



**Women's Achieve Summit**  
*Richmond, VA*  
*October 15, 2019*

**Introduction**

**Queen Latifah, producer, actor, and musical performer**

Announcer:

Good morning. Please give a warm Virginia welcome to our host and emcee, a multi-talented star who was a female hip hop pioneer, a Grammy and Emmy winner, and an Academy award nominee. The one, the only, Queen Latifah.

Queen Latifah:

Wow. You all was jamming. Woo. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you everyone. Relax. Have a seat. We about to hangout all day. I saw you had my girl Missy Misdemeanor Elliot up there. So proud of her. Just talked to her the other day too, so. Thank you so much and thank you. Give it up for the house band, the Misbehaviors. They're going to be rocking with us all day. Please make yourself comfortable.

Audience:

I love you.

Queen Latifah:

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You got it. What a great sight to look out at 1400 women and one or two brave guys. I'm so happy to be here and be your host today. Today's summit is one of the signature events of the 2019 Commemoration American Evolution. American Evolution is the Commonwealth of Virginia's 400th anniversary of events in 1619 that still impact us today. All year, Virginia has been telling authentic stories of 400 years of democracy, diversity and opportunity in America. Women have not always been invited to participate in that democracy. Oh, but we in it now. And we are here to celebrate that today.

We are actresses, we are astronauts, we are journalists, business owners, soldiers, educators. But what we all have in common is we are women. Yeah, you can make some noise for being a

woman. I'm pretty happy about it. And we're committed to a better future for our communities, Virginia, and of course the world. Now we asked you to bring a mentor or a mentee today. Raise your hand if you came with someone. Yes. See, and we take direction. You know what I mean? See our goal today is to keep the program fun, informative, and meaningful. And we have a stellar lineup today of women who have done some amazing things. Have been to outer space. I mean literally been to outer space. I want to go outer space. I ain't going to lie. I want to go to outer space. I thought I was in outer space a few times, but tequila don't really count. You know what I mean? Anyway, I literally want to go to outer space.

They have fought on the front lines of war. Yeah. Brave women, powerful women, and they have worn crowns. Why not? Why not be a queen. I'm excited to meet them all today and we have our very own story slam about how well behaved women seldom make history.

Audience:

Yeah.

Queen Latifah:

Okay? So we want to remind you to download the event app. We're going to use it to take questions for our guests today. So if you haven't done that yet, download the event app. Okay?

### **Coffee Talk**

**Queen Latifah, producer, actor, and musical performer**

**Wendy B. Lawrence, former NASA Astronaut and retired U.S. Navy Captain**

Queen Latifah:

So shall we begin? Let's get started? My first guest is the first female graduate of the Naval Academy to be a NASA astronaut. Please welcome Captain Wendy Lawrence. Yeah.

Can I hug you? Oh my God, I just hugged an astronaut! The hat is awesome.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

I mean ... Yeah, go Wendy.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

I mean, I guess if you can't get to space, the next best thing is to sit next to somebody who went to space. That's pretty awesome. Wendy, do you remember the first time you thought in your mind, I want to be an astronaut?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Oh, absolutely. And this is a very appropriate year to ask me that question because when you talk to astronauts who are around my age, we got to grow up during Apollo. And for us it's the Apollo 11 mission. And I was 10 years old growing up in Southern California, and I remember lying on the floor in front of the still black and white television that we had at home. Not that it would have mattered much because the video coming back from the moon was pretty much black and white.

But to this day, I cannot tell you exactly what it was about watching Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin go out and take those very steps on the moon for the first time. But I looked at that. I was amazed. I couldn't take my eyes off the screen. And I remember thinking to myself oh, that's what I want to do when I grow up. Well, my mother remembers it slightly differently. She said "Oh no, no, no. You turned around and looked at the rest of us and proudly proclaimed that's what I'm going to do when I grow up. I'm going to be an astronaut and I'm going to fly in space." So the beauty of being 10 you know, you dare to dream.

Queen Latifah:

Oh, you dare to dream, but you did what you dared to dream.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

I was possessed by a dream. So I absolutely understand the power of having a dream.

Queen Latifah:

The power of having a dream, I love that. I love that because unfortunately some people's dreams are truncated. They are cut off.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

They are.

Queen Latifah:

They are not encouraged to dream.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

I think too often though, we do it to ourselves, and I think women do that more often than men. We just immediately look at something and say "I can't do that. I'm not going to be good enough. Or it's selfish of me to think that this is something that I should go pursue." So that's why I like to say to kids you owe it to yourself to try. You never know unless you try.

Queen Latifah:

Can everybody hear Wendy well?

Audience:

Yes.

Queen Latifah:

Okay, good. Because I have a feeling that that is not the first time you're going to hear that today. So I just want you to make a little mental note of that. That we do it to ourselves sometimes. Okay? Wendy, tell us about the moment when you first found out you were going into space?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Well, NASA kind of delays that a little bit. What people don't quite understand is when you are first selected by NASA, technically you're an astronaut candidate. So that means you have to go through an initial training flow. And once you get towards the end of that training flow and it's clear that you're going to complete it successfully, then you're designated as an astronaut and you're eligible to be assigned to a mission. So fortunately for me, my timing, my arrival at NASA was at a point in time where there are many shuttle flights and I didn't have to wait long. I was actually not done with that initial training flow when the chief of the astronaut office called me one day and said "I'm assigning you to your first mission, SDS 67", which is incredibly exciting obviously. And it dawned on you like how one step closer, I still have another year to go because it's a very intensive training flow. But still a very exciting day knowing that you finally, finally are going to get that chance to make that dream come true at the very end of it.

Queen Latifah:

You are in. Oh, and you have some pictures. I see you have some pictures to show.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Yes, so this is-

Queen Latifah:

What are we looking at now?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Here we are looking at my last mission and I ...

Queen Latifah:

Yeah. There she is.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

In particular, I wanted to show this for an event like this, I wanted you to see the commander of that mission, Eileen Collins, first woman to ever land the space shuttle.

Queen Latifah:

Wow.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

So needless to say, quite a privilege to fly with somebody like Eileen. This was her second opportunity serving as a space shuttle commander.

Queen Latifah:

And I didn't know that he let Liev Schreiber. That looks like Ray Donovan is in space. Ray Donovan get up there before me. That's not fair. That's not cool. I'm going to have to talk to somebody over there to NASA.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:  
I think so.

Queen Latifah:  
You know? Now that's a big jump from flying a chopper, which is pretty rad. I would love to fly a chopper.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:  
It is fun to fly backwards.

Queen Latifah:  
To flying the space shuttle.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:  
It's fun to fly fast, too.

Queen Latifah:  
What was the training like because I mean, there's a long way from being 10 years old and saying "Hey, I want to go into space" to actually doing it. What was the training like for you?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:  
The other thing I think is important for people to understand is it's a process. Making that dream come true is a process. And so, I was very fortunate in that many of my dad ... My dad was in the Navy, he was a Navy pilot as well. And he trained with people like Alan Sheppard and John Glenn. And so, I had the benefit of his-

Queen Latifah:  
I'm sorry. Excuse me while I pick up those names you just dropped.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:  
I know. I know.

Queen Latifah:  
There we go.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:  
But that helped because I didn't see anybody in space who looked like me. But I could make that connection because these were family friends there. And my dad said "Well, take a look at what they did to get where they're at right now, where you want to be, and maybe you can follow in some of their footsteps." And so, growing up in a military family, it was easy to go the United States Naval Academy, like my mother's dad and my dad and become a Navy pilot. And that

process of becoming a Navy pilot is very similar to the process NASA uses to train their astronauts because the whole astronaut training program kind of evolved from the military flight program.

Queen Latifah:

Right. Well, I'm one of those people, I can't lie. True confession. I watched NASA TV and-

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

Just circling the Earth, but it brings me such peace. I just turn it on and there's our Earth. Just the spinning. I'm always trying to recognize what country is at and there's a storm over there and ... But-

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

We do the same thing in space. We have something called World Map. It's a software program. We look over and go oh, okay. Australia.

Queen Latifah:

Right.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Okay. Yeah, all right.

Queen Latifah:

Well, what is the best part of orbiting the Earth? What's the best part?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

There are many best parts. Certainly one is having the chance to look out the window and look back at your home planet because it is incredibly, as you can see here in this picture, it is-

Queen Latifah:

Ah, it's gorgeous.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Better with your own eyes. You get the three dimensional effect, but it's a humbling experience as well to see the Earth this way, particularly during the daylight part of the orbit. The incoming sunlight just overwhelms the stars. The stars are there. There truly are billions of them.

Queen Latifah:

Have you seen Andromeda?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

I've seen the Milky Way. That one I can point out. If you go to the next ... There's another picture that you could show that shows the nighttime view, but it's just incredible to be able to look back at your home planet and see it in this fashion. So that is really one of the highlights is being able to look out the window. And of course, you don't feel the pull of gravity anymore. So being able to fun, now float is very, very fine. Very, very fine.

Queen Latifah:

Is it? I would love to just be floating around, like literally right now. Just floating, asking questions.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Every party, yeah. You would do, yeah.

Queen Latifah:

We'd probably crash all into each other. There's too many of us in room to be-

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

And there's your nighttime view.

Queen Latifah:

I get to float with the bass guitar. That'd be kind of fun. Now you've visited the Russian space station Mir in the '90s. How is it that we can get along so well in space and not so well on Earth? What is going on?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Excellent, excellent question. So let me put that into context a little bit because I was one of those astronauts who was still serving in the United States military on loan to NASA to be an astronaut. So for many of us, we were serving before we got to NASA. We were serving during the Cold War. We were the Cold War warriors. We were trained to go to war against the Soviet Union, then Russia.

Queen Latifah:

And I was old enough to remember being sort of afraid of that and nuclear war and all that kind of stuff.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

But then President Clinton came into office, the Wall had fallen down, the Soviet Union had fallen. The parties wanted to engage Russia in a more positive way and that became our mission. Go figure out how to work with your enemies.

And what was interesting, it was the Russian astronauts, the cosmonauts and the NASA astronauts. Really those of us who were serving in the military who figured it out because we decided we're going to focus on what we have in common. We're not going to focus on the political differences, the cultural differences. Let's focus on what we have in common because

we basically do the same job. You ride a rocket, I ride a rocket, we end up in space, we have a mission to perform.

And so, we made a conscious effort even though we didn't speak the same language, we knew we spoke the language of space flight and we made a conscious effort to focus on that. And here we are 25 years later still working with the Russian. So it is possible. We can truly take the swords and beat them into plow shares when we choose to do that.

Queen Latifah:

Now you followed your dreams into space. What would you say to a young woman here or even a more seasoned woman thinking about their next big challenge in life?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Well, I'm going to go back to what I said before, which is don't deny yourself that opportunity. You deserve the chance to pursue that. And I think too often we try something initially it's difficult, it's challenging and we make an immediate decision that I'm not good enough to do that. Well, everything takes practice. You know, look at if you dance, if you perform, sing, play a sport, you're going to work at that to get better. And so we accept that. But oftentimes when it comes to pursuing our careers, if we reach a point where things become difficult, we immediately say "I don't have what it takes." So my advice is don't sell yourself short. And then, the other thing I would say is there's nothing wrong with asking for help. So all the mentors in the room, thank you very much.

Queen Latifah:

I'm going to need a pen.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

To the younger individuals in the audience who sought out mentors, good for you. Because again, there is nothing wrong with asking for help. I don't like this meme in society that says you have to do it all on your own, otherwise you're not as good as somebody else. That is a false narrative. So ask for help. Seek out those who want to help you because trust me, they're in your lives. And then start taking the steps that are necessary to get to where you want to be.

Audience:

Yeah.

Queen Latifah:

Well, this is awesome and it's going to be awesome day. Can you all feel it already? Seems like we have a couple of audience questions, so I'm going to go over to my girl, Erin of the Misbehaviors. E-rock, what we got? We got out there?

Erin Lunsford:

So we got a few questions. Someone from the audience wants to know, Wendy, how does it feel to be such an inspiration for women who have the same dream as you?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

That's also very humbling and thank you for that question. Honestly, it's a transition. When you first get to NASA, you're just so excited that I finally get to pursue my dream. I'm getting so much closer. So I think you tend to be a little self-absorbed. But the more experienced astronauts pull you aside and make it clear to you that you also are there to serve as a role model. That's just going to naturally become part of the job because so many people had that same dream. And over the years, I've gotten a little bit more comfortable with it. I think I've embraced that role and I feel very honored that I can serve in this capacity to be an inspiration for others. If I can help plant a seed in somebody and then help nurture that dream, what an amazing opportunity to have.

Erin Lunsford:

All right. I think we've got one more. Let's see. Oh, okay. I was just going to ask this one too, so this is great. Captain Lawrence, what is the thing that movies and TV get most wrong about being in space?

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Okay, first off, it's Hollywood. It's for entertainment. It doesn't necessarily have to be factually based. Okay, don't get me started on Gravity. Love Sandra Bullock.-

Queen Latifah:

Please get started on Gravity.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

-as an actor. The whole premise of Gravity just is wrong. You can't take out every orbiting satellite just because one of them breaks apart. There are many movies that are very well done. Apollo 13 was very well done. The Martian, very well done. But again, Hollywood has a different role, which is to entertain.

I will take this opportunity though to vent a little bit. There's a movie out right now called ... I think it's-

Queen Latifah:

*Ad Astra?*

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

No, *Lucy in the Sky*, which I think is very unfortunate. I'm going to say this because there's the group of women in front of me. Another thing that really holds women back is that society tends to perpetuate stereotypes. And it's unfortunate in this movie that the central character is a woman who basically can't handle the stress of having been in space. And so, why is it always a woman that they want to portray in that role? And that is a very damaging message that we send to young girls. So that in particular I think is unfortunate. That's one thing I think that Hollywood has gotten wrong because there are many women who are very strong, Queen Latifah-

Queen Latifah:

I got some work for-

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

-for the path that you have plowed and we need to portray more women like you on the screen. Competent, capable, very professional, able to do whatever.

Queen Latifah:

She's putting a battery in my back. I don't know why. I don't know if you know who you're talking to, but I'm about to go give somebody a good shaking in Hollywood.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Please do for all of us here.

Queen Latifah:

We do need that though. We do need that. I can agree with you that Hollywood does get it wrong sometimes when it comes to that portrayal of women. The portrayal of women in general. And many other things. Thank you so much for being here today.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

Thank you for starting off our day.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

I appreciate the opportunity.

Queen Latifah:

And thank you for seeing the bigger picture. Ladies and gentlemen, please give it up for Wendy one more time, our Captain. Such a great pleasure to meet you. Thank you so much.

Captain Wendy Lawrence:

Feel like a fan girl right now.

Queen Latifah:

Me too. Me too. Oh, my god. I was just getting into that. It's like our own talk show. This is pretty awesome.

Queen Latifah:

Yes. I'm going to need a pen. I have a very fine pen back stage, but you know ... I got to give you props for that. That was smooth. That was smooth. Thank you. This better be good because we going ... It's a beautiful cover. *I Am Healing: Seven Secrets To Wellness and Self Care*. We need that. We need that. Thank you so much. Are you Priscilla? Thank you so much, Priscilla. And thank you for the pen.

## **Interview**

**Queen Latifah, producer, actor, and musical performer**  
**The Honorable Mark R. Warner, United States Senator from Virginia**

Queen Latifah:

I want to introduce the person responsible for this Women's Achieve Summit. Now he began this conference back in 2010 as a way to drive conversations about issues that mattered to women. Yes, he. Please welcome Senator Mark Warner. Yeah. Awesome. So thank you so much. Woo. Come on.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
All right.

Queen Latifah:  
Have a seat. Wow.

Audience:  
Hello Senator.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
I love you back.

