jamaican bobsleigh team. It introduces four Caribbean islanders recruited to participate in the Winter Olympics. They had not ridden on a bobsled nor even walked on snow, never mind experienced the breathtaking cold of a Canadian mountaintop. The entire world watched, waiting to mock and ridicule them. Instead, the world came to embrace their determination and resilience. Now, nearly 30 years later, Devon Harris – the “Yul Brenner” character in the film – is a widely acclaimed international speaker and mindset-resilient coach.

## Devon's biography

### About Devon Harris

The story Devon tells is far from a Disney fantasy. He shares his journey of climbing out of poverty, risking personal ridicule and safety to succeed well beyond societal expectations. Devon's story is pulsating, palpable, and awe inspiring. Most importantly, it's rich in relatable “ah-hah” examples of how to persevere through physical and emotional challenges. Of the many thousands who have heard Devon speak, many have adopted his message to “keep on pushing” as their personal mantra.

Devon draws on lessons from his impoverished and endangered childhood, eight years in the military, and decisively different struggles to three Olympics. We travel with him from Kingston, Jamaica to the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst England to the Olympics in Calgary, Canada, Albertville, France and Nagano, Japan. Devon's authenticity strikes home with all audiences. Sales people, engineers, and

top executives exit his presentations uplifted, more [resilient](#), and with their inner-winner fully awakened and ready to rise!

When his childhood mates told him he couldn't escape the boundaries of the daunting and depressing Waterhouse ghetto, Devon declared "yes, I can!"

When the British training officers at Sandhurst told him that candidates from his background could never pass enough muster to lead men, he respectfully responded, "yes, I can!"

When the elites of winter sports told his fellow Jamaican bobsleds and Devon that they couldn't earn the approval of real winter olympians, he promised them and himself "yes, I can!"

Defying the odds, Devon did "escape" his destiny of being a prisoner of poverty. In fact, in 2006, he started the Keep on Pushing Foundation to provide supplies, computers and a breakfast program to his primary school in Kingston so more children could be ready when that rare opportunity knocked. Today, the foundation has expanded its scope to provide practical solutions to enhance education in disadvantaged schools across the globe.

Despite discrimination, labeling and the low expectations of narrow-minded instructors, not only did Devon impress at Sandhurst, he went on to command over 120 soldiers, received a Queen's Commission, and retired after eight years as a Captain in the JDF.

After literally crashing in front of the world, the Jamaican bobsleds finished their first Winter Olympics with a valiant effort that earned the respect of their competitors and convinced a world of skeptics that the *tropical island men* did indeed belong. Devon took part in two more Winter Olympics and helped create and nurture a Jamaican bobsled program that regularly qualifies for the Olympics!

We all dream. Some of us dream big. But few have the fortitude to [overcome the endless obstacles](#) that enable big dreams to come to fruition.

In a very engaging and relatable manner, Devon shares what it takes to find your unique vision no matter what your job or situation is; how to focus, stay on track, and how to persevere past obstacles – get up after you fall and embrace the joy in your noble journey.

Speaker Devon Harris is the author of the [motivational](#) children's book, *Yes, I Can!* and the semi-auto-biographical writings on resilience: *Keep On Pushing: Hot Lessons From Cool Runnings*.

## Devon's talks

- **Keep On Pushing®**

A highly customizable, entertaining program, in which Devon effectively shows how the process of pushing a bobsled is analogous to the success journey of life; how the process demands that in order for a team or organization to grow and change, EVERYONE on the team must embrace growth and change.

Devon's presentation strongly affirms that to harness continuous success every part of an organization needs consistently high levels of:

- clear vision and purpose
- passionate personal effort
- teamwork, and

Devon's journey that propelled him out of the violent ghettos of Kingston, Jamaica; to Sandhurst; to the Olympics; to international recognition (with the Disney blockbuster *Cool Runnings*). By enriching his inspiring story with humor, compassion, personal charisma, and real-life how-to guidance, Devon engages audiences from the moment he greets them to his final, distinctive Olympic bobsledder call for them to "keep on pushing!" The man and his message are very well suited for opening or closing keynote presentations.

