**William Michael Barbee** is a native of Newark, New Jersey, and was educated in the Newark Public School System. He attended Arts High School: *America’s First High School of Performing Arts*, majoring in Fine Art; Jersey City State College, majoring in Biology with a minor in Fine Arts; Rutgers University, graduating with a Degree in Business Management; McAllister/American Academy of Mortuary Science, graduating with a Diploma in Mortuary Science and Funeral Services; and graduated Pillar College with a Master’s Degree in Clinical Counseling with a concentration on Marriage and Family Counseling.

Despite William Michael’s love for learning and after a successful 38-year career as a serial entrepreneur, he reflects on his childhood that was filled with love, tragedies, and trauma. In the summer of 1980, he and his family were the victims of an arson fire that resulted in the death of two of their loved ones. The fire left the Barbee family bruised, penniless, and emotionally scarred. They were homeless for nearly two years. William Michael entered high school as a homeless teen while living in a welfare motel. By 1989, William Michael became the victim of a carjacking and other life-altering events. The toll of other catastrophic trials led William Michael on a downward spiral. A few months after the carjacking, Barbee began therapy for extreme depression and anxiety.

William Michael shares that Psychologist Dr. Shelly Kneiderbach facilitated his introduction and journey through professional outpatient counseling. Known for his talent as a fine artist, the toll of his emotional pain restricted him from artistic expression. After noticing his inability to express his emotions, Dr. Kneiderbach introduced William Michael to therapeutic journaling. In addition to journaling, Dr. Kneiderbach used other techniques to facilitate William Michael’s cognitive processing in finding his voice to express love, pain, happiness, grief, sadness, peace, and freedom. Existential and *(CBT)* cognitive behavioral therapy were two of the main therapeutic orientations she facilitated for William Michael to find meaning and purpose in life. He later became a very accomplished serial business entrepreneur, published author, film producer, clinician, and philanthropist.

William Michael used notes from his counseling sessions with Dr. Kneiderbach to write his first of four books entitled, *“Clipped Wings They Do Fly.”* CWTDF is his freshman novel which tells a story about the innermost thoughts of a young man living with paranoid schizophrenia and bipolar disorders. In 2015, that book was turned into a feature film entitled *“Beyond The Silence.”* The film focused on the plight of mental illness within the family and community. It gained national and international attention when WABC-TV News Correspondent Sandy Kenyon featured aspects of the movie in his entertainment reporting on WABC during primetime. The film was displayed in the 2019 Cannes International Film Festival Marketplace. Today, *“Beyond The Silence”* is streaming on Amazon Prive Video.

William Michael’s next two books were respectfully titled, *“What’s In Your Bag: Unpacking One Item at a Time”* 1st & 2nd editions. They are nonfiction first-person narratives that focused on self-help techniques William Michael used to get him through his most trying times. Some of the chapters are *Love, Forgiveness, Embracing Change, and Spiritual Journey*. In *“What’s In Your Bag: Unpacking One Item at a Time 2nd Ed,”* William Michael challenges his readers to explore their relationship with God through the lens of six *“Cs:”* Community, Commonplace, Culture, Call, Communion, and Conflict. Through social media and networking, those books have been the catalysts for many speaking engagements and have created platforms of discovery about one’s self-care and mental wellness. Some of those platforms were New York’s very own WBLS FM radio station, Bristol Meyers Squibb, Novartis Pharmaceuticals, and the Mental Health Association just to name a few.

At the invite of (late) Rep. Donald M. Payne Jr. (D-NJ), William Michael joined fellow small business owners from around the Nation to speak to the (SBA) Small Business Administration Congressional Subcommittee, headed by Nydia Velazquez (D-NY 7th District), on the challenges, effectiveness, as well as ineffectiveness the agency plays within the urban business communities. In October 2017, he and Robert *“Bob”* Davison,” Executive Director of the Mental Health Association of Essex & Morris County joined other nationally recognized Mental Health advocates and executives from around the country at the Mental Health America’s Annual Conference “Hill Day,” in the Nation’s Capital. There, they learned about legislation affecting the mental and behavioral health communities and influenced the foundational structuring for new legislation to be written by members of Congress and the Senate. William Michael’s film *Beyond The Silence* was featured at that conference.

William Michael’s continued thirst for knowledge and discovery led him to complete his fourth book entitled, *“HEAR MY VOICE: Born Black In America.”* That book was birthed out of William Michael’s personal tragedies when over a 20-month period, he suffered the losses of over 80 family members, friends, and associates, of whom over sixty of them died from the impact of COVID. William Michael stated that *“Born Black In America”* book was one of his historically comparative pieces of writing to date. It explores US History through the lens that addresses systemic and structural factors that disproportionately target African Americans today.