Queen Latifah:  
You are one of the enlightened, brave men that I spoke about in the audience.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
I live with a wife and three daughters. I better be woke.

Queen Latifah:  
That's right. That's right. And what a difference you making in their lives, I'm sure. This is the 10th anniversary of the Virginia Women's Conference. Why was a conference for women so important for you?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
Well, first of all, thank you, Queen Latifah, for being here. And I don't know if it was acknowledged on the front end, but this incredible woman is going to receive Harvard's highest award, the W.E.B. Du Bois Award next month for her contributions. And we are very grateful to have you here in Richmond and to think about this conference. I mean, 10 years ago, it was 300 women across the street at the Marriott. And I was the headliner. We have come a long way when you got Captain Lawrence, when you got Queen Latifah, when you got Mika Brzezinski and a host of speakers all day and boy, oh boy, a band like this to go along as well.

So my sense was, you know, I was a governor before I was a Senator, and before that I was a venture capitalist. And my whole notion was you have got to look for value, particularly unrecognized value. Sometimes you find it in areas of the state that had been left behind. Sometimes you find it in people. And the truth is in a country like ours where still less than 10%

of all venture capital money goes to women. Less than 1% goes to women of color. When too many of our kind of halls of power folks look a lot more like me than like you. And it just seems-

Queen Latifah:

And not even as good as you. They could use a little work.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

Let me stay here forever.

Queen Latifah:

They could use a little work.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

But it just made sense. Bring women together, let them network, meet each other and have a conference that was dedicated. And the response has been remarkable, but it was never in my wildest dreams did 10 years ago we think that we would be 10 years later with this kind of turnout. So thank you, thank you, and to all the wonderful women, thank you as well.

Queen Latifah:

Thank you. We need a lot more these conferences. So thank you so much for doing this. Now the Equal Rights Amendment lost by one vote in the Virginia House of Delegates in February. Will women ... I know. The blues. Will women ever have true equality under the law?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

We're going to have another shot. You are going to have a right to make that decision because ... And this is not politics. Not politics today, but all 140 seats in Virginia State House, General Assembly, State House of Delegates and State Senate is up this year. So if women go out and vote and you decide that maybe you should hire people who believe that Virginia ought to pass Equal Rights Amendment. That believe that our children shouldn't have to go to school fearing for their lives because we don't have sensible gun safety. Who believed that we've got to leave to our children a planet that we can live in, then yes.

We are one vote down in both the House and the Senate. So you don't have to go out and change 50 different delegates, although you could do that as well. But if we switch a couple of votes in the House and the Senate, Virginia will become, I think it will be the 38th state, and the Equal Rights Amendment will become not only the law of Virginia, but the law of the land.

Queen Latifah:

That's what we need. That's what we need. That's what I'm talking about. You know, often people ask me what do we need to do to get people to go out there and vote? And a lot of you probably hear it from your kids. They're like oh, my vote won't make a difference. That apathy that we've always had to fight against. But I tell them this, listen, go register to vote. And then if you decide you don't want to vote, at least you can.

But if you're not registered, you don't have a choice. And kids don't like being told they can't do something. So switch it up on them. Quick. Now, in 2018, unprecedented numbers of women were elected to the House and the Senate, which was amazing to watch. Lot of white outfits in there. It was very, very, very, very sexy. I get to say that. What impact has that had-

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
I just smile.

Queen Latifah:  
What impact has that had on Washington now however?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
Well, part of those new women, three of those new women came from Virginia. And we were very, very proud.

Queen Latifah:  
That's right.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
And you've seen the changes already in the house. You know, first woman speaker, Nancy Pelosi. You see a House that suddenly has a very different agenda. You still see where I work, not doing as much. We do not have a female majority leader, which would be a nice thing to happen in the US Senate as well. So I think government functions better, candidly, when we have more women elected. And the reason has nothing to do with whether you're a Democrat or Republican. It has to do with the fact that women are used to getting stuff done. Too many women don't have the luxury of spending their whole time arguing and never getting to yes.

And I think if we end up hiring more women, I don't care whether it's Richmond or Washington or your local community, I think just the data shows the improvement. And to your point about whether it's kids or whether it's friends, I think there may be some people where I work up in Washington who actually want to make things seem so messed up, so screwed up that it encourages people just to say to heck with all them.

Queen Latifah:  
Of course.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
And if you don't vote, all you're doing is turning the keys over to the whack jobs. That's a technical term. On either end of the political agenda. I don't care if you're far left, far right. That is not where things get done. So particularly, every year we have elections in Virginia, but this year's a pretty big one. If you want to send a message to the folks that I work with, let's make some change happen to here in Richmond.

Queen Latifah:

I agree. I like it. Now you have introduced four bills to help protect workers in the gig economy, which is like Uber drivers, Lyft drivers, you know. What do you see happening to workers in the future?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

Well, that's a great question.

Queen Latifah:

Airbnb, things like that.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

I got interested in this back in like 2015 and we saw the economy was starting to switch. You know, in the 20th century, we had an economy where people went and got a job, would keep that job for most of their life. My dad worked for the same company, 38 years. Never made a lot of money, but with that job came-

Queen Latifah:

Right.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

Never made a lot of money, but with that job came healthcare, retirement. If you lost a job, there'd be unemployment, workman's comp, disability. Starting in the mid-nineties, companies started saying if the job wasn't absolutely critical, they're going to outsource us either literally or figurative. And then we got these things called the platform economy, the gig economy where you could go out and monetize your time.

Queen Latifah:

Right.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

Immediately.

Queen Latifah:

A side hustle.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

A side hustle. And for a lot of women that was not a new experience because women had always been that either full time breadwinner or part time trying to juggle kids, husbands, family, and at the same time help put food on the table.

Queen Latifah:

Right.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

And where we are today in America is one third of the workforce is in some form of contingent work, part time independent contractor, gig worker. And my concern is, even though the economy may be all right up here, if the stuff hits the fan, as it will, that third of the workforce has no benefits at all.

Queen Latifah:  
Right.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
So I think in America, I don't care what we call the kind of work you do, if you make a dollar, some portion of that dollar ought to be set aside for you for benefits. Those benefits ought to attach to you individually, they ought to be portable. And don't give me this stuff that if somebody says, well, they've not worked that long to invest. No, you should start earning benefits from your first hour of work.

Queen Latifah:  
Right. Right, right.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
And who manages that? We can debate. One other idea here that I think is a big, big idea that I'd love to hear my 20 friends who are running for president talk about. And that is every business says my most important asset is my people. They also pay lip service to that. But the truth is nothing in our tax code or accounting system or reporting system incentivizes anyone to invest in human beings. Matter of fact, we incentivize you to do the opposite. Right now, if a company goes out and spends \$5,000 buying a robot, that money they spent buying that robot, you get an R and D tax credit. That robot's viewed as an asset. You can put it on your balance sheet. It adds value to your company. If you go out and spend \$5,000 giving somebody skills, you get none of those benefits. So shouldn't we treat investment in human beings at least as good as investment in stuff?

Queen Latifah:  
You're saying all the right things. If only you were a woman ... you could be running the joint. This would be done already. Everything,

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
That's great. I'm going to have another drink of water.

Queen Latifah:  
Okay, now we'll have a little bit of fun. We're going to do something that we call speed dating. As women, we want to know the inner you, so stuff that might not be public knowledge. You ready? You game?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
No.

Queen Latifah:

We got some good music for it though. Yeah. Okay. First question, how would your best friend describe you?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

Hopefully, as loyal and somebody who loves to organize all my friends.

Queen Latifah:

Ah, that's cool. I like that. What song best sums you up?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

I'm not sure it does, but I would love it to be, We Shall Overcome.

Queen Latifah:

Wow. You sure you're not a woman? Cause that was a good answer. You know what? That would be amazing.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

I did get a peek at some of these, so ...

Queen Latifah:

I like that. I love that. I absolutely love that. What would you take to with you to a deserted island?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

In this crowd, I only have one answer. My wife.

Queen Latifah:

There we go.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

Not my first rodeo.

Queen Latifah:

Somebody in Washington is cooking with gas. That's all I got to say. If you were to choose a slogan for your life, what would it be?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

It would be get stuff done, but I probably wouldn't use the word stuff.

Queen Latifah:

Now I'm particularly endeared to Senator Mark Warner, I must say. I like that. And if a movie was made about your life, who would play you and what would the movie be called?

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

Well, I got a whole lot of folks that I would love to play me, but they would ... People say that doesn't look at all like him.

Queen Latifah:  
This is Hollywood. Listen...

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
I know, I know. I can dream. I can dream.

Queen Latifah:  
It's faking the stars. I can be...

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
I would like ... I would say Bryan Cranston. I hope it'd be kind of ... cause I hope I still got stuff to get done, and so a Work in Progress or An Unfinished Life or something like that.

Queen Latifah:  
Okay, let me work on this. An Unfinished Life starring Bryan Cranston as Senator Mark Warner.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
We're going to have to have a great female lead to get anybody to come see that film.

Queen Latifah:  
There we go. Starring Meryl Streep as ... Anything she's in, we're coming to see. We got a hit on our hands. Thank you so much for being a good sport.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
Thank you.

Queen Latifah:  
And thank so much for being a great supporter of women. Give it up for Senator Mark Warner.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
Thank you.

Queen Latifah:  
Thank you so much. You make me so proud.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:  
Thank you.

Queen Latifah:  
I love watching you.

The Honorable Mark R. Warner:

Take care.

Queen Latifah:

Keep it up. Dang. Every time I start dancing, the song is over. Okay, ladies and gentlemen, it is time for our first story slam. We chose our four story slammers from more than 50 entries. Our first storyteller is a warrior, a U.S. Marine, a social activist, a mother. She is a woman with true grit. Please welcome Tee Marie Hanible.

### **Story Slam**

**Tee Marie Hanible, retired Marine Gunnery Sergeant, author, and founder of Operation Heroes Connect**

Tee Marie Hanible:

Y'all gon' make me cry. Oh, my path started out as a rocky one. I grew up on the south side of Chicago. I was in foster care until the age of nine when I was adopted. At the age of 16, I was a victim of gun violence. At the age of 17, I was kicked out of all Chicago public schools. I decided to join the Marines. I wanted something bigger. I wanted something outside of Chicago. Something with opportunities. So the Marine Corps was my calling. The Marine Corps was my opportunity. In boot camp, I was that can't tell me nothing, smart aleck teen that just couldn't adapt. I couldn't be broken. But they found my kryptonite at boot camp. They took me out at one sister platoon and they put me in the opposing platoon. I cried like a baby. I booed and cried and that was the moment they broke me. But that was the moment I got stronger. I built up my confidence. Those ladies that were now my new sisters, they're the ones who helped me graduate boot camp. They were my power.

Moments of strength often come from moments of extreme emotion. 9/11 was my moment of strength. Watching 9/11 unfold set a fire inside of me. I wore it as uniform, but I felt like I wasn't doing enough. I didn't just want to continue to do the desk job of being a Marine. I wanted to fully serve, I wanted to deploy. I remember asking my boss for permission to deploy and I got a resounding, not no, but hell no. "Why would you want to deploy as a single mom?" he said. "Why would you want to put yourself in harm's way?" he asked me. I felt so defeated. Here I was ready to rock and roll and I couldn't even hit the start button. That start button came to me days later though.

I remember I was tasked with putting together these taskers to deploy units forward, and I was in charge of putting names on the roster and so I slipped my name on that roster. And even though I can hear his no's still in my ear, I went ahead and did it anyway. Whew. The ass chewing I received after that. There was a lot of heated discussions in the days to come. There was a lot of questions. Why would you want to do this? You have a child. Why would you want to go forward into something you know not of what you're going forward into? And I can remember my response as if it was yesterday. For the same reason you would want to do it, sir. For the same reasons you would want to go forward. I want to serve my country. This is what I signed up to do ... and that's what I did. I went forward into Iraq.

And as frightening as things were in Iraq, I knew I needed to live in my moment of strength. So I put my daughter's picture in my cover, what we call a cover, you all call a hat, and I lifted my brothers around me. I lifted them up when they began to feel homesick. I focused on the mission at hand and I focused on getting back home safe to my daughter. Those were my objectives going forward. After all, this is what I asked for, right? I was a Marine. It was time for me to put up or shut up. This is what I asked for.

After deployment, I remember coming back and filling what most veterans feel, a sense of emptiness. Now that I was back in Garrison, things were different. My life, my normal desk job didn't feel as fulfilling as before. So no matter where I got stationed in, from the West coast to the East coast, back to the Midwest, I made it my passion to give forward and to pay it back. I started volunteering. I started being a big sister to little sisters. I started finding my new passion in my community around me. I remember getting stationed in Quantico and 2011 and wanted to give back in the same way. And every organization I reached out to, it was a year long waiting list or it was this, that and the other, and all this requirements that you had to ... all this red tape and I just wanted to give back, so I started Operation Heroes Connect.

Operation Heroes Connect is a nonprofit that partners at risk youth with veterans and service members as their full time mentors. Each year we take over a hundred kids to summer camp and we facilitate the camp. And this camp is absolutely free to every child that attends. I have been blessed with many opportunities. I've been recognized at the White House and honored by President Obama I have co-starred on a hit TV show alongside John Cena. I became the women's veteran coordinator for Women's March on DC. And I was a first and only and still am only military recipient of the Washingtonian of the Year Award. And this year I wrote the best seller, *The Warrior Code: 11 Principles to Unleash the Badass in You*.

Now when I think back to that little foster kid from Chicago who faced so much adversity in her life, I'm thankful for those challenges because they helped shape me into the woman I am today. Because today I'm a mother, I'm an activist, I'm an author, I'm a philanthropist and I am still a warrior.

Queen Latifah:

Wow. That's what I'm talking about. Thank you, Tee.. That was an amazing story. And she got a book. Thank you sister.

Tee Marie Hanible:

Thank you so much.

Queen Latifah:

Thank you so much. I can't wait to talk to you afterwards. Thank you. And she's wearing a stiletto. What? Priscilla, you ain't have no stiletto on when you ran up on me with your book. That's okay, I love ... My library is going to be on point by the time this is done. This is fantastic.

## **Mapping the Future of Education**

**Dr. Irma Becerra, President, Marymount University**  
**Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman, Professor of Practice, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Superintendent, Richmond Public Schools (2002-2008)**

Okay, everybody, let's get ready for our first mashup. We have two very distinguished ladies discussing the future of education. Our guests are the former superintendent of the Richmond public school system and current professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Deborah Jewell-Sherman, as well as the current president of Marymount University, Irma Becerra.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:  
Thank you.

Queen Latifah:  
You're welcome. Thank you so much. Please. It's so nice to meet you. Thank you so much.

Dr. Irma Becerra:  
Thank you.

Queen Latifah:  
Please.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:  
Hi, Irma.

Dr. Irma Becerra:  
Wow, Debra. Wow, this is amazing. Fun to be among all these women achievers. Yes. So we have a few questions that we're going to ask each other. So first I'm going to ask Deborah, tell us a little bit of how did you get where you are today?

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:  
From the time I knew myself, I wanted to be an educator. I think I realized that when I was about three years old. I had these wonderful Southern women who were teaching in the daycare system in New York City and they were my early role models. I followed the traditional path of many educators, which is NYU. I was an elementary ed major and then later graduate school. I've held most of the roles that educators hold, teacher, any teachers, counselors, assistant principal, principal and in two places. And then I decided to put a bet on myself and went back and got my doctorate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

And then in 1995, I was fortunate to be hired as an associate superintendent in the Richmond public schools, and that began a wonderful time. I think that some of those people who were instrumental in the success as we showed here in Richmond are in the audience. I know that Dr. Yvonne Wallace Brandon is here and others. After almost eight years of superintendent, I was recruited to Harvard and now I get to prepare doctoral students to take on the work that I did, and

that's part of my legacy. And so I feel like in every role I've been a teacher, and I loved every single minute of it. I don't think that there's a license I prize more.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Yes.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

So, Irma, how did you get to where you are?