Audience takeaways include:

- clarified vision
- invigorated individual and team purpose
- a new or renewed appreciation for synergy and collaboration
- permission to relentlessly pursue solutions for all challenges

- **Developing A Resilient Mindset**

A highly engaging, high energy, high impact program in which Devon Harris demonstrates how to develop a resilient mindset and improve performance in a fast-paced world, swirling in a sea of uncertainty.

The presentation provides a POWER BOOST for the audience as Devon shares lessons learned during his personal journey, going from ghetto struggle to graduate of the most prestigious military training school in the world.

He also shares the tools that he has seen at work with athletes in the Olympics — the same ones he used with his soldiers as an army captain to help them become mentally tough so that they no longer felt deflated or even defeated but confident and determined.

Devon shares the tools that he and other Olympic athletes and military leaders employ to stay confident and focused in the face of adversity, temporary setbacks, or defeat.

Audience takeaways include how to:

- take personal responsibility regardless of the uncontrollable event impacting them
- reframe an experience in order to reduce stress and feel empowered
- Bounce back from setbacks, frustration, or the occasional out-right failure.

- **The Captain's Toolbox: Developing Essential Leadership Traits**

Leadership isn't defined by the job title, expertise, or years of experience. It's about developing the perspective, skills and personal style to get results that matter. Even "born leaders" don't know or portray all the right traits or decisions at the starting line. We are all works in progress who can transform ourselves into effective leaders and more vital and valuable resources to our organizations. Expanding on the idea that "leaders are made not born" and building on the lessons he learned as a military leader and Olympic team captain, Devon's program:

- focuses on individual development
- affirms that those empowered to manage, supervise or direct others can continuously learn, grow and change.
- equips attendees with the knowledge and skills to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses to quickly become more adroit leaders
- presents proven techniques and methods that help leaders become more effective in

Audience takeaways include how to genuinely buy in and reach their goals on or ahead of schedule.

- Inspire through authentic communication
- genuinely empower others
- become and stay a role model.

- **Hot Lessons from Cool Runnings – Coaching for Personal and Professional Success**

In this program Devon Harris skillfully weaves the real life improbable inspirational story of the Jamaica bobsled team with the entertaining portrayal of the Disney blockbuster *Cool Runnings*. He highlights some of the powerful life lessons he and his teammates learned along the way – lessons the audience can immediately apply to both their personal and professional lives.

Suitable as an opening or closing keynote.

Some of these lessons and many more can also be found in Devon's book [Hot Lessons from Cool Runnings](#).

Audience takeaways include how to:

- conquer fear

- employ the extraordinary power of visualization to achieve success
- build self-esteem and confidence
- define success on your own terms
- persist in the face of insurmountable odds

- **The Power and Magic of Teamwork**

This inspiring message sees Devon drawing on his personal experiences as the Captain of the Jamaican Bobsled Team and a former Sandhurst-trained Captain in the Jamaica Defence Force, to show how working collaboratively facilitates group/team, individual professional, and personal non-work related success.

The key ingredients for this power and magic elixir include:

- defining and owning a clear vision
- empowering leadership, and

Using his own engaging stories and powerful insights, Devon translates the challenges and triumphs of being in the military and competing in the Olympics into lessons and insights that will inspire them to reach peak levels as a team. Suitable as an opening or closing keynote.

The audience will learn how:

- a clear vision allows a team to remain motivated, become remarkably efficient, and control the direction of change.
- to identify their noble purpose – the far-reaching benefits of the mundane things they do daily.
- to transform their organization by growing their capacity to lead.
- to use the process of self-evaluation to help them move towards their full potential.

- **Out of many; One: An Olympic Athlete's View of Diversity in the Workplace**

Devon Haris brings a fresh look at how diversity in the workplace is not just a legal mandate or corporate ethic. It is fundamentally practical to building the best team for international, national or local competition. With many cross-cultural experiences and the authenticity that comes from living what he believes, the 3-time Olympian delivers a compelling global message to groups of all sizes on how embracing diversity can lead to greater bottom-line success.

Suitable as an opening or closing keynote.

The audience will learn how:

- a clear personal vision supersedes society's assumptions
- attracting top talent regardless of labels and providing an open, nurturing environment enables peak performance for individuals and team/organization.
- Valuing and maintaining differences can create a more fulfilling experience and greater potential.