

For those concerned

I am honored to be writing this recommendation for Khalif J. Guiden.

I have known Khalif for over 15 years in different capacities, and it has been amazing to see his development as a leader, creative, and overall great person in the community. Our initial introduction was through his work for The 100 Black Men of Greater Charlotte. Through time, I have witnessed his growth, determination, discipline, eagerness to create change and detailed thoughtfulness he provides when approaching his work.

I am a business owner in the Charlotte community. I have grown my business practice to multiple locations and dozens of employees while mentoring black teen boys in underserved communities in Mecklenburg County for over 25 years. My experience and involvement in the community have allowed meeting emerging leaders, and Khalif is one of those leaders that stands out the most for many reasons.

He is analytical, disciplined, multi-faceted, well-spoken, and thorough in his approach. His ability to be a connector is compelling, as he is comfortable in any room and when speaking to anyone. Most importantly, he is one of the most genuine people I have had the pleasure of meeting. A trait that is often overlooked in the realms of business. During our initial introduction, he worked as a Business Data Analyst and Program Manager uptown at one of the major Financial Services companies. Most notably, he was part of an Early Talent Program comprising 20 future company leaders from over 5,000 applicants while being the only black male selected for the program. This was a fast track to moving up the corporate ladder. I only share that because it is a direct example of who he is as an individual and leader.

Upon Khalif becoming a full-time creative, I had not known his plans and goals that inspired his transition. I had plenty of challenging questions before he started the process. I am not directly involved in the creative scene; in fact, I am removed and somewhat disconnected from the inner workings of what is happening within the creative community of Charlotte. My colleagues and I often needed to be made aware of what was happening creatively from a grassroots level.

Throughout the past few years, Khalif has kept me updated on his artistic projects, cultural events happening in the community, and unique experiences for me to be introduced to the talent that resides in Charlotte. He constantly expresses how important it is for other business leaders, me, and the city's professionals to be connected to what is happening. I completely understand why he utilizes his resources and talents to bridge the gap. He continuously expresses the power of supporting local artists with resources and transactions so that they can make an impact on the city as a whole.

Since I was not initially introduced to Khalif in a creative capacity, I was highly impressed when engaging and witnessing his work and connection to the creative community when attending the events he has curated or when seeing the finished products of his many projects. I have seen murals he has painted, attended various shows he performs in and develops, purchased products he has designed, and much more.

I am incredibly proud to know Khalif and admire the sacrifices he has made while always remaining an advocate for the arts. I know he will continue to be successful because he is a great leader and, as I have come to understand and witness, an innovative creative from Charlotte. Most importantly, I commend him for using his work and creativity to introduce people like me, other professionals, and residents to the creative climate happening in Charlotte. He is also creating at a high level which adds to how I see and know him. I highly recommend Khalif for any opportunity that will help further his creative journey and practice because he will create significant change, remain innovative, and impact others while connecting with the community.

All the best

Dr. Richard B. Dunning