



Growing up as an only child in the suburbs of Richmond, Virginia, **Kemba Smith** led a privileged and sheltered childhood. After graduating from high school in 1989, she left the security of her family to continue her education at the prestigious Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. What happened to Smith in her new campus environment was a nightmare: away from the protective watch of her mother and father and in an attempt to “fit in,” she fell in with the wrong crowd and became involved with a drug dealer. He was a major figure in a crack cocaine ring and drew Smith right in the middle of his life with physical, mental, and emotional abuse, disguised as “love.”

Eventually, after enduring a turbulent four-year relationship with him, Smith was sentenced to 24.5 years and served 6.5 of those in federal prison. Fortunately, she regained her freedom after President Clinton granted her clemency in December 2000. Her case drew support from across the nation and the world in a crusade to reverse a disturbing trend in the rise of lengthy sentences for first time, non-violent offenders. Her story has been featured on CNN, Nightline, Court TV, The Early Morning Show, Judge Hatchett, and a host of other television programs, along with several publications such as The Washington Post, The New York Times, Glamour, People, JET, Emerge, Heat and Soul, and Essence magazines.

Smith’s traumatic real life experience forces today’s students to recognize that there are consequences to their life choices. She has been corporately sponsored to speak at a variety of high schools and college venues by Proctor & Gamble, Bank One Academy, Shell Corporation, BET, Traveler’s Foundation, and Verizon. Rainforest Films also acquired the rights to produce Smith’s life...

Kemba Smith

Speech Topics

- Youth
- Women's Issues
- Psychology / Relationships
- Personal Growth
- Overcoming Adversity
- Keynote

