Royal Ramey

Wildland Firefighter, Founder of Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program

From Prison to Public Service: A Wildland Firefighter's Journey Chief Royal Ramey's journey is a testament to resilience, transformation, and opportunity. Sentenced to six years in prison at just 20 years old, he found purpose in California's Conservation Camp program, where he trained as a wildland firefighter. After his release, he faced systemic barriers that prevented him from continuing the work he had already proven himself in, but instead of giving up, he fought to change the system. Motivated by his experiences, Ramey founded the Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program (FFRP), helping over 300 justice-impacted individuals launch careers in fire service. In this deeply personal and inspiring talk, he shares how perseverance, leadership, and commitment to public service compelled him to create opportunities for others and drive meaningful change in the world.

Leadership in High-Risk Environments: Lessons from Fire Service and Social Entrepreneurship Drawing from his decade of experience as a wildland firefighter and nonprofit leader, Chief Royal Ramey explores the parallels between fire service and effective leadership in mission-driven organizations. He shares how firefighting principles can shape strategy, crisis management, and team coordination in any industry. Through real firefighting guidelines and gripping stories on the frontlines, Ramey teaches leaders how to cultivate resilience, adaptability, and accountability in high-pressure environments. Attendees will leave with a fresh perspective on leadership and practical tools to implement in their own work.

Redefining Workforce Success: Unlocking Potential, Filling Labor Gaps, and Driving Lasting Impact As industries across the country struggle with labor shortages, a highly skilled but overlooked workforce—formerly incarcerated individuals—remains untapped. Chief Royal Ramey, who went from serving time to leading wildfire crews and founding the Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program (FFRP), will expose the contradictions in a system that trains incarcerated firefighters but prevents them from professional opportunities upon release. He will also shift the conversation from recidivism rates—the percentage of formerly incarcerated individuals who return to prison—to non-recidivism, the measure of those who transition into stable and fulfilling careers. This talk is a call to action for anyone looking to create a workforce that not only addresses labor shortages but also drives meaningful social and economic change.