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Thank you, Deborah. My story is my parents left Cuba when I was eight months old. We had to leave because of the Cuban Revolution, so we left without any assets. And those first formative years in my life were important because my grandparents instilled in me the fact that no matter what happens, no one can ever take away your education. And that's why I dedicated my life to education. I grew up in Puerto Rico, went to school at University of Miami where I got my Bachelors and Masters in electrical engineering. I was oftentimes the only woman in my class. I certainly face barriers like burning all the circuits, electronic circuit lab. And then of course my classmates say you're going to stay right there that whole semester because you're going to ruin our grade. And to them, I tell them, if you could only see me now.

I went to work at FPL and it was there that I had an opportunity to also be a corporate instructor, fell in love with adult education, and decided to go back to school to get my doctorate. When my kids, Anthony was two years old, Nico was six months, and I was the first woman to get a PhD in engineering at Florida International University. So as you can imagine, I'm used to oh boy-ing my way through the room. After a short time with University of Florida center, I joined the faculty of management information systems as an assistant professor. Got tenure, became a full professor, 12 years doing research primarily for NASA, which was a phenomenal time in my life. And after that I had the opportunity to start the administrative route, first as a center director for entrepreneurship. Then I was a vice provost for academic affairs, then vice president for engagement.

Later on, I was recruited to be provost at St. Thomas University and there ... I was there when Marymount found me. And I really fell in love with Marymount's mission to educate women for work since the 1950s, so for 70 years they've had a very clear mission of woman empowerment. So I decided to say bye to Miami, pack my bags, and now I'm the seventh president of Marymount for the last year. I'm enjoying it. I'm enjoying it very much.

So tell me a little bit about your personal journeys, some of the challenges and opportunities that women face in the 21st century.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Yeah, as I listened to your story, Irma, one of the things that I noted for both of us is that we pretty much checked all the boxes. Men often don't have to check all the boxes, they don't have to be a teacher and then a counselor and then an assistant principal and then a principal. And that's one of the challenges that I think we as women need to seize. We often feel that we can't do

the job until we are sure that we know every bit of everything. You're going to learn, you're going to learn you'll learn by doing. So one of the things that I have had to do is to step out of the comfort of knowing everything and sometimes taking a risk.

One of the things that I have found is that I moved, I had to move a lot to get the opportunities that I had. You're often not a prophet in your own land. And so if you just stay in one organization or one system, people may not realize the value that you bring. But I taught in New York, New Jersey, Fairfax County, Virginia Beach, Hampton, before I came to Richmond. And having all of those experiences prepared me for what I found here in Richmond.

Remember that we as women are often not just breaking a glass ceiling. When we get the job, we're often on a glass cliff. And when you are among the first to do this, then you have the responsibility to those that you serve, you have a responsibility to yourself, but you also have a responsibility to those who are following you. Because when people see you have the gumption to take on like the contract that I had that said I had to double the number of schools that met accreditation in one year or I could be fired for cause. When you step out and take that kind of risk, what you are saying is I as a woman believe in you, I am the woman for the job, and together we can get this job done. And so we need to, we need to do that more.

So, Irma, the same question for you. What do your personal journeys tell us about the challenges and opportunities that women still face in the 21st century? Can women have it all?

Dr. Irma Becerra:

And my answer is yes, women can have it all. And I think when I was a student, an undergraduate, I often asked myself that question coming from a household where my mother really never worked, so a very traditional household. And clearly I just went into the workforce, but when I did go into the workforce in the 1980s as an engineer, I was the only woman in my group. And I think at that time a lot of corporate America wasn't ready for women. And I found that when it was time for me to have my son, it was not possible to have any kind of flex hours or we had, what, like about two weeks for maternity leave. And I found it very difficult and I think I was working for the power industry, so very male dominated.

I found it very difficult to, to have a thriving career and be a mother. So that's when I decided to go back to school, go into academia cause I felt academia gave us a lot more flexibility, and that's something that at that time I valued. Corporate has changed dramatically since that time. And today, most companies not only give you maternity leave, but also paternity leave. So they're very supportive of a work life balance more so than at the time that I was coming through. Nevertheless, they, as you know, Deborah, the academic life is also very rigorous. The tenure cycle often coincides with the time that you're having your child bearing. So it's important to really work around, establish important partnerships.

And one thing that I often get asked about work life balance, and I don't think I am a poster child for work life balance, but I do say that my secret sauce was to outsource whatever I was bad at and I didn't enjoy, and I could find somebody else to help me do it better than I did it. For example, I was my really bad cook, I'm not going to lie. So when it came time where my kids

were in middle school, I had to pick between cooking and homework, so I found every restaurant in the neighborhood. Monday, Tacos, Tuesdays, all you can eat, Wednesday ... So you know, the kids loved it. We went to a restaurant. I didn't have to do the cleanup, come back, do the homework. So you do have to be creative.

Also build your support system. My mom was a big part in helping me through those years that I was a PhD student. I mentioned that I started when my kids were young, but I also want to mention all the teachers along the way that held their hand out to me and assured me that I could do this. Even starting my PhD, I didn't think I was ready to do this, and my advisor, I was teaching as an adjunct and he said, come on, you can do a PhD. And I said, with kids? He said, yeah, with kids. So all the teachers that believed in me, that mentored me, professors, colleagues, administrators, my dean who hired me and said, you can do this. So now I feel compelled to do the same thing for others and extend my hand and tell each one of you, you can do it as well.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I just wanted to piggy back on that one. I tell my students that in order to be successful, there are two things that you need. You need a partner, somebody who loves you unconditionally, and you need to get a dog. Because when I was superintendent, I had two dogs, and when I would come home, Los Lammy would say, it doesn't matter what they said about you on television, you're fabulous. You are the smartest superintendent and you look good, girl. So you need to... Yes, you definitely...

And the other thing I wanted to say, I'm going to get to this question, is that I think you can have it all. You just can't have it all at the same time. So some days you're going to be a stellar mom and a so-so whatever it is that you do. And then other days you're going to prioritize whatever that is that you do, and you'll get help to do what you need to as a mom. And the other thing is you have to work hard on not allowing your children to make you feel guilty.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Yes.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Because in the scheme of things, it all balances out. Lastly, remember what is the priority, and that's family first. Because when we die, you know they're not ... they're going to ... the people that are going to be around you, the people that will miss you the most are your family, so you want to make sure that that's a priority. Okay.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

So tell us a little bit, Deborah, about what is the state of education today in K through 12 as a former Virginia superintendent?

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Yeah, so education is still challenging. I think that education is still the greatest work that one can do because you touch not just those that are in front of you, you touch generation after generation after generation. It's still the key for upward mobility. All too often demography is

destiny for the children that we serve in urban school districts, meaning the zip code defines the opportunities that they're going to have, and all too often their life's chances. So in Richmond public schools, the stellar educators that I got to work with and I determined that demographic data we're not going to be allowed to determine what happened to our children. And we were successful in making that happen.

I mean, and everybody understood the importance of that from custodians to bus drivers to teachers and principals, our board, everyone. We understood how important that was. Right now, there are lots of means of education. We have in class, we have charters, we have online opportunities, but there's nothing more inspiring or needed for a child than that relationship between a teacher and a student. We touch eternity. We help children see possibilities that they never thought that they could see. And so we have STEM, we have lots of opportunities, far more than in my generation, but continuing to learn is critically important.

When I went to New York University, I went with an IBM Selectric typewriter. This was in 19-none-of-your-business ... but an IBM Selectric typewriter. And the only thing that looked like a cell phone was what Captain Kirk used to say, "Beam me up, Scotty." So those teachers had to teach me not just the content of the day, but also how to continue to learn. And that's what the challenge is for us.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

But also how to continue to learn and that's what the challenge is for us as we go forward in the 21st century. Yeah, thank you. Irma, how do we foster readiness for my K-12 students so that we can prepare them for your colleges and other colleges? We want to make sure that they attend, not just attend, but succeed and as they say in Virginia that they finish. How do we make that happen?

Dr. Irma Becerra:

I think it's very important, Deborah, that we continue to work on that bridge between high school and college. And I think at the national level, we need to set the expectation. College is for everybody and everybody has to succeed in college. It was a few years ago when people didn't use to graduate from high school. And as a nation, we recognize the importance of high school graduation. And I think you told me how high the rates of high school graduation are here in the state of Virginia, in the 90% correct?

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

In some school districts, not...

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Yes. Not everybody.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

That's a high bar.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Yeah. But it's important that as I look at the future, most of the jobs that do not require a college education are about to disappear. I just was in Hungary and I visited one of the driverless vehicles testing facilities and there's another one in Michigan. And in a few years, I'm going to say less than 10 years, the largest profession in the United States will disappear. The largest profession in the United States is drivers. So we need to think about the fact that artificial intelligence is going to automate many of the jobs that today don't require a college education.

And that it's critical for the competitiveness of our nation to set the expectation that college is for everybody and college graduation is for everybody. Today only half of the students that enter college graduate at a national level. And that's why I made a commitment to every student that comes to Marymount University. I'm making a pledge. You come to Marymount and I will do everything in my possibility to see you to graduation. And that's a commitment that we need to have from every university.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:  
Sure.

Dr. Irma Becerra:  
The rest of the world is gearing up. The rest of the world is gearing up to compete in the 21st century by pushing college graduation. And whenever I hear that college is not for everybody, I am a little bit preoccupied because we need to raise the bar. It's up to us. The women that are here. We did it when we first came to this nation 400 years ago, we raised a bar. This is the moment to raise the bar on college attainment and set the expectations college graduation is for everybody.

If you don't graduate from that engineering degree, let's say you get halfway through, you don't get that job that pays you halfway of the salary of an engineer. So many companies, college graduation is the badge that you need to get in. So if you look at companies like IBM, Amazon, there may be 10% of the jobs that don't require a college degree, but the majority of them do.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:  
Them do, right.

Dr. Irma Becerra:  
So let's set the expectation. Let's change the rhetoric. College is for everybody. And college graduation is for all, is important for the competitiveness of this nation.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:  
Thank you.

Dr. Irma Becerra:  
This great nation. So I want to ask you, Deborah, what is the landscape for careers in education in the 21st century?

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

I think that this is a really exciting time to be an educator. We are not restricted to K-12 teaching and learning as important as that is. Right now I am the first and only professor of practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. And in that role I teach doctoral students who are going to not just be superintendents or cabinet level professionals in districts, but there'll be CEOs of nonprofits, CEOs for philanthropic endeavors. There are just a host of opportunities that weren't available just a very short time ago.

And then the entrepreneurial space is wide open. Technology has opened the door. There are so many different careers that people can pursue. And so I agree that having those credentials are critically important because there is a double standard. There's no woman in this room that doesn't know that I would not have the job I have if I didn't have my doctorate. There are other professors of practice at Harvard who don't have a doctorate, but the real deal is that if you are a woman, if you are a woman of color, then you need to make sure that you are exceptionally well prepared so that when the opportunity presents itself, you can open up the door and walk right in. You just want to be.

And I think that we stopped telling women that as a child, how many of you remember good, better, best, never let it rest until your good is your better and your better is your best. There's no stopping a woman who knows her worth and who wants to change the world. I didn't go into administration because I was going to make the big bucks because as quiet as it's kept, we don't make the big bucks in education. I just want to change the world. I want it to be like pinky and the brain. I wanted to make sure that the children that I had in one elementary school had the same great opportunities in middle and high school so that they could get ready to go on. And so every time I took a step up, it was to have greater influence and that's what I hope will be the driving force behind many of you who are in this room.

Lastly, I will say to you that there will always be people who tell you've done enough. You know, why would you want to as a mid-career professional, you're a principal... Why would you want to go and get your doctorate? My answer was always, there's another mountain that I want to climb. I am standing on the shoulders of great women who never had the opportunities that I had, and so it is imperative that I maximize those opportunities for myself so that I can maximize them for my children. One last point and then I'll get to your last question.

I remember for those of you who were here during my tenure as Richmond. You know that it wasn't an easy one. But I remember going to dinner one evening with my husband and two young women from Huguenot high school came up to us and introduced themselves. They were a college freshmen. They were here for Thanksgiving break and they wanted me to know that they had just graduated that June and that they were doing well, so they left. But when we got ready to leave, they came back and they said, Dr. Jewell-Sherman, we wanted you to know that we watched you as superintendent and we knew that you were fighting for us and that what you did on a daily basis was to ensure that we had an opportunity. And so we knew that if you could do it, we could do it. My point is you never know who's watching you. It's your students, it's young people in your neighborhood, it's your colleagues. You want to make sure that you bring your bad-ass self to whatever it is that you are doing. Because you really are the women for the job. Thank.

Irma, the face of students, educators, and educational leaders is much more diverse today than 20 years ago. What does that mean for education and how we prepare students for the global economy?

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Great question. Well, first I want to say that 10 years ago, I would have never imagined that I would be a university president and much less sitting in this phenomenal room. I think one of the things have of serving as I started moving up in my administrative ladder is that there were less and less women that looked like me. And it concerns me, it concerns me about the lack of female and minority role models for our students in our college. Even at Marymount University, which used to be a women's college and now we're co-educational. We do have a large number of female faculty, but that's not true at most universities. And certainly we need to work on more representation in terms of minorities among our faculty. We need to be intentional. The fact is that there are not that many in the pipeline. And if I look at Hispanic women in particular, educational attainment drops off significantly the higher you go.

So while the number is not that off at the AS level, if you start going up to the BS and the MS and the Doctoral, the percentage of Hispanic women and minority women in the mix drops precipitously. So we need to take note of this because the less female and minority role models in the classrooms, then the less likely in particular for students who are first generation.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Absolutely.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

They need to see people that look like them. Because trust me, everybody doubts their self when they're in college, no matter if they're in a community college or if they're at Harvard. We all go through this. I went through it myself where you're like, am I, should I be here? This whole, the research.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

The imposter syndrome.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

The imposter syndrome. And even now as professionals, we feel that as well. Can I do this, can I sit in front of a room of 1,500 amazing people? So we constantly have to push ourselves, Deborah. So I think that it's important that we recognize that we need to pay attention, but we need to be intentional. In moving others along, it takes a village. If you look at some statistics, if you are a first generation student, you are only 59% as likely to go to college versus if your parents went to college, you are 93% likely to go to college. So it's so important for each one of us because you can impact the life of a student.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

No question.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

You can tell them this is within your reach. It does take a village, but we owe it to our future generations to reach out, to instill that confidence in those young students. You all know someone that is either one of your students or somebody that you know that is about to go to college, call up on them, ask them, how are you doing? How is it going? Make sure you tell them you can do this. This is within your reach and it's so important, not only for your success, your livelihood, your family, but the future of our country.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

No question, no question. You mentioned that imposter syndrome is real. Anytime you're breaking a glass ceiling or stepping out into an unknown reality, your job, you wonder, am I the woman for the job. Irma and I want you to know that you are. So if you are a woman, repeat after me. I am the woman for the job.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

I am the woman for the job.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Sometimes you may have to say that to yourself as you're driving to work. Sometimes you may have to say that as you're putting on the makeup because somebody, no one else may tell you. And so you have to self-talk yourself into that reality. Also tell yourself how good looking you are, how smart you are and how accomplished you are. Because we as women get so many negative messages. We have people who give us the side-eye. We're in meetings and we say something and it falls flat and then a man says it and everybody says how brilliant that was.