William Michael is currently working on his fifth book titled, “*Love Forgives: Touring the Mind of An Artist through a Therapeutic Lens*.” Love Forgives is an artistic expression where art meets therapy. This coffee-table book is an extension of mindfulness as an intentional therapeutic activity. Through his collection of photographs and narratives provided by clinicians, this book aims to empower its readers with information and tools needed to take charge of their mental wellness. When the book is published, William Michael seeks to provide therapeutic instruments that will facilitate individuals living with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and other mental health conditions to areas of better outcomes. He believes *Love Forgives: Touring the Mind of An Artist through a Therapeutic Lens* will have positive impacts on all its readers.

Over his 38-year career as a Serial Entrepreneur, William Michael has created employment opportunities for nearly one thousand individuals through his eight companies and has been intentionally impactful in his community. As recently as November 2022, William Michael ran for a seat on the West Orange Township Council. Just short of the votes needed to win that election, William Michael continued working in the public service. In January 2023, he was appointed as a Zoning Board Member for the Township of West Orange, New Jersey. William Michael has been the recipient of many awards and merits for his commitment to the community through excellence in business, philanthropy, writing, filmmaking, and the mental and behavioral health fields. Some of those awards are as follows:

Rutgers University *African American Alumni Hall of Fame Inductee* 2024

YMCA – Leaders & Legends *Trailblazers Award* 2024

NAACP *Business Award* 2021

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr *Service Award* 2019

DiDi Hirsch Mental Health Service *Leadership Award* 2019

Rotary Club *Business Award* 2019

The Love You Girl & Renee J. Bradley Foundation *Inspiration Award* 2019

Save Our Nations *Dream Maker Award* 2017

State of New Jersey Department of Children and Families: *Making A Difference Award* 2015

State of New Jersey Governor’s Council on Mental Health: *Ambassador’s Award*  2013

Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders: *Entrepreneur of the Year Award* 2007

William Michael's philanthropic deeds include, but are not limited to a Bi-weekly facilitation of the 126-member **MAN VILLAGE Men’s Support Group**, Member on the Township of West Orange Zoning Board, **Vice Chairman & Founding Member** on the Board of Trustees for the **Health Care Foundation of the Oranges**: (*Chairman of the Governance Committee)* formerly (*The Foundation at East Orange General Hospital)*; **Mental Health Association of Essex & Morris** *(former Board Secretary*); **Montclair Art Museum: *African American Cultural Committee*; Newark YMCA & Vicinity;** and **the Salvation Army of the Oranges & Vicinity** to name a few. As recent as 2019, William Michael resigned as Chief Operating Officer of the newly formed professional celebrity-focused *Global Mixed Gender Basketball League,* where he held the position for 11 months.

While honoring his morals and staying true to the youth, William Michael continues to spread words of hope through his books, films, speaking engagements, radio, social media outlets, and television. On January 15,2024, William Michael delivered the keynote address for the residents of West Orange Township for their Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration. William Michael remains humble and diligent in his efforts to reach, redirect, and empower inner-city youth. He teaches the basic core values of honor and respect while showing how to navigate life through various difficulties. He is most proud following his inner convictions of love, healing, and forgiveness. When asked what advice he would offer to people, he says it would be to ***“Leave More Than You Take.”***

*Supporting links:*

1. **DiDi Hirsch Erasing the Stigma Award***:* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6\_b\_GPcfY4&t=2s*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6_b_GPcfY4&t=2s)
2. **ABCTV NEWS:**[*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cndYACUw0j0&t=3s*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cndYACUw0j0&t=3s)
3. **RUTGERS University African American Alliance Hall of Fame Inductee:**[*https://rutgersblackalumni.org/hof/william-michael-barbee/*](https://rutgersblackalumni.org/hof/william-michael-barbee/)
4. **Fron Trenton to You with Senator Ron Rice:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8f3CC3dEmEw>
5. **State of New Jersey Governor’s Council on Mental Health Stigma:** [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=0TYC9xU\_TLw*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=0TYC9xU_TLw)
6. **Beyond The Silence:** [*https://www.tapinto.net/towns/west-orange/articles/west-orange-businessman-s-acclaimed-film-is-now-playing-on-prime-video*](https://www.tapinto.net/towns/west-orange/articles/west-orange-businessman-s-acclaimed-film-is-now-playing-on-prime-video)