

Interview with J Williams

Interview by Lewis Whaitiri

How would you describe your smoking status?

I'm an ex smoker. Well main reason was because of this campaign and also because I like to encourage the youth. You know, using this as a tool to encourage youth, especially Samoans, because I'm a Pacific Islander. I want to encourage the Pacific Islanders out there to stop smoking you know.

Do you consider quitting smoking as a real achievement?

Yeah it is. For me personally, quitting smoking was a big achievement. I am proud of it yup. And I want to tell the New Zealand youth out there that I am proud that I've stopped smoking, proud to be smokefree.

How did you go about quitting?

Well I looked at myself as a person and as an artist and with my profession and it just wasn't going to work out. It wasn't going to help me at all so I had to kick it in the butt.

How long have you been smokefree?

About 2 months.

And what changes have you noticed?

Of course the breath you know, you've got to have nice breath, skin's good looking, my fitness is up to scratch, my health is up to scratch um... more confident with my vocals because I'm smokefree. I can see a difference.

Have there been any times that you've craved smoking?

Yeah I've been tempted. I have craved a smoke when I see my friends and my boys having a cigarette. I do crave it but I think of tomorrow, how is that going to help having a smoke, how is that going to fix things? I think of it in the long run and of my health so I just think 'no'.

Is smoking as common as it used to be?

Um, nah actually. Because how they've banned it in bars and you can't really do it publicly anymore. Before that was a cool thing to do because you know, the movies showed it all the time, but now we have things like this campaign that encourages the youth to stop and it is a cool thing to stop.

Is it socially acceptable to smoke?

I've got friends who smoke and they think that is the real cool thing to smoke and it's not, it's not. I have smoked cigarettes in the past. I smoked cigarettes for a bit and I found that it didn't help with my singing, my vocals. It didn't help with my fitness, didn't help with my health so I had to kick it in the butt. It doesn't help with anything actually you know your breath, you don't

want to have stink breath man. You know you go hook up with some chicks and you've got the black gums and stink breath. Blergh.

How did it affect your fitness?

I can just feel it like if I had a few cigarettes the day before you can hear it in my vocals and you can hear it in my breathing.

Other than the campaign is there anything that made you decide to stop?

I don't like smoking. I really don't like it. Like it's sucking everything, the community and the youth cos like I still hang out with my real boys, I still hang out with them and they all smoke and this is telling them that it's not cool to smoke....

Is it socially acceptable to refuse a smoke?

Yeah it is cool to not smoke. It shows your strength. It shows who you are and yeah that could be an influence on other people.

What are your thoughts on how smoking affects your image as a performer?

Yeah like I said the gums thing. You get some black gums man the breath, and with the fitness, I can feel it on stage. Like if I've had a few cigarettes you can just feel it on stage compared to if you haven't had a few cigarettes. You can feel it in the performance. It's definitely with the breathing, definitely with the fitness, and the sweating as well. I sweat a lot more when I smoke because it comes down to the fitness with being an R& B dancer, you've got to be fit and smoking's not going to help you be fit.

What do you think smoking says about a person?

Honestly, it says a lot to me. Personally it shows what sort of a crowd that I used to hang out with, what sort of upbringing they've had you know.

What do you think is the worse thing about smoking?

You die. It leads to a lot of deaths. I hear that the death toll is remarkably really huge so yeah you can get cancer you know lung cancer and all of that. Who wants to die like that?

Would you go out with a smoker?

Hell no. Hell no, I will never ever go out with a smoker, period. It's so unattractive. I mean when I'm talking to a girl I want her breath to smell like roses not flipping tar, coal, firewood.

Do you think you can tell a non smoker from a smoker?

Obviously yeah I went to Wellington yesterday and a guy smiled and I was like 'yup he's a smoker, looks like he just ate a crunchie bar.'

Do you know of any friends or family that have quit or tried to quit smoking?

Um...na my sister sort of did. She tried to. Growing up around her it sort of influenced me to smoke a bit. My sisters influence me a lot with everything and seeing her smoking sort of pushed

me to smoke. Now that I see that I am growing up and I'm making my own career and I'm doing well like I think I'm doing well to prove to her like that I've stopped and you don't need that and it's not cool to smoke. That she can do it too and inspire her to stop smoking.

My granddad died from smoking and he got cancer and when I was young I was like I don't want to die like that because I remember, I told myself I never want to die like him in that sort of a way. He went through a lot of pain so yeah that was one of the big things that inspired me not to smoke.

In what way do you support your sister?

I show her through my actions, through my decision to not smoke and through this campaign as well. This is a big example, she's like 'holy moly'. To be straight up yup I used to smoke but I stopped and I want to show the youth out there and challenge them to stop aswell.

Do you have any advice for younger people who might be thinking about taking it up?

Um, shucks aye man, honestly you need to stop smoking...yeah Eddie Junior and Alastair you all need to stop smoking because I can see it, I can really see it and it's getting to a point now where you can see it in your face, you can see it, the bags under your eyes. Honestly, the boys are putting on a lot of weight so I think if they stop smoking it will help in nearly ever area.

I'm a singer right and I'm a fitness freak so I had to stop smoking and you know for all you future singers out there, all you guys out there - smoking isn't cool at all and it does not help at all.

If you could get a message directly to your boys what would it be?

Boys I love you guys. I don't want you to die so you have to stop smoking. You have to stop smoking, it leads to death.

Do you ever go to church?

Yeah.

And is the church smoke free?

Oh it's smokefree hard out.

Has your house always been smoke free?

Uh no it hasn't always been smoke free.

What are the benefits for your home now?

Well now that everyone goes outside it definitely smells more refreshing and inviting.

Now that you've quit do you notice that you save a lot of money?

I only smoked in the weekend but yeah, they waste a lot of money. Most of the boys waste a lot of money on smokes and I can see it like when we go out like I'm always the one that has to shout the drinks aye cos they are buying the smokes. Boys if you quit smoking you can buy your own drinks ok, stop hassling me.

What's your opinion on the tobacco industry?

Cigarette companies just want money, they don't care about lives, they don't care about people who are smoking. They just want money. Money hungry. That's what I think. I'd say to them 'you know how many people die from cigarettes every year, do you know that most of my family smoke cigarettes?'. They are sick as, they are really sick that's what I'd say.

How does being a role model affect your choices?

Yeah I think it's really important because I want to give that message, I'm all about positive messages you know and being smokefree is one of them. It's definitely a priority. I do not want kids to think that I'm a smoker because I'm not. That's just a straight answer, I'm not and I hate smoking. I do not want the youth out there to think that I'm a smoker and that I smoke because I'm not and that's a straight answer.

Anything else you want to add?

Quit smoking, be healthy, be like J.