So one of the things that I train in teaching, I say to my students, if somebody does that, like if somebody did that to Irma, my job is to say, Irma you just said that. And that was brilliant when you said it.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Exactly.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

One last thing. Know what your core values are. The things that I prize are wisdom, which means always learning. Compassion, which means that you never look down on anyone. The only time you look down is when you're reaching down to pull somebody up. And preoccupation with action. Children in second grade today have one year for us to get it right. And so we need to be intentional about that and we need to ensure that everyone is college and career ready. Right Irma?

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Yes. And don't forget to bring somebody along.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Absolutely.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

We all have had someone that has reached out to us and extended our hand and now it's our chance and our opportunity to bring others along. Like you said before, so many people that are watching us, make sure that you reach out and you extend that hand and you say, come on, this is within your reach and I want to see you graduate because you can do it.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

You can do it.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

And your nation depends on it. Yes.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Right.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Thank you.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

So it looks like our time is up. Thank you all for joining Irma and me. We loved it.

Dr. Irma Becerra:

Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman:

Thank you. It's so good to see you.

### **Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Women Trailblazers**

**Queen Latifah, producer, actor, and musical performer**

**Sgt. Monica Beltran, Virginia National Guard; Bronze Star and Purple Heart Recipient**

**Connie Nyholm, CEO, Virginia International Raceway**

**Chief G. Anne Richardson, Rappahannock Indian Tribe of Virginia**

**Rynthia Rost, Vice President of Public Affairs, GEICO**

Queen Latifah:

Great job. I want to love you. I will, oh awesome. Of course. You better. Great job, great job. Oh wow. I want to love you. Erin, we're going to have to talk about our timing, man. I was just about to get into the treat you right part. You got to treat me, right? Give it up for the Miss-behavers. They ain't misbehaving or what? And thank you so much ladies. That was an amazing talk.

I'm delighted to tell you about our next segment. Whoa. We have assembled an amazing group of women who have all blazed a trail in a field that is traditionally male dominated. Now my

guests today are a Bronze Star and Purple Heart recipient for her bravery on the front line in Iraq, Sergeant Monica Beltran. And a lawyer who is Vice President of Public Affairs at GEICO where she also serves on the board of directors and GEICO's philanthropic foundation, Rynthia Ross. Next, her father was chief of the Rappahannock tribe. Her grandfather was chief and his father before him was chief, but she was the first woman to lead the Rappahannocks since the 1600's, Chief Anne Richardson.

And finally, whew. The Virginia International Raceway, oh the CEO is here. And I happen to know she got here from Alton, Virginia in under an hour, Connie Nyholm. Ladies, give it up for our ladies. Connie, Chief. That was good. You see, she handed me this right? I got three words. Cut the check. I got a CEO who I'm sure would like to spread a little love. This is awesome. I'm going to take this. I got a nice little guy who would like to enjoy that. Look at you. No, no, stay good GEICO. Good gecko. Okay, so enough of me being silly.

Here we are 400 years after Jamestown and we are still talking about glass ceilings and trailblazing and pioneering. I mean, what do we have to do? I'd like to hear from all of you to finally blaze this trail. Monica, Rynthia, Chief, Connie, anybody want to go for this one? I think...

Connie Nyholm:

Go ahead. I think we just need to be ourselves and be ourselves and be fearless. Have the courage to step forward and make things happen.

Queen Latifah:

Did I tell you she got here from Alton in... Let's get to it.

Connie Nyholm:

My pace car's outside.

Queen Latifah:

So just be fearless. Just go for it. Just do it.

Rynthia Rost:

I say don't ask for permission. Ask for forgiveness. I say it all the time and being intentional.

Queen Latifah:

Say that again.

Rynthia Rost:

Don't ask for permission, ask for forgiveness. Just keep going.

Queen Latifah:

Expand a little bit upon it.

Rynthia Rost:

So I have a group of people who work for me and they're right down there and hi. There's a guy down there too, he's responsible for everybody's gecko. But what we do has to be intentional. We have to put one foot in front of the other with the intention of accomplishing something. And that accomplishment is do it, don't regret doing it and keep moving forward. We're under the impression that everyone who has accomplished something has asked for permission to get that to do it, when in fact they took a risk. And they were willing to take that risk, and they were also willing to take whatever the ramifications were going to be from that risk. And that's what women have to internalize. I am not going to ask for permission to ask for that job or to open that business or to be a race car driver or to be an astronaut. I am going to intentionally do what is in my heart and my mind and my gut to do.

Queen Latifah:

That makes sense to me. Chief Richardson, you are truly a first. What enabled you to get in that position today? Tell me how that came about.

Chief G. Anne Richardson:

Well, it's a long tradition in my tribe, and so I was mentored by men and women, so my traditional culture is a bit different. But you still had to be intentional about where you were going and expectations that your community had of you. And you had to live up to those expectations. And then the dreams of the ancestors before you are always in the forefront of your mind and that's what drives you forward to do the things that they dreamed of that haven't been done yet. The other part of this is mentoring the next generation. So very important when women are in leadership because we're having to break down the doors and fight to get to where we want to go and we've got to teach the next generation to do the same because they have to exceed what we've done in this generation.

Queen Latifah:

Wow. Wow. Connie, you also mentored by men as well, right?

Connie Nyholm:

Yes. In the racetrack industry, there's many, many more men than women. And when I was introduced to Harvey Siegel, we very quickly learned that we had complementary strengths and weaknesses. Started redeveloping VIR, which reverted to cow pasture over 25 years of not being used. And together we set a vision for a race track like no one had ever built before because we didn't have any rules. We had each other and the good people we surrounded ourselves by. So we reopened back in 2000 and now we're globally known as one of the best tracks in America for sports cars and motorcycles.

Queen Latifah:

I can't wait to get on that track.

Connie Nyholm:

Drive fast. Take chances.

Queen Latifah:

Oh boy, I can't wait to get on that truck. Monica, you are the first woman from Virginia to ever receive the Bronze Star. And you also received the Purple Heart. Now when you signed up, I'm not sure that that's what you expected. I don't know what they told you you'd be doing. What did you think would happen? Did you expect and this all come about? What happened?

Sgt. Monica Beltran:

Well, I was deployed in Iraq in 2004 to 2006. We were convoy escorts and we did missions throughout all of Iraq. We escorted our civilian contractors to military personnel to equipment down all Iraq. We encountered an attack that day in October 26th of 2005, which was one of the worst attacks that we ever had. And unfortunately that day I did lose a friend, soldier of ours in our unit, multiple of us was wounded. We were ambushed. I was in charge of the rear element of the convoy. I was on a gunner. And we pulled through out of the kill zone, saving 54 of our soldiers out of that.

Queen Latifah:

What? Did you say you were on a gunner? You saved 54 people. Come on now.

Sgt. Monica Beltran:

Yeah.

Queen Latifah:

Come on.

Sgt. Monica Beltran:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

I'm sorry. I hear the theme music that's going along with this story as it's happening and there's a lot of wha ta ta going on. That's amazing. That's awesome. Wow. Did you think you would end up in the middle of an ambush?

Sgt. Monica Beltran:

Honestly, no.

Queen Latifah:

Because I recalled that war and it seemed to be like, oh, we're going to go in here. We're going to do this real quick and we'll be out of there in no time. At least kind of, I don't know if you guys remember, or you ladies, you women remember, a few guys, but it seemed like it was going to be this shock and all this big thing. It would happen really quickly. We'd go in there and we'd be out of there.

Sgt. Monica Beltran:

I was fairly young when I joined. I was in Iraq when I was 19. So me experiencing that, I mean you hear stories, you see videos online, you hear from other units coming back and you hope that you don't experience that. But unfortunately we were already in country for well over a half a

year thinking everything was fine. And that day just happened and I never would have expected, but it did. But we pulled through.

Queen Latifah:

Yes you did. Yes you did. Yes you did. She pulled through. All the more reason we need to really support our men and women in uniform and just really, really lift them up, hold them up, and hold to account everybody in our government who needs to be supporting our military veterans. I mean they need to come home to love, support, jobs, health care and mental support and their families need to be supported. So that's my, I'm off my box now. I mean I'm the daughter of a Vietnam vet, so I know what my dad has gone through throughout the years.

Now Rynthia, you have gone from NPR to EOC to GEICO. You jumping all over the place, which is great. I think it's fantastic. It sounds quite familiar to some of the things I've done in my career, how do you decide where to take to your career? Do you decide where to take your career or does your career decide where to take you?

Rynthia Rost:

That's a good question. So my 14 year old self walked into the Oglethorpe Mall in Savannah, Georgia. And at age 14, I went up to the suggestion box and I put a suggestion in and I said, there aren't any people who look like me who are running the cash registers here. We're all here, we're buying stuff, but we're not doing anything. I was 14 years old and it was the segregated South and I was a bold little girl. I was an unruly person. Sounds familiar.

Queen Latifah:

Wait, what's the theme of this thing?

Rynthia Rost:

Hey band. And so that unruly little girl grew up into an unruly young woman who went to law school who wanted to make sure that people who look like me, women, women of color got an opportunity. I had a mission and I just went with it. The trajectory of my life has always followed that 14 year old girl. It's always been about equality and opportunity and making sure that everyone gets to rise to their highest level. I found my purpose early and I've been chasing that purpose ever since.

Queen Latifah:

Wow. Did you answer my question?

Rynthia Rost:

No.

Queen Latifah:

I'm just checking. I just was drawn in.

Rynthia Rost:

Yes.

Queen Latifah:  
Before I knew it.

Rynthia Rost:  
So yes, the question was did my career take over and become what it is. And I would agree that way leads onto way. I gathered a couple of skills and those skills then became commodities that were then purchased on the open market. And that's the truth.

Queen Latifah:  
I like that.

Rynthia Rost:  
Yes.

Queen Latifah:  
Your skills became commodities that were then purchased on the open market.

Rynthia Rost:  
Yes.

Queen Latifah:  
And I don't think we often look at our skills as commodities, as valuable. Things of value that can be purchased on the open markets. I mean that's, I might have to rock with that one.

Rynthia Rost:  
Okay.

Queen Latifah:  
I may have to use that, I'll borrow that at some point.

Rynthia Rost:  
You can have it.

Queen Latifah:  
But one of the other important things I think you just said was that 14 year old girl.

Rynthia Rost:  
Yeah.

Queen Latifah:  
So you're always following that idealistic 14 year old rebellious girl inside of you who said, I want to do something and I want to do something different and I'm going to do it my way. And for a lot of us, I felt that way at 14, but I didn't quite know who I was yet. I don't know about you, but I didn't quite know who I was yet. I don't know if I quite had that strength. Maybe I did

and didn't know it. Maybe I didn't. What do we say to the 14 year old girls who have that dream, that idealism in them? How do we get them Chief to continue to be that forever, how do we get them Connie, to express that in their adult lives?

Chief G. Anne Richardson:

You find ways to ignite that passion. You find ways to come alongside them and teach them to express the way they feel and who they are. And not to be defined by anyone, but to define themselves for everyone.

Queen Latifah:

I love it. Well Connie, you're a woman after my own heart. I mean, I love fast cars. I love fast bikes and I loves me some business. But how did a girl from Martinsville become the CEO of a Speedway? I mean, how'd that happen?

Connie Nyholm:

Well, I'm very fortunate. But I grew up in Martinsville, as you said. And then I moved to New York, and I know you're from New Jersey. And we started a networking group for women in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, so that we could foster bigger, better business amongst ourselves.

And one of the other founding members of that group, Peggy Burke, worked for Harvey Siegel who had just put VIR under contract. She introduced the two of us and we took off, as I said before, making this crazy dream come true that had no boundaries, no definition. And I finally got a project big enough to come home to help my parents in Martinsville, and to make a mark in the Southside community, which had been so devastated by the loss of tobacco jobs and textiles. You know, one of my goals was to grow employment, and to enable the area to capitalize on what we were doing already, to grow the industrial parks and automotive, aerospace, workforce development, everything we try to be involved with as a good community business citizen.

Queen Latifah:

Oh, that's awesome.

Chief G. Anne Richardson:

Awesome.

Queen Latifah:

So you evolved.

Connie Nyholm:

Yeah, we evolved and...

Queen Latifah:

You connected with people who had like minds, and you evolved.

Connie Nyholm:

Yeah. Always surround yourself with people better than you are, and don't be afraid to enable them to help you, and just say thank you and get on that journey together. So I think that's how we've grown to be the force in motor sports that we are, is because we're welcoming to all sorts of people. I tell people every day, I have the best job on the planet with 300 people making me look good.

Chief G. Anne Richardson:  
I like it.

Queen Latifah:  
I'm often trying to find people better than I am.

Connie Nyholm:  
That's because you're the fastest taxi driver around.

Queen Latifah:  
Connie, I got to ask you, and this is just me being selfish, what is the fastest you've ever driven?

Connie Nyholm:  
About 180. In a RS7 Audi. We were taking the opening lap of the newly repaved racetrack, and I got to drive. And the corner worker mistakenly let someone else out in front of me, so I had to catch him. About eight miles later-

Queen Latifah:  
Of course you had to catch him.

Connie Nyholm:  
I had to cross the finish line first. That was a labor of love.

Queen Latifah:  
Oh my gosh. It don't take much, just a little gunning and... I mean, Monica, I like my Sig P229. What's your favorite?

Sgt. Monica Beltran:  
I got a Glock 23.

Queen Latifah:  
Oh, so, okay. So we can go shooting one day.

Sgt. Monica Beltran:  
Okay, yeah.

Queen Latifah:  
We going to bust some caps.

Connie Nyholm:  
Hey, I've got shooting ranges. You ladies come on.

Queen Latifah:  
You got a shooting range?

Connie Nyholm:  
Oh yeah.

Queen Latifah:  
Okay, I feel a vacation. Insured by GEICO.

Connie Nyholm:  
We're going to make that happen.

Queen Latifah:  
With the dreams of the Chief rising inside of us. This sounds like a hardy weekend I want to be at. Girls' Trip 2, right here. Will they survive?

I love it. Oh my goodness. Okay. So here we are, we have seen hashtag #MeToo, #TimesUp, but we've also seen a lot of decisions about women being made by people who are not women. Too much of that. How do we change that?

Rynthia Rost:  
Well, I think we have to be courageous. I'm going through, personally myself, dealing with the fact that my daughter has taken a major role in this #MeToo movement. And the courageous part of me, and the unruly person that I am, used to say, "Oh, just stay off of social media and don't do this and don't do that." But she's been working with this group called Why I Didn't Report It, and she's telling her own story. And I, with GEICO, just a couple of... Well, actually just last week, went to one of our offices, and we are allowing people to pitch to us ideas about giving money back through the GEICO Philanthropic Foundation.

And we gave \$30,000 to various organizations in each of the communities where we operate, in six different communities, to our associates to give back to organizations. And a lot of those organizations are affiliated with #MeToo, a lot of them were domestic violence organizations, or they're organizations that support women who had been trafficked, and on and on. And I was listening to all of that, and I had that 'aha' moment for myself, because I had been telling her, "You can't do this," and these people were saying to me, "You've got to do this, and you've got to pay attention to the fact that women's lives are being torn asunder, or they're not being allowed to flower, or they're not being allowed to evolve, or there's so much out there that you don't know about, that you really ought to be about, and help and support." And so it hurt me to my heart that I wasn't at the forefront of that, because I said I was an unruly woman, but I also am a victim of being a 65 year old woman who traditionally feels-

Queen Latifah:

65?

Rynthia Rost:

65. But anyway, I mean, so decisions are being made by people other than us, because we have not had the courage. I did not have the courage to get out there and do that.

Queen Latifah:

Well, let me ask you-

Rynthia Rost:

And now I have to.

Queen Latifah:

You're saying your daughter was telling her story.

Rynthia Rost:

Yes.

Queen Latifah:

Is she telling her story?

Rynthia Rost:

She is telling.

