



# Style File Kwain Bryant

PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATOR  
LIKES TO MAKE A STATEMENT  
WITH CUFFLINKS AND SHOES

BY LYNN TRENNING  
Special to the Observer

At the recent Charlotte-Mecklenburg African American Agenda convention, Kwain Bryant delivered a clear message: "We are active architects of our own destiny." The CEO of the Empowerment Exchange, Bryant is a public health educator who seeks to facilitate change through prevention education programs, training and development. Born in Garner, Bryant, 37, graduated from N.C. Central University. He has worked with young people at Teen Health Connection and as a counselor advocate with adjudicated youth at the Urban League. His enthusiasm is infectious. "You can be anything you really want to become if you want to put forth the time and energy to make that happen," he says.

**1. What do clothes say about you?**

I think it is a contrast, a contradiction almost. I want my clothes to be complementary and contrasting. I'm not a business executive type, I'm a service provider. But people who don't know me might think I'm an attorney.

**2. Where do you like to shop?**

SouthPark mall. Definitely American Eagle and Banana Republic for casual dress. Belk and Nordstrom for suits and ties.

**3. What accessories do you wear?**

Belts, ties and cufflinks and some pocket squares. My favorite pair of cufflinks are Tiffany's cufflinks. I don't like to spend a lot of money on clothes, but there are a few things I like. Cufflinks are subtle. I like the idea that you have to pay close attention to them.

**4. Describe your look in three words?**

Subtle, slick and sophisticated.

**5. What is your grooming routine?**

It takes 30 minutes to shave my head. My morning ritual is getting dressed and taking my time because that gets me in a place where I can be ready for those mental challenges. When you are working with people and you have to help them solve problems, it can be stressful. You have to relax the brain. Rituals help relax you.

**6. What products do you use?**

Aveda shaving cream. I guess you're supposed to use it for your face but I use it on my head.

**7. Do you have an exercise routine?**

I work out three times a week. I run, lift weights. I do some free weights. I'll try anything outdoors. I've tried rock climbing and white water rafting. I'm afraid of heights, but if I can just climb up I'm OK. I don't do rollercoasters. I'm high energy, and I don't take myself that seriously.

**8. Do you wear cologne and which do you prefer?**

I wear John Varvatos. It smells kind of like tobacco leaves.

**9. What would you wear on a date to a fancy restaurant?**

I would wear a nice casual shirt and I may not wear a tie. Just the jacket and pants with a conservative patterned shirt.

**10. Do you favor certain colors?**

Basic primary colors. Nothing flashy, and I like to use accessories to bring everything together.

**11. Where do you shop for ties?**

I like Nordstroms, and Belk has nice ties. You can pick up some nice ties at TJ Maxx and Marshalls.

**12. Who has influenced your style?**

My mother. She laid out our clothes every morning before school and they were coordinated from head to toe. I was wearing khakis in the fourth grade. I had every color, with shirts to match.



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**Kwain Bryant doesn't like flashy. Wild colors are not his thing. He prefers to stand out rather than stick out. He's dressed in a midnight blue Ralph Lauren suit with pinstripes, accented with a red Zinetti Italian collection tie and Tiffany cufflinks, below.**

**1. Do you frequent a specific restaurant?**

I like dining at different restaurants. I love P.F. Changs. Carpe Diem is really nice. Blue is really nice.

**2. What was your biggest splurge?**

Shoes. Shoes say a lot. Shoes say you understand style. You see a lot of people wear nice suits but not nice shoes. Shoes are the foundation of your clothes. Everything else can be impeccable, but if you have cheap shoes, that doesn't quite work. I have one pair of Ferragamo, black with saddle hooks.

**3. Your best bargain?**

I pride myself on finding cheap stuff. It's a challenge. My best bargain is a peacoat I got from J. Crew. I may have paid \$30 for it. It's a pea green, it's different and I like it.

**4. What wouldn't you be caught dead wearing?**

A bright colored suit, an obnoxious colored suit. I don't like things that stick out. Standing out and sticking out are different things.

**5. What fashion advice can you give to men?**

You don't have to have a lot of money to dress nice, and I think your personality helps to define your style. I would encourage men to have simple pieces, and if they want to add some flair or flash to do that with accessories. Have some very standard pieces with nice accessories.

**6. How does your sense of style help you do your job?**

It helps with confidence. Even when I was in school I dressed up when I had a test day. People's perception is reality. It at least gives you an entree to prove yourself. I got my fashion sense from my mom. I also used to watch older African American men come to the barbershop. And they were just impeccably dressed. I used to watch older men cross their legs and now that's how I sit.

These men came from an era where you had to present a sense of excellence all the time. I think clothes give you a sense of going that extra mile to say I'm confident. I deserve to be there, and I will go the extra mile to prove myself.