Queen Latifah:

Is this a story that you knew about, or did you not?

Rynthia Rost:

I did not. I did not know it. And that is something that's happening, too. I mean people were at the office, at GEICO, were telling me stories. People are living amongst us who have stories, and we don't know these stories. We don't know that they're living in their cars. We don't know that... The makeup... They said they had an accident and bruised their leg, when in fact they were kicked in their legs. We don't know.

Queen Latifah:

I know you can speak to a lot of this, because I'm familiar with a lot of this happening on many reservations.

Chief G. Anne Richardson:

Yes.

Queen Latifah:

A lot of issues of domestic violence.

Chief G. Anne Richardson:

And the story is so important. And you talked about you being the rebellious 14 year old, and now you have bred a daughter who is like you.

Rynthia Rost:  
Go figure.

Chief G. Anne Richardson:  
Leave her alone.

Rynthia Rost:  
Okay.

Chief G. Anne Richardson:  
She's trailing a blaze that others are coming behind her with. And that's how we break that glass ceiling.

Queen Latifah:  
That's how you do it. And Monica, I know you faced a lot. I mean I just read sometimes about women in service, and some of the things that they've had to deal with. Many... Surprisingly, a lot of men are very supportive of women in the service, in the military. But you also run into a lot of people who are not, or just really knuckleheads. So what are some of the things you may have dealt with, or how do you see things changing?

Sgt. Monica Beltran:  
Well, now I do see a lot more females being in leadership positions, which I feel like that's much of an improvement. The fact that people like me, a lot of us, we talk to our younger soldiers coming in, and we preach about that standing up, and be that movement to become someone. And having the military be that experience and opportunity to get you to where you need to be. That, and very appreciative of the men that actually do support that.

Queen Latifah:  
So drop and give me 50. More women like her, that is. Well, thank you so much. It's been a great pleasure and an honor to have all of you here. What can I say? Give it up for them, ladies.

Awesome. Great job, I hope you didn't feel too nervous.

Keep it, if you like it. It's your cup.

Thank you, Chief. Thank you so much. All the best.

Thank you, Connie. Thank you. See you on the track.

Now you messing with me. Fever. Didn't she sound so beautiful? I just wanted to keep going. All right. Our next story slam proves that the best opportunities are often those we make ourselves. Please welcome Carrienne Polo.

## **Story Slam**

### **Carrienne Polo, entrepreneur and founder of New Park Creative**

Carrienne Polo:

At the age of 21, I was going to college, and had my first full time job doing graphic design and animation for a local TV station. I would work overnight producing graphics for the morning news, then leave and go to school during the day. I was working and networking in the city, and I had started to pick up some freelance gigs on the side.

Now the work I was doing in my freelance gigs, and the work I was doing in school was much more creative and flexible than my full time job. I knew I was meant for bigger and better things, so at 23 and much to my mother's dismay, I quit my full time job to pursue freelancing. Thank you.

I immediately started to build a client base. I was hired by a production company to do video editing and graphic design for a series of full page ads that were to run in the Sunday New York Times. I felt so proud to be working on such high profile projects at such a young age. One day I'm in the office, and I overhear a male freelancer on the phone with his friend. He says, "Yeah, this gig is pretty sweet and they're paying me X amount to do these videos." I thought, "Oh my goodness, this guy is getting paid nearly double what I am, and for the same work." I was just as good, if not better than he was at the work that we were doing.

I was so mad at the production company for paying me so little, but more upset with myself. I should have asked for more. I should have set a rate that valued my talent and capability. I Googled how to negotiate a rate increase and set a meeting with the owner during the negotiation. He says to me, "You should be happy with the work that you're getting, because some designers go their whole career without getting an ad in the New York Times." I thought, "Buddy, you have no idea what I am capable of, and nobody sets the expectation for what I will accomplish in my career but me. Just wait and see what I'm going to do." I said nothing.

I negotiated a fair rate, and we continued to do really great work together. I went on to contract for several large agencies and Fortune 500 brands. I edited video for PepsiCo North America, designed sales materials for Philips Sonicare. I jumped at any opportunity to get into a creative meeting, or to get my hands on a proposal so I could see what it looked like and how it worked. I was producing the creative that the company would mark up and sell to its client. I realized there was nothing that these agencies were doing that I couldn't do myself. I knew I could be successful if I started my own company, and that's exactly what I did.

It gets better. So early on, we had a big project come in. We had to produce 86 videos for our client, and I knew I needed to hire a studio that I could trust. So I ended up hiring that same production company that I had freelanced for, except this time they were the subcontractor negotiating their rate with me.

I felt like such a boss in that moment, but it was also really validating to know that I was doing things right. In the last five years, I graduated college, got married, bought a home and had two kids. All while continuing to grow my career. I'm now 32, and I own a successful marketing agency, New Park Creative. We help organizations... Thank you.

We help organizations grow by developing their brand and marketing strategy. I hire talented creatives, and I pay them fairly. I mentor young women to set higher expectations for what they can accomplish in their careers. I have learned so many lessons in my journey as a female entrepreneur. That opportunity is something that I need to make for myself. That with success comes failure, and pushing through those moments of weakness and self-doubt are where I grow. I learned to value myself, and to ask for more. Because I refuse to be paid half as much as the person sitting next to me. Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

Thank you so much Carrienne, for reminding us that we need to stand up for ourselves in what we're worth. You know what I mean? Just what's up Alicia? You just feel like hitting a beat or something? I saw you over there, just miming. You know? I'm talking about what you got. Hey. Hey. All right.

Okay. I see why they stopped playing, because they know I'm a get up and go a little too far with it. I get it. Okay. I'm excited to welcome my next guest. She's an attorney, bestselling author, and anchor for Fox News and Fox Sports. Please give it up for Eboni K. Williams.

### **Coffee Talk**

**Queen Latifah, producer, actor, and musical performer**

**Eboni K. Williams, attorney, best-selling author and television personality**

Eboni K. Williams:

Hi. I'm so excited.

Queen Latifah:

Thank you so much for being here.

Eboni K. Williams:

Can I just fan girl out for two seconds? Ah, it's Queen Latifah. Okay.

Queen Latifah:

Bask in me, bask.

Eboni K. Williams:

We are living, hey, single. Oh we're in the 90s.

Queen Latifah:

Okay. I was with you. I mean, keep your head up.

Well Eboni, you have covered sports and news for Fox. You're on VH1. I mean, you get around. What are you doing now?

Eboni K. Williams:

I do get around, you know what, Queen Latifah, I am actually covering the culture right now, for Revolt TV. So I'm a current cohost on State of the Culture, with Joe Budden and Remy Ma and Jinx, and it's so fun. And I would be remiss in this moment, talking about culture, to not applaud you, Queen Sister, for your award from Harvard University, your W.E.B Du Bois medal for advancing the culture.

Queen Latifah:

Thank you.

Eboni K. Williams:

But I'm talking about the culture, and I'm having so much fun doing it, because our chairman of Revolt, Mr. Sean Diddy Combs, he's really taken a mandate.

Queen Latifah:

Who, Puff?

Eboni K. Williams:

Who, Puff? Diddy.

Queen Latifah:

It's his birthday. Birthday time for Puff.

Eboni K. Williams:

Yeah. But so you know, throughout his career he's been an icon of culture as well, like yourself. And what I appreciate about Mr. Combs is, he has taken the definition of culture, and he's working to expand it. So he's saying that yes, Revolt started as a music channel, a network. But you know what, the culture is so much more than just music. It's also politics. It's also women's empowerment.

Queen Latifah:

Absolutely.

Eboni K. Williams:

It's also fashion and beauty. It's also social justice, which is particularly where my capacity as an attorney has really come in handy on State of the Culture and what we talk about.

Queen Latifah:

I think that's awesome.

Eboni K. Williams:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

And I love that and I appreciate that.

Eboni K. Williams:

Yeah.

Queen Latifah:

Wow. An author and an attorney. I mean, how do you find that time for things like life?

Eboni K. Williams:

Like life? Well you know, I'm such a natural born geek that it's so...

Queen Latifah:

Me too.

Eboni K. Williams:

Right. So it's in alignment with what I enjoy on my free time. Like my Uber rides with my homegirls are essentially a debate forum. It's the same. It's really the same thing. So it's something that I enjoy, and that's how I actually got into this career. A lot of people ask me, how do you go from trying cases in a courtroom, which I did for seven years, really close by in the state of North Carolina. Any North Carolinians in the room tonight? Yes. I graduated from UNC Chapel Hill. I grew up in Charlotte. I was a public defender in Mecklenburg County, and then I was in private practice in Durham, Raleigh, and in Charlotte. So from there, how does one-

But from there, essentially, I wanted to be amplified. I wanted to be amplified. The issues that I was speaking about every day, whether it was a police brutality, whether it was judicial review, whether it was... Just all of these, how we talk about probation in this country, how we talk about criminal justice reform, juvenile justice in this country. I wanted a bigger microphone. So nothing felt quicker to that end than working in mass media. So I took my talent, I went to Los Angeles, didn't know a soul, started in talk radio, actually. And then from there, the career in media and television kind of just snowballed through a lot of happy accidents.

But I say that to say this, what's really important is that you find out what your gifts are. And I did an inventory, because I didn't really know, like you said, it was all over the place. I'm doing law, I'm writing books, I'm doing all this stuff.

And I said, "You know Eboni, what are your spiritual gifts? What are the things that God has just most ornately given you organically, that you do more natural than breathing?" And that's a good question. And so, how do you find this out? So I picked five trusted souls. For me, this was my mother. This was my best friend of 25 years, a best friend of 20 years, and just two other mentors I had in the space. And I say, "I want you all to write down five things that you think I do better than anybody else you know?" And they did that. And then I took the compilation, and I started looking for the crossover.

Queen Latifah:

That's a great idea. I've never heard that before.

Eboni K. Williams:

Where are people saying I do the same thing over and over? And for me, this is going to shock all of y'all, it was talking.

Queen Latifah:

I was going to save you a couple minutes, but I mean, she's running through all my questions. She's just running away with this interview, from me.

Eboni K. Williams:

I'm sorry.

Queen Latifah:

No, but talking.

Eboni K. Williams:

But talking, right? I was the kid in the class that it didn't matter where the teacher sent me, I was just going to run whoever's ear beside me off. But instead of... Seriously though, how do I turn that into a gift? How do I turn that into something, frankly, profitable? And that's really what I did. I was able to kind of look and see-

Queen Latifah:

Didn't we just talk about taking those skills and commodifying...

Eboni K. Williams:

Listen.

Queen Latifah:

Or monetizing.

Eboni K. Williams:

Making it rain.

Queen Latifah:

Making them money at it.

Eboni K. Williams:

Right. Grabbing the bag.

Queen Latifah:

That's right. Getting the bag.

Eboni K. Williams:

Yeah. So that's what I did. That's how I turned from trial attorney to now broadcast personality, is I really just looked and saw. I wake up in the morning, Queen, talking and thinking. I go to... I can't sleep at night, because I'm thinking about how do we solve these problems? How do I use my gifts to infiltrate a real problematic criminal justice system in this country. And my ability to do that every day is my gift. And they paid me to do it, so it's amazing. It's amazing.

Queen Latifah:

There we go. Tell me a little bit about that. Because justice reform is really, really important.

Eboni K. Williams:

Oh my God.

Queen Latifah:

I mean, it's a mess. The whole system is a mess.

Eboni K. Williams:

It is.

Queen Latifah:

And it's disproportionately affected a lot of us.

Eboni K. Williams:

Folks that look just like us. Absolutely.

Queen Latifah:

But now it's being talked about, and now there's some potential for some change. And now a lot of people smoking a lot of weed, and not going to jail for it.

Eboni K. Williams:

And actually making money off of it.

Queen Latifah:

Exactly.

Eboni K. Williams:

The green rush is real.

Queen Latifah:

The green rush is real. But we have a lot of people that spent a lot of time in jail because of it. So I mean we... I don't want to get into a whole criminal justice thing, but...

Eboni K. Williams:

I think we should.

Queen Latifah:

But what, if you could quickly just dive into a little bit of what might be at the top of your list of things that we can affect some change on.

Eboni K. Williams:

Absolutely. So there's been a lot of questions, and I think this is really important, actually Queen Latifah, because you're right. The fact is, now we've got lobbyists and law makers and kind of the establishment, the political and economic establishment of our country, pun intended, green-lighting cannabis as an industry, of legitimacy. And for years, for entire generations, it's been criminalized. And it's been the direct cause, I know this because I worked as a criminal defense lawyer, I know exactly. I've stood beside young men and women who, because of what was then against the law, which is now concurrent with the law, isn't that interesting, separated from their families, broken homes, broken legacies, generational trauma. So some of the conversation I've been hearing with colleagues of mine in the space is about reparations. Reparations of a sort.

Now I personally take a different position. It's different only semantically. I think there's a, as my grandmother would say, more than one way to skin a cat. So some of the conversation is, they want a direct address from the government that says, "We wronged you in this capacity. Here's either a check, or here are jobs, or here is some offering to make it right." Personally, my experience with government, Queen, is I'm not going to wait on the government to make it right for me.

Queen Latifah:

Wow.

Eboni K. Williams:

That's just me.

Queen Latifah:

Unless the women are running it, because clearly, as Mark Warner said, we got to get it done.

Eboni K. Williams:

We got to. Typically, we do. So I like to go at another way. This is the opportunity. Just like the gold rush, just like some other capacities. This is an opportunity for young folks, for all folks of color, for women, to go into this space of entrepreneurship as it relates to this industry. Because it's not going to come back a second time.

Queen Latifah:

No, it's not.

Eboni K. Williams:

This is the moment. So I think for all of those that are looking for some sense of justice, as it relates to how we as a people and as a community have been wronged, as it relates to cannabis and marijuana and weed, whatever you want to call it, make it up on the front end. Instead of waiting for back end return that says we're going to be retroactive in how we address your

justice, I think this is an opportunity for us to be proactive. And now say, "Okay, well while you're waiting on that, I'm going to get it on the front end and be a business owner, be an industry leader in an industry that was closed off to me and mine for a generation" That's what I would advise.

Queen Latifah:  
The MySpace of marijuana.

Eboni K. Williams:  
That's right. And take up all the space. Take it all up.

Queen Latifah:  
Yeah.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Yeah.

Queen Latifah:  
Absolutely. I agree. I'm doing it myself, so...

Eboni K. Williams:  
You, Whoopi Goldberg, I mean, seriously, a lot of faces. I mean that's... I have my own investment. And I'm not even... That's not really my thing, but guess what is? Money.

Queen Latifah:  
I'm an entrepreneur. Exactly.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Hello.

Queen Latifah:  
It's just entrepreneurship.

Eboni K. Williams:  
It's entrepreneurship.

Queen Latifah:  
You've talked a lot about your mom, and again, we have many mentees and mentors here today, and that your mom was very, very instrumental in mentoring you. Tell me a little bit more about that.

Eboni K. Williams:  
So my mother, she's a hero, right? I'm an imperfect hero, but a hero. My mother was born in 1960, in Southeast Louisiana. So she grew up in a completely segregated American South. My

mother, who is a young woman, my mother is not even 60, she's 59. Did not go to school with a white person until her senior year of high school. So she had a very different experience.

Queen Latifah:

She's like, "What is that?"

Eboni K. Williams:

Yeah, she like, "Say what?" A very different experience than me. Nor was she able to finish her formal education. What she did was end up putting herself through beauty school, and do some other things as an entrepreneur.

So she modeled that for me, because she always said, "You know, Eb, nobody's going to pay you as much as you going to pay you." And so I took that lesson to heart. So that's one way she modeled for me. Another thing she did was, she was less about instruction and more like, I'm using this word, modeling. She just led by doing. And as somebody who's a sponge, I just soak it up and watch. Most of what I learned, both what to do and what not to do. You know, she's an imperfect human. So some of the things I saw, missteps, I was able to sit back and say, "Okay, I'm going to be able to do that differently."

But the most important thing she imparted upon me was education. So because she didn't have that formalized education, when she would go into banks to get loans for financial, I mean for residential or commercial spaces, she ran up against a lot of obstacles. Because as a young, single, black mother from the South-

Queen Latifah:

This sounds like my mother.

Eboni K. Williams:

Right, right.

Queen Latifah:

You're about to say what I think you're going to say.

Eboni K. Williams:

Right. They never saw her as credible.

Queen Latifah:

There it is.

Eboni K. Williams:

Right. They never saw her as a good investment. Think about how deep that is. When you walk into a space to fuel your dream, and you're a proven product of winning, but just by virtue of how you show up in the space, female, of color, single mother, you are deemed to be a poor investment. Deep, right? So for me, she wanted it to be different. She said, "Now I can't help you

with being black and of the South, because that is what it is. Matter of fact, I'm going to give you off a good measure. I'm going to name you Eboni."

Queen Latifah:  
I know.

Eboni K. Williams:  
All right, Gloria. All right,

Queen Latifah:  
You're going to rubber stamp that.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Right, right, right. Take it to the bank. But what she did though, Queen, and I'm so grateful, is she made sure that I was so focused on education. So I was like... I talk about that geek thing, I'm being serious. At Christmas, yes, I would get Cabbage Patch Dolls, and black Barbies and all this, but I would also get books on Frederick Douglas, books on Fannie Lou Hamer, books on Eldridge Cleaver. From third grade on up, so I understood my people's stories, so no one would ever be able to tell it to me.

Queen Latifah:  
Right.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Okay. So I knew that-

Queen Latifah:  
Sounds familiar.

Eboni K. Williams:  
I knew, right? I knew that, and I knew who I was, so that when I go into these spaces, whether that's a school or law school eventually, or a courtroom, or now a broadcast studio, I know who I am, and I know my full worth because it was taught to me at such a young age. So for that, I'm eternally grateful. She taught me who I was.

Queen Latifah:  
Wow.

Eboni K. Williams:  
And that's the most important thing I think you can do for a young person.

Queen Latifah:  
Thank God for the moms.

Eboni K. Williams:

Thank God for Gloria

Queen Latifah:

So what does it mean to you to be a mentor?

Eboni K. Williams:

It means everything, right? Like what am I in this space for? What am I blessed to be in this space for? If I'm not paying it forward 10 times over? If it's just about me and my story and my success, I might as well not be here, is the way I really do feel about it. Legacies is important.

Queen Latifah:

Where does that come from? Does that come from what you've learned in your history? Does it come from your mom's story? Your life?

Eboni K. Williams:

It comes from our people's story. Like we are a people of legacy. And when I say 'our people,' of course I'm talking about people of color, but I'm talking about greater humanity. Humanity is a story of legacy and connection. So maybe because I'm an only child too, Queen, so I grew up with no siblings.

Queen Latifah:

That's why you talk a lot.

Eboni K. Williams:

That is why.

Queen Latifah:

You right, you had to spend a little time with the several you's. I understand.

Eboni K. Williams:

It's true. I talked to myself.

Queen Latifah:

It makes you very imaginative. You got to make up a couple more buddies. I get it.

Eboni K. Williams:

There's a lot of characters in here.

Queen Latifah:

I totally get it.

Eboni K. Williams:

You got it. That's right. So growing up as an only child, I really... The legacy thing didn't make sense to me till I got older. I just celebrated my 36th birthday. Is this one of my friends?

Queen Latifah:  
In case you need a friend.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Can I sit my friend down?

Queen Latifah:  
No, give it back.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Oh, okay.

Queen Latifah:  
My friend. My friend. I'm selfish.

Eboni K. Williams:  
No, that's not selfish. No, so legacy was important. So yeah, talking to young people, but young women in particular, like I said, with State of the Culture. So I was just backstage emailing, during your last panel, a young lady. Every Friday we tape. We tape on Fridays, we air on Mondays. Every Friday we tape, I invite a young lady to come with me. So while I'm in hair and makeup, she can pick my brain, ask me questions about my experience, about the rundown of the show, about whatever she wants. You know, you get two hours to just ask whatever you want of my experience. Then she gets to watch the live taping of a national produced show, which is pretty cool, and see how the sausage is made. Because I'm sure you experienced this too, Queen, everybody wants to be in the business, right?

Queen Latifah:  
But just don't want to see how the sausage is made.

Eboni K. Williams:  
But they don't want to see how the sausage is made.

Queen Latifah:  
I do want to eat the sausage.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Right. But I want people, I want to do them a favor and I want to show him what the sausage looks like.

Queen Latifah:  
Hit the nitty gritty.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Correct. Before you commit to this process, because it's a process, and I speak a lot about process, because the process cannot be bypassed.

Queen Latifah:  
Nope.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Okay. And if you try to bypass it, I promise you, in a good way, it will catch up with you.

So I invite these young ladies every Friday to come and bear witness with me. The Revolt team is going to Los Angeles in two weeks. We're doing the Revolt Summit in LA. And one of the things I asked my content producer to do is office hours.

Queen Latifah:  
Right.

Eboni K. Williams:  
So I'm going to set up a stage, much like this one, for the Revolt Summit attendees, where it's going to be 10 minutes with me. And young creatives from all over the country who have come into this summit can ask me whatever they want about their content creation, about their management, about their finances, about their educational pursuits alongside their content. It's just who I am.

Queen Latifah:  
So you're going to have to text them and let them know to bring their voice memos for their phones, because this is going to be a lot of information that you can deliver in 10 minutes.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Oh, yes. And don't... Right.

Queen Latifah:  
That will be very useful.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Make it pithy.

Queen Latifah:  
That will be very, very useful for them.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Yes.

Queen Latifah:  
I think that's awesome. It's very important to give back, and it's very important to talk about the process.

Queen Latifah:

That's awesome. It's very important to give back, and it's very important to talk about the process. You're right. Because a lot of us are... Well, I didn't have the advantage of going to college for what I became, so there were a few missed steps and that we kind of paid hard.

Eboni K. Williams:  
We learned the hard way.

Queen Latifah:  
We learned the hard way. We learned the hard way. We had to educate ourselves through the process. And so, it may have taken us a little bit longer than we wanted to on certain things, but we learned.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Absolutely.

Queen Latifah:  
So, anytime that you can be spared that, and kind of get straight to it and know what you're in for is much, much better.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Yeah. Yeah.

Queen Latifah:  
You have been a public defender, you've seen some of the worst in society. Everyone who you defend is not innocent, so-

Eboni K. Williams:  
This is this true.

Queen Latifah:  
...you've had to see some, but deserve to be represented.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Representation. Of course.

Queen Latifah:  
This is law. Having seen some of the worst in people, what do you suggest is the best way we go about bringing out the best in young people, particularly?

Eboni K. Williams:  
Right. When you're talk about rehabilitation, and it's supposed to be one of the stated goals of our justice system-

Queen Latifah:  
When it was that, it was okay.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Yeah. Supposed to be.

Queen Latifah:  
It's not that. Right.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Sadly, we have shifted. You're exactly right.

Queen Latifah:  
To just incarceration.

Eboni K. Williams:  
We have shifted to just incarceration and just punishment. So, it's supposed to be twofold. It's supposed to be punitive and restorative. Ever heard that term? Restorative justice? That's where it comes from. We're supposed to be pouring in something to these folks who are serving their time, so that when they cycle back out, and most of them will, they can be law abiding, tax paying, community supportive individuals. Okay?

Queen Latifah:  
Who can vote.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Who can vote. And all of that, regain their humanity, regain their place in society, and do it differently. Right? Do it differently because guess what makes a safer environment and safer community? Guess what makes a broader tax base and... Excuse me, economic foundation for our country, is rehabilitating these individuals. Of course it does. Of course it does. But instead, we have lost that direction, for the most part, and we are strictly punitive. We are for for-profit prisons. It's a hustling backwards mentality. And I say it's hustling backwards because the short term says, "We'll make a lot of money by incarcerating these people in these for-profit spaces, but how much money are we losing on the back end of that?" Who's thinking about that? I want to just give that to everybody.

Queen Latifah:  
Well, I think that, once again, goes to something someone asked me earlier, what are we afraid of? What are we so afraid of? What is the worst that could happen if we all got together and moved forward rather than gripped on to everything behind us, that we actually move forward? And you didn't have to hold your hand up because-

Eboni K. Williams:  
Teacher?

Queen Latifah:  
...you're allowed to answer whenever. Let's see here. Eboni?

Eboni K. Williams:

Both hands. You know what? It's a powerful question. You know what people are afraid of? That there's not enough. Any Brené Brown readers in the room? So, Dr... Yes. So, Brené Brown talks a lot about this, the notion of scarcity. And people are afraid that if they support people and they do all this greatness that you're speaking about, that they give people opportunity, that we put people in position to win and be successful in mass, that there won't be enough to go around. That's what they're afraid of. But here's the thing, I'm not going to preach up in here today, but I'm a believer. And if you are a believer, and a lot of these people that are talking about that... That's okay, you can applaud that. My faith tells me that God is of abundance. My faith tells me that. My faith tells me that. My faith tells me He's not a cheap, stingy, or broke God.

Queen Latifah:

Right.

Eboni K. Williams:

So, if we believe this, Queen, and I say we because that's the kind of foundation of our country-

Queen Latifah:

Sound like you about to preach. Come on now. Come on. Come on now.

Eboni K. Williams:

If we believe this, then that fear is misplaced. That's all. If we really, deep in our core, believe in abundance and believe in enough, then we are not afraid of rehabilitating anybody. We are not afraid of supporting anybody. We are not afraid of educating anybody, because we believe there's really enough. Because I believe it's enough. That's why I'm all about bringing young people, young... My mom, bless glory. I love my mom. She's imperfect. So, she says, "Why are you bringing all those young girls up in there to take your job?" That's what she said? I'm sure you've heard something similar before, right?

Queen Latifah:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Of course.

Eboni K. Williams:

And I said, "You know, mom..." And I say this humbly, "They can't take my job."

Queen Latifah:

I was about to say, they can't take...

Eboni K. Williams:

They can't take my... because it's for you.

Queen Latifah:

... for you.

Eboni K. Williams:  
You.

Queen Latifah:  
You.

Eboni K. Williams:  
You.

Queen Latifah:  
You. You feel me? You. You.

Eboni K. Williams:  
There you go. Now watch me you... Okay.

Queen Latifah:  
Right.

Eboni K. Williams:  
So, that's it. And that just goes back to the abundance. It's so much to go around. We need so much representation in these spaces. Come on, sis.

Queen Latifah:  
I mean, if you just think about how much food is wasted and how many billions pounds of food that goes in the garbage just because it wasn't used that day, I mean, there's so many companies now that are being created to supply people with food.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Absolutely.

Queen Latifah:  
Perfectly fine food. Wait, there's just a little smudge on that orange? So, we're going to throw that perfectly fine orange away? No. So, luckily, there are a lot of... And she's clapping because she's probably familiar with this, but there are a lot of companies that are being formed now that are going to make sure they supply food that is imperfect to people who need it.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Yep.

Queen Latifah:  
Because we need it. What a waste.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Absolutely. Wow.

Queen Latifah:

This has been quite incredible. I mean, I think you are something special. You have done so many different things. The question I have for you now is, how do you know when it's time to do something different? I mean, is it just a spark that comes in your mind? Or are you inspired in some sort of way by a person? Or do you see something out there that says, "Okay, it's time to move from this into something else. I see something else I need to do"?

Eboni K. Williams:

So, for me, Queen, it's very spiritual, and I do this thing where I'll put my hand over my heart and I check... I call it a check-in. I check-in... No, right, sis. I check-in with myself, and I say, "Okay, E..." That's what I call myself. That's one of my names that I call myself.

Queen Latifah:

E Boogie.

Eboni K. Williams:

E Boogie. EBZ, let me check-in.

Queen Latifah:

There we go.

Eboni K. Williams:

And I say, "Does this serve me? Does this serve me? Does this serve those spiritual gifts I spoke about in beginning of our conversation?" And I'll give you by example. I don't want anyone to lose their job over this, but in my intro we had talked about me being a host at Fox News and Fox Sports. I'm no longer there. Right? Anybody familiar with my career knows that I left the network. I actually asked to be released from my contract early. I walked away with about six months on my deal, and frankly, several hundred thousand dollars.

Queen Latifah:

I was about to say and some paper.

Eboni K. Williams:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Queen Latifah:

And some paper.

Eboni K. Williams:

And I'm not like rolling in the dough to where that don't matter. It does matter, but it wasn't serving my spirit anymore.

Queen Latifah:

Right.

Eboni K. Williams:

And I went to the network very specific intention. It was really to change the hearts and minds of those that make up my jury pool very specifically, because it matters what these jurors think of us, their ability to see our humanity. Right? Okay. So, I won't preach again. Y'all know what I'm talking about. So, I went there for that, and for four years I was able to make some movement around it. Not as much as I would like, but some. And then, it got to the place where I was stuck. I couldn't make any more movement, y'all.

And when that came, to answer your question directly, that's when I knew it was time to do something different. And so, what that difference looks like, one of the things in my career that I have reputation for is my versatility. So, it doesn't matter if it's politics, if it's justice, if it's makeup and fashion, if it is what the baby's releasing or Lil' Kim's new CD, I can talk about it all. And while that's very much a blessing, at times, it's been a challenge. So, if I can break the rules and ask you a question-

Queen Latifah:

Uh-oh.

Eboni K. Williams:

For-

Queen Latifah:

So, now you're going to ask me questions. All right. I'm insured against this question.

Eboni K. Williams:

Okay. So, we were mostly introduced to you as the preeminent female MC, right? Okay. I'll speak for myself. My generation was introduced to you as an actress, great sit-com television, all this. Then all of a sudden, you go and do a full feature film and get an Oscar nomination, for God's sakes, in Chicago. Then, of course, you spend several years on daytime television with The Queen Latifah show. And now, amongst other things that you do, you're actually in real estate and philanthropy, you're developing entire communities. So, I want to ask you, as a woman who made a whole career, full career out, of not being what I call a slot receiver, you are somebody who insist upon the industry accepting you in the capacity in which you assert yourself. Whether that is as a rapper, as a music artist, as an actress, as a host, and now in this space you're in now, we can see the benefits of that. I would love to know what the challenges of that have been for you. Have people pushed back on that?

Queen Latifah:

I'm dizzy.

Eboni K. Williams:

Yeah.

Queen Latifah:

That's generally the challenge. What are the challenges of that?

Eboni K. Williams:

I mean, I'm really asking because I'm curious because it's going to inform kind of how I make moves. Because I know when you're successful in a space-

Queen Latifah:

Now that I got to charge you for.

Eboni K. Williams:

Okay. I just told y'all, I have no money, Queen.

Queen Latifah:

For a nominal 20% commission-

Eboni K. Williams:

No!

Queen Latifah:

... I can help you move your career... No, I'm just playing.

Eboni K. Williams:

We can talk about that. But yeah, like I know sometimes when you find success, your team even, and the people around you, and even maybe you, you're a successful rap star, you're a successful actress, why you want to go do something else? How have you dealt with that?

Queen Latifah:

What's most, I think that spiritual check-in that you have, I don't exactly put my hand... Well, it's more under here. Right? I go under the boob-

Eboni K. Williams:

Queen Latifah.

Queen Latifah:

... and get it directly on the heart.

Eboni K. Williams:

I'm so done.

Queen Latifah:

Yeah. Yeah! Then I tend to get too close to my belly, and I get hungry, but the same neurons that are in here are in here. They're in my gut, so I go with my gut, which comes from God to me. So, for me, when I get the spark of an idea, it won't leave me alone, and now I have to let the people around me know what that idea is. So, it's letting my partner know, it's letting my close friends or family know. Up until recent, it would have been letting my mother know, and it's still letting my mother know. My father. It's letting the people around me know what I'm thinking. Or it's

writing it down or it's just doing it, and then kind of showing everybody just a little peek of what that might be. Or it's a project that's passionate to me.

For instance, there is a book called *The 13 1/2 lives of Captain Blue Bear*. It's a kid's book, teen. It's about 700 and something pages long. I read all the Harry Potter books. Often, I stay at the Four Seasons in Georgetown, and there's a small bookstore right next door to it. And I always go in this bookstore because I love books, and this book happened to be in there. And it became my plane book. So, every time I took my flights from New York to LA, I would read this book until I fell asleep, and I decided to find out who owned this book. And I'm like, "Why not?" So, I had and called my agent and I said, "Who owns this book? I want to option this book. I maybe want to make this book into a film." She found out who owned it. They were German. It took a lot of back and forth, a lot of translation, but I optioned the book, partnered up with the Lisa Henson from the Henson Company. The Muppets. You know them.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Yes, yes.

Queen Latifah:  
We got a treatment for it, and we just sold it to Netflix.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Absolutely.

Queen Latifah:  
So, it may sound like it was a super complicated thing, but it wasn't. It was my 14 year old reading a book that took me on a journey into a world. And I said, "This is a world. It should be created. Kids should see this. We should see this. Maybe I can do this." And that passion led to that. This project you're talking about in Newark, there's a block in my city of Newark, New Jersey, and I was like... Gosh, hey Newark.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Hey, Newark.

Queen Latifah:  
I'm like, "There's way too many abandoned houses on this block. There's a couple of lots on this block. I should get this block. I need to build something on this block. This block could have a view of New York." Anyway, that's how I look at my city. I don't look at my city as the, "What Jersey, what exit?" or mobs or just the Jersey shore. We have a beautiful shore, by the way. But New Jersey is a different state to me than it is to other people, and Newark is a city that I grew up in that had a million people when I was growing up there and not 300,000 people. It was a thriving metropolis, and I wanted to see it become what I know it should be. And so, this block, to me, was waiting for someone to come and give it love.

And there was a woman across the street who grew sunflowers every year on this street. She lived across the street, but there was an empty lot. She was from down south. She would come in

the spring, she would just start growing stuff, and I love that. So, for me, that's the roses that grow from the concrete. That's a metaphor for that. She was a metaphor for that for me. And so, now we're building that project. Finally, after all these years, I finally acquired pretty much the whole block, and we're ready to build in about a month. We're going to start that project.

But none of these things happen by themselves, and they happen by connecting with friends. So, my best friend Tammy is one of my friends who has helped me manage this whole project through these years. I got stuff to do over here, so someone else is helping me over there. And while that's happening over there, some of the irons are in the fire over here. So, when it comes to connecting with people who have strengths where your weaknesses are, that's important. That is very important to move in a business forward... Some people are better at time management than me. I can't act and devote myself fully to a role and run my whole schedule at the same time. No, I need an assistant who can do that for me. And it's not to make me spoiled, it's just that I don't have the time. There's just one me.

Eboni K. Williams:  
One person.

Queen Latifah:  
And if I'm truly going to commit to something and do it right, then I got to give it 100%. So, my acting coach sometimes is literally there not to teach me how to act, but just to separate the me's, to get the Dana out, to get the daughter, the sister, the entrepreneur, to remove Khadijah, get rid of the talk show host, the rapper who wants to... No, no, no. Right now, you are Bessie Smith. You are Bessie. You're Bessie. Be Bessie. Take the seatbelt off. So, I have people that help me, and I think that, as you go on throughout the day, that you may meet someone who will be very helpful to you. And I'm sure you've met people who've been very helpful to you in your career and will continue to do so. So, that being said, what can we do as a collective to elevate each other, to elevate the collective success of women? How can we embrace the sisterhood?

Eboni K. Williams:  
Back on me? Okay.

Queen Latifah:  
Yeah.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Make space for each other. I think that is really my one-liner on sisterhood. When I first started State of the Culture on Revolt, my cohost is the great Remy Ma, and Remy and I come-

Queen Latifah:  
Who, Remy Ma?

Eboni K. Williams:  
Remy Ma.

Queen Latifah:  
Remy! Sorry.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Remy. And Remy and I come from two different worlds. We're two very different women.

Queen Latifah:  
She's smart as a whip, though.

Eboni K. Williams:  
We have two very kindred spirits. And what's interesting is I try not to read the comments. Don't read the comments. But the comments were all this angst about how are these women going to exist, right? How are they going to share space? How are they going to share a stage? And anyone that's seen the show, Queen, that has really been the highest compliment I've received, is I love the both of y'all on there. I love the duality of what womanhood can look like and that we make space for each other's experience. We make space for one another's truth. This is not about me getting you to be like me or Rem trying to get me to be like her, right? We are just making space. Sister, I see you, you see me, and we about to do this because it's important for all the young folks, especially watching, to see us model that. Right? To see us... Because when you think about bullying and online teasing and all... It's because these young girls are not being taught to make space for one another and appreciate each other's uniqueness. Okay?

Queen Latifah:  
And appreciate each other's uniqueness.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Yes, yes, yes. Right. We want to shame and we want to... It's ridiculous in this global... So, to me, that's one of the best things about being alive when we're alive right now, almost 2020 for goodness... That's amazing. We live in a society that has so much space, and I encourage young women and sisters of the sisterhood to take it all up. Don't shrink yourselves, not for a man, definitely not for a man, but not even-

Queen Latifah:  
Not even for a woman.

Eboni K. Williams:  
But not even for another woman. That's right. Seriously. Because I do think some of that has kind of been less than articulated but presumed. I got to let her shine. No, no. You guys can shine in tandem. In fact, the power is in the collective shine. That's the power. And we need to get out of this, my last point on this, Queen, you know I like to talk, we got to get out of this one at a...

Queen Latifah:  
I got it. Oh wait, that's my finger. Damn it.

Eboni K. Williams:

I grew up thinking it could only be one of us at a time. Right? Only one star at a time, at whatever capacity. One judge, one actress, one talk show host, one of the... No.

I was at a talk with Susan Taylor, the great Susan Taylor of Essence Magazine.

Queen Latifah:  
I love Susan Taylor.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Amazing, right? And she spoke about how in fashion there was a designer, Tracy Reese.

Queen Latifah:  
Of course.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Tracy Reese, if you don't know her, Google her. She's fabulous. And for a long time, Tracy was kind of the singular couture, black designer in that space. And sadly, when Tracy shut her doors, at least on Fifth Avenue, the brick and mortar store, there was no one in the space. And Susan's point was, that's what happens when we subscribe to this one at a time mantra. You're vulnerable to leaving the void. So, what we need to do as sisters is encourage one another to take up the space in tandem. I'm very big on tandem. Even when I started segueing into media, Queen, a lot of people told me, "Well, you really should not do that now because we already have all these great queens in the space, from Sunny Hostin to Judge Faith Evans. I'm crossing my worlds up, the culture is getting crisscrossed.

Queen Latifah:  
Judge Jenkins.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Yes, Judge Faith Jenkins. Midwin Charles. I mean, just all these amazing women in the space. Eventually became Angela Ryan, Simone Sanders. But it takes all of us as a tandem village of sisters to do the work needed. And frankly, we could use about 20 more.

Queen Latifah:  
I concur because, God, Angela having to break them all down by herself sometimes-

Eboni K. Williams:  
It's too much for one person.

Queen Latifah:  
Speaking of too much for one person, you've got some audience questions.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Oh, sure.

Queen Latifah:

So, I'm going to throw it over to E Rock over there on the keys.

Eboni K. Williams:

I love this band.

Queen Latifah:

Erin, what do you have from the audience?

Erin Lunsford:

Queen Latifah, you guys. So, I just want to say this is so inspiring to watch you guys. Are you guys inspired right now? Amazing. I could listen to you guys talk all day. So, the audience really wants to talk to you, Eboni. We are overflowing with questions. We'll see how many we can get to. Somebody wants to know, what is the most encouraging thing that you've been told?

Eboni K. Williams:

The most encouraging thing I've been told is that capacity matters. I was told this from my publicist. Queen just spoke about building a team. Two things about me. I'm notoriously cheap, and I am notoriously go-it-alone, right? That's that only child thing in me that says, "I can do it, and I could probably do it better than everybody else." Anybody feel that? Anybody carry that with them? Yeah. It's not going to get us too far. It's not. So, eventually, I succumb and I start working with this incredible team. And so, my publicist says to me... In a big part of it, I know you all are here today because we also subscribe to the power of networking and being in the room, right? But my publicist taught me an important lesson. She says, "The capacity in which you are in the room also matters."

At some point in your career, at some point in all of y'all's journey, you need be mindful of the capacity in which you are entering space, and you don't want, and this is a little deep, you don't want to just be in the room at some point just for the sake of it, right? You want to be in the room in a very particular capacity that is advancing, not just your mission, but the mission of the energies around you. So, insist upon it because, oftentimes, folks are not going to give you your proper capacity. They're just not. Like you know a little something about it, Queen Latifah. Right?

Queen Latifah:

Positioning is everything.

Eboni K. Williams:

Positioning is everything.

Queen Latifah:

P.I.E.

Eboni K. Williams:

I never heard of that, but I'm going to take it. Thank you. Positioning is everything though, y'all, and it took me a minute to accept this. I'm also a very humble person, so I'm very much like tuck my tail between my legs and just put my head down and do the work and keep doing that. And I still do that, but I have had to accept the truth that the positioning is everything and that the capacity does matter.

Erin Lunsford:

Amazing answer. Thank you. Okay, this one's kind of a quick question. Is there any other profession you want to attempt?

Eboni K. Williams:

Yes.

Queen Latifah:

Can't wait to hear this. Or professions.

Eboni K. Williams:

Professions. I would love to be a professor. I would love to be a professor.

Queen Latifah:

Wow, that'd be great.

Eboni K. Williams:

I would love-

Erin Lunsford:

I would take your class.

Eboni K. Williams:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

Professor of-

Eboni K. Williams:

Professor of... If I had not gone to law school, I was actually going to pursue my PhD in African and African American studies, which is what my undergraduate is in, is in Comm and Af-Am studies, so I would love to go back to a different world. That's just me, I think, in my older age, right? I would love to be a professor because I believe in education. It changed my life. I'm a proud first generation college graduate. And yeah, and again, my mom Gloria just pounded, pounded, pounded the pavement so that I can have this opportunity to impart generational change for my family's bloodline and my family's legacy. And it's made a world of difference. That credibility part we talked about earlier, Queen, I'm not a lawyer because it sounds good or it looks good. I'm a lawyer because I represent being the voice of the voiceless.

But I'm going to tell you how it's helped me when I walk into these rooms we're talking about, I am deemed credible on site. So, when I talk to young people and they talk about, "Should I go to law school," or, "Should I go to MBA school?" Or, "Should I get this..." It's not about the degrees, right? It's not about the paper. But there is something to be said, especially when you are a woman, and your credibility is in question at all times. Okay? Because I'm exhausted with how many times I have to walk into spaces and let folks know who I am. Okay?

Queen Latifah:

I can see that myself, and it's enjoyable.

Eboni K. Williams:

Yeah. But in all sincerity, that piece of the educational component is very helpful, so I encourage young people to pursue it. So, yes, Professor Eboni K. Williams.

Erin Lunsford:

All right, I think we've got time for one more question. It's a sports question.

Eboni K. Williams:

Yay!

Erin Lunsford:

So, do you think we will ever see a woman in the NFL?

Queen Latifah:

In what capacity?

Eboni K. Williams:

There you go. Thank you co-council.

Erin Lunsford:

Maybe any capacity. I don't know.

Eboni K. Williams:

Well, it's an interesting question in this moment, right? Capacity, though, matters, because my first thought when you asked the question, love, was I was going to say, "I think we definitely will see an NFL commissioner in my lifetime." Right? I think we're getting there. When you start looking behind the scenes at the NFL, you're seeing women rising in the executive space. When think about on the field, the only real conversation we've had about that thus far is that the kicker position.

Queen Latifah:

Kicker.

Eboni K. Williams:

Right. And I believe there's a young woman right now who's seriously training and doing all that. I think if the sister wants it, and she can hang, I say more power to her. I would love to see it as long as she's protected and she's safe in the capacity and in the space. Because I'm a woman that loves football. I really do.

Queen Latifah:  
Safe in the capacity on the field?

Eboni K. Williams:  
Well, because she's a kicker. She's the kicker, though, right?

Queen Latifah:  
Yeah. But she's going to have to take it because...

Eboni K. Williams:  
I know, that why I said she can take it.

Queen Latifah:  
Yeah, because-

Eboni K. Williams:  
You got to be able to take it.

Queen Latifah:  
You know how it goes when they get to you before you kick it.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Right. And they're coming fast. They coming fast. I would be slightly concerned for her in that way. But it's a lot of different kind of women out here. Yeah. We built different. So, sure. Anything that she can do and wants to do, I totally support.

Queen Latifah:  
I'd like to see a woman on the line. That'd be fun.

Eboni K. Williams:  
All women don't have the same body type, so I don't see why not. If she's literally built for it, let's make it happen. So, absolutely. That's great. Can I have one more?

Erin Lunsford:  
Do we have time for one more? Sure. All right.

Eboni K. Williams:  
Last one. I promise.

Queen Latifah:

Please let it be another sports question.

Erin Lunsford:

Let's see.

Queen Latifah:

It's deep. It's deep. I feel like...

Erin Lunsford:

Oh, I like this one. Okay. Of all your careers, what did you enjoy the most?

Eboni K. Williams:

Toss up between being a public defender... I loved that. Ooh, I loved that. I love going to my office, having a sack of 200 files, and then just going and get it, because there's no like... You don't even have time to think. You just got to go. But also, the career I'm having right now because I'm here with you lovely people. Like seriously. This is my favorite thing to connect. Being on TV is cool. Being in radio is cool. Writing the books is cool, but this in-person energy exchange is a blessing because as much as I hope I'm pouring into y'all, just know you're pouring into me. And you have poured into me today, so thank you.

Queen Latifah:

You have poured into me today. My spirit is lifted. Thank you so much.

Eboni K. Williams:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

Thank you so much, Eboni. Thank you, everyone. Please go enjoy an amazing lunch expo where you will sample food from all across Virginia. It is lunchtime. You've been a great morning, and we will see you back here at 1:00 PM. That's not 1:00 AM. Don't take no naps after lunch. That was awesome.

Queen Latifah:

Welcome back! Come on, girl. Keep on giving it up for this band. They have been rocking all day! All day! Just rocking. I think there are more of you in this room than there were before. I'm almost positive. I don't know who snuck in here. You snuck in the right place.

Well, I hope y'all enjoyed that time together and the many cuisines of Virginia. And if you enjoyed that, you'll love the Virginia Customs, Culture, and Cuisine celebration in the month of November, so you can come on back and enjoy it again if you'd like. But even more.

**Women, Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

**Queen Latifah, producer, actor, and musical performer**

**Jay Ell C. Alexander, CEO, The Vaughn Strategy and Black Girls RUN!**  
**Shannon Siriano, Founder, Rebelle Con and the Rebelle Community**

Queen Latifah:

Let's get going onto our next mash up. Two women who have forged very exciting careers are innovators and entrepreneurs. Our first guest is the CEO of Vaughn Strategy and Black Girls Run. It's an organization that has changed the lives of girls across the country. Please welcome Jay Ell Alexander, and joining Jay Ell is the founder of Rebelle Community and RebelleCon, a boutique conference experience which brings female founders and female leaders together to talk about real life. Please welcome Jay Ell Alexander and Shannon Siriano.

I made it through that!

Shannon Siriano:

Thank you. You did great.

Queen Latifah:

You!

Shannon Siriano:

I really like walk-on music. I mean...

Queen Latifah:

I just don't want it to end! I don't like when my walk-on music ends.

Shannon Siriano:

Yeah.

Queen Latifah:

Anyway... because the song is still playing in my head. That's the problem. You know? Now, ladies, you may know that I wrote a book called Ladies First: Revelations of a Strong Woman, and I think it's fair to say that you two are strong women. But enough about me and my amazing book, how many copies have sold, the fact that it's still available, even has an audio version...

Jay Ell Alexander:

Just throw that in.

Queen Latifah:

But let's start with you, Shannon. In 2017, you started RebelleCon. Tell us about it, and of course, the power of female leaders in today's world.

Shannon Siriano:

Yeah. Well, RebelleCon is a conference for women, and actually, our next one is this coming weekend.

Queen Latifah:  
Oh, great.

Shannon Siriano:  
In a couple days. But our whole goal is to help women define and create their own version of success. Because often, we're striving for a thing that we think we're supposed to want, and then once we get there, we realize that that's not what we wanted after all. So we bring speakers from across the country that are founders, that are leaders, that are authors, that have an interesting perspective to share on our favorite topics, and those topics are wellness, money, community, and creativity. Those are the four foundations that we feel like, if you can get those right, the rest of it is pretty much easy.

Queen Latifah:  
Wow. And it's sort of a boutique conference. It's...

Shannon Siriano:  
Yes.

Queen Latifah:  
So you like to keep it not huge.

Shannon Siriano:  
Correct.

Queen Latifah:  
Boutique, more bespoke, more...

Shannon Siriano:  
Intimate.

Queen Latifah:  
More intimate, so that people can actually really get the message, have some time? Is that why you do it the way you do it?

Shannon Siriano:  
Well, we want them to really connect with one another.

Queen Latifah:  
Right.

Shannon Siriano:  
And we want them to see themselves in the speakers. I know I've been to plenty of events where there's a really successful woman onstage, but she seems so far ahead of me that I leave more

defeated than inspired. So we try to bring people that are really inspiring, doing really amazing stuff, but seeing like, "I could do that. I could be like her."

Queen Latifah:

Okay, you're going to do this next week, and I'm going to ask you a question in a moment, but that was... You just touched on something really important: that you leave feeling further away than you did when you came in because they seem so far ahead of you. Now, I don't know if anybody is feeling like that in this room, because we also have a lot of people here with mentees with them, and people who have seen some pretty awesome women onstage today. What would you tell our audience? Someone might be feeling like that right now.

Shannon Siriano:

Yeah.

Queen Latifah:

What would you tell them to not have... in order for them to not feel that way?

Shannon Siriano:

Sure. Well, I would say, everyone's journey is their own. Everyone's goals and what you need to make your own self feel fulfilled is different. So really, comparing in any way makes no sense. So I think, find what inspires you about that person and use that as your motivation; don't think every part of your story and journey has to be like hers.

Jay Ell Alexander:

I like that.

Queen Latifah:

There we go. Thank you. I appreciate you letting me follow up on that.  
And Jay Ell.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Yes.

Queen Latifah:

I said, Jay Ell.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Yes!

Queen Latifah:

Jay Ell, you are a leader in the public relations... First of all, I just love what you're wearing.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Oh, thank you!

Queen Latifah:

I'm trying not to stare at you. Let me read my card. Jay Ell, you are a leader in the public relations industry, and a marathon runner?

Jay Ell Alexander:

I am!

Queen Latifah:

What! 26 miles!

Jay Ell Alexander:

Yes. .2.

Queen Latifah:

26... I know that's right.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Don't forget it.

Queen Latifah:

Don't you forget my .2 miles!

Jay Ell Alexander:

Never forget that .2.

Queen Latifah:

Because if you think that .2 wasn't hard... You are the founder of Vaughn Strategy. Now, what drove you to start your own PR firm?

Jay Ell Alexander:

Well, actually I came in very unconventionally; I think I was kind of thrown into the entrepreneur space. PR and communications is my background, and I found that people were just asking me to do work on the side, and that's kind of how I rolled into Black Girls Run as well. And when I started getting paid, I didn't understand how taxes worked, to be honest with you, and Uncle Sam came for me at the end of the year.

Queen Latifah:

Yeah. He just came for me.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Yeah, I understand. He's still knocking on my door.

Queen Latifah:

Literally, as we speak. You know.

Jay Ell Alexander:

So it was really, I created the business really to protect myself, to establish a business, and then the entrepreneur space just continued to evolve.

Queen Latifah:

And then Black Girls Run?

Jay Ell Alexander:

I know, yeah.

Queen Latifah:

Tell us about that.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Yeah, so, Black Girls Run is my new baby. We've been around for about a decade. We actually have a nonprofit now that has been in existence for about a year-and-a-half, but I am the CEO and owner of Black Girls Run; I bought the company about a year-and-a-half ago. And we are a nationwide running organization that empowers women, especially African American women, to hit the pavement and to really eradicate the epidemic of obesity and chronic diseases in our community.

Queen Latifah:

I think... yeah. Having been involved in so many efforts to do the same thing, I think that is so important, and I think the best part of it is, it's not about body type; it's not about-

Jay Ell Alexander:

Oh, absolutely not.

Queen Latifah:

... what you look like; it's not about your size; it's not about whether you can run a marathon. It's your marathon.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Exactly. Exactly.

Queen Latifah:

It's just you being healthy, getting moving, and I think that's just a wonderful thing.

And you guys have worked together.

Shannon Siriano:

Yes!

Jay Ell Alexander:

Shannon's my boo.

Shannon Siriano:

No-

Queen Latifah:

They're boo thangs, y'all. They're boos.

Shannon Siriano:

... I nominated myself the president of Jay Ell's fan club.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Aw!

Shannon Siriano:

Literally. Jay spoke at my very first RebelleCon.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Yes.

Shannon Siriano:

Before she owned Black Girls Run, she was there as a representative for them. And then we went and had lunch a couple weeks later, because Kelly Lemon told us to. I saw her earlier. Kelly said, "You guys have got to have lunch," and Jay said to me, "So, I'm thinking that I might buy this organization." And I was like, "Oh my God! You have to do it!"

Queen Latifah:

Oh, wow.

Shannon Siriano:

And so then, she came back and spoke at the next Rebelle as the owner.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Right. Right.

Shannon Siriano:

It was so cool. And she's spoken at other events, and we also were in a MasterMind together.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Yeah. We've known each other for a few years now.

Queen Latifah:

That's so great. I'm keeping this thing going. Well, so for both of you, what are the unique challenges of a woman starting their own business?

Jay Ell Alexander:

Wow. For me, I would say... I had this conversation with my husband yesterday. He's a fourth grade school teacher, so his mind is completely different...

Queen Latifah:  
Aw!

Jay Ell Alexander:  
It's just...

Queen Latifah:  
I'm sorry.

Jay Ell Alexander:  
Besides just being a man.

Queen Latifah:  
It's just so sweet.

Jay Ell Alexander:  
So it's just the awareness of things that we just don't talk about. So, having a lawyer, or having a bookkeeper, or cash flow management, or who's going to manage this? Or, I just had a baby a month ago. Well, now what? Now that I have a baby, when I step back-

Queen Latifah:  
Did you just have a baby?

Shannon Siriano:  
30 days ago!

Jay Ell Alexander:  
I did. I had a baby a month ago.

Queen Latifah:  
You just had a baby a month ago!? Oh my God. Girl or boy?

Jay Ell Alexander:  
Boy. Christopher Cameron, Junior.

Queen Latifah:  
Christopher Cameron, Junior! Oh, congratulations!

Jay Ell Alexander:  
So you know, all of those nuances of... Shout out to all the mothers. I have all the respect for you.

Queen Latifah:  
Shout out to all the mothers.

Jay Ell Alexander:  
So, just those nuances that we just don't talk about enough. So that's why I appreciate spaces like this where we can talk about just the real of starting a business, that it may look glamorous on social media, or being a mom, but I was crying all last week. Y'all didn't see all that.

Queen Latifah:  
Right, right.

Jay Ell Alexander:  
So you know, it's just those conversations, but I think that's what has been difficult about starting a business, is there's not enough spaces to talk about what's actually happening behind the scenes.

Queen Latifah:  
Hmm. And you two get to talk about that. What would you say, Shannon?

Shannon Siriano:  
Well, I'm in a unique position that I do get to coach women that are starting companies, so I see two things that happen all the time when women are starting: first thing is, perfectionism gets in the way. Women want to everything zip zapped up, totally perfect before they move on it or put it into the world. So I see that really slows people down.

Queen Latifah:  
Right.

Shannon Siriano:  
And the other thing that I see that happens so much is, we're very secretive about our ideas, and we-

Queen Latifah:  
Secretive about... I'm sorry.

Shannon Siriano:  
Our ideas.

Queen Latifah:  
Right.

Shannon Siriano:  
So business ideas, or an idea for a company, or whatever it is that we want to start. We don't want to talk about it; we keep it really close to the vest. I think there's a number of reasons why, but when you don't put your ideas into the world, you're missing an opportunity of people that

want to help you, and unless you are going to share with other people, you don't know who has a resource you might need, or a perspective that you might need. And so I really strongly encourage, if you have an idea, especially an idea for a business, talk about it; tell people about it. Because if you don't, who knows what great push you could be missing out on if you would just share?

Queen Latifah:

Well, when you raised not to put your business in the street...

Jay Ell Alexander:

Well, you don't share it with everybody.

Queen Latifah:

It's almost an oxymoron. You want your business in the street, but not that business in the street.

Shannon Siriano:

It's true. And I think there's a fear...

Queen Latifah:

You know what I mean? It's kind of tricky.

Shannon Siriano:

Some of it comes from the fear of, we think someone's going to steal our idea.

Queen Latifah:

Oh, of course we think that. And many would.

Shannon Siriano:

But-

Queen Latifah:

Many would. I mean-

Shannon Siriano:

No one's going to do it the way you're going to do it.

Queen Latifah:

You know, that's the... To quote Jay Z on that, "Somebody said they made Hov. Said, made Hov, Say 'Okay, so, make another Hov.'" Nobody could make another Hov.

Shannon Siriano:

Not at all.

Queen Latifah:

Because there's just one. So he could come up with a million ideas of his own again and again and again. And I think people have to have a confidence in the fact that that may be the spark; that was the idea, but the way they'll do it is going to be the way they'll do it.

Shannon Siriano:  
Right.

Queen Latifah:  
You know, and the way someone else will do it will be the way they do it. And people will be able to kind of choose that they think is the version that's meant for them. I mean, there's a lot of hair products out there, everybody, yeah? So... you're not the first to make a hair product, but the way you make it is the way you make it, so I think you're absolutely right in that.

Shannon, I love a quote that you said... This is not the exact quote, but you said that you get excited about the fact that conversations about diversity and inclusion are becoming mainstream. What did you mean by that, and how does that help when it comes to business?

Shannon Siriano:  
Yeah. Well, I have connected with a lot of local large companies. Most of the Fortune 500 companies locally I've connected with because of my business, and each of those companies have a full time... If not one person, a team of people committed to diversity and inclusion within their organization. That is new. That is not a thing that's been happening, especially in large companies, in the past. So that's what I meant by "it's becoming mainstream," in that people in the business community are talking about diversity and inclusion, not just it being the right thing to do (which, we all know that). But also, it being good for business (which, we all know that too). So I'm really excited about that.

That's something that I've known and felt for a long time: if you have more different opinions, you're going to end up with the best solution, and it's exciting to see other people start to be on that bandwagon as well. I think that means more opportunities for women, more opportunities for women of color, more opportunities for people who didn't have opportunities in the past to be able to contribute their ideas in a meaningful way.

Queen Latifah:  
That's amazing. Have you had Marc Pritchard?

Shannon Siriano:  
No.

Queen Latifah:  
Marc Pritchard is the head of Procter & Gamble. He controls the biggest advertising budget in the world. And you should meet him.

Shannon Siriano:  
If you want to make an intro, I'd love to meet him.

Queen Latifah:

You should both meet him. This person has signed me to my CoverGirl deal years ago and helped me to also create the Queen Collection. But more importantly, we've been doing a lot in the space of diversity, particularly in advertising, filmmaking... Allowing women filmmakers to have their films made, have them shown. We had them shown in Tribeca. You can find some of them on Hulu. It's the Queen Collective, if you want to know what it's about.

But he often talks about that the ideas just don't come to him. People don't think that he'll be interested in something new or something different, and so oftentimes advertisers will just bring the same old people in the room with the same kind of ideas, but they're actually sort of itching to hear new ideas, and they want to be part of...

Believe me: he gets it. He gets that women control a huge amount of the budgets in their house. Over 50% of the dollars, and where they go are decided by the woman who's in the home, and that's money. That's business. And a lot of these products from Proctor & Gamble are for us. You know what I mean? Your Tide and your this and your that. And so, I think there are a lot of people out there looking for those sorts of things, so yeah, keep chasing it down, for sure.

Shannon Siriano:

Yeah.

Queen Latifah:

And finally, the question I love to ask all women I get to talk to is, what keeps you going? Especially, now I'm going to ask you... I mean, you do have a husband, which is helpful.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Yes.

Queen Latifah:

I don't know how helpful one month in, but... All hands on deck one month in, you know what I mean?

Jay Ell Alexander:

Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Queen Latifah:

All hands on deck. But I mean, the phones are ringing the emails are piling up, you're on a deadline. What keeps you motivated? What keeps you going?

Jay Ell Alexander:

I would say for me, it's definitely my village. I have people surrounding me that... Now that I have a son, I have someone absolutely relying on me, but also just understanding the community that I serve, I'm representing the woman that is trying to get off blood pressure medication, or that is just getting off the couch to run her first mile, or she just got a poor doctor's report. Or

maybe getting over a divorce, and now is using Black Girls Run to continue to motivate her, to pull herself out of depression, and that I represent that community of building women up to become healthier and a better version of themselves. So when I realize that my purpose is so much bigger than just me, just Jay Ell, that's what gets me up every day: to know that I'm telling someone else's story, and I want to continue telling those testimonials.

Queen Latifah:

Oh, that's great. That's wonderful. Shannon?

Shannon Siriano:

Mine is my team, absolutely, and there's a few of them here today. They-

Queen Latifah:

Shannon's team, where you at?

Shannon Siriano:

Where are you? Bethany, Megan, Sheetal, hey there.

Queen Latifah:

Shout out to Shannon's team.

Shannon Siriano:

Yes. You know, I've definitely been in meetings crying, overwhelmed, like "This is too much, I can't do it," and they sit there and they listen, and they don't try to fix it, and they just hold space for me, and then I leave, and then they fix it. And then they call me and they say, "It's handled," and then I can come back.

Queen Latifah:

I like your team.

Shannon Siriano:

And they support me when I come to things like this, and we show up for each other, and I think when you're a business owner, when you're anyone, if you have a super solid group of ladies that show up for you, that's what pushes you through.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Right.

Queen Latifah:

The sisterhood. The village. Well, although she won't let me come anywhere near the mic, my girl Erin over here from the Miss-Behaviors has some questions from the audience. What do we have, E-Rock?

Erin Lunsford:

So for my first one, someone from the audience wants to know, as entrepreneurs, what is the best thing about being your own boss, and what is the worst thing about being your own boss?

Jay Ell Alexander:

I would say the best thing is probably my freedom and flexibility: that I'm able to work my schedule how I want to, but that has a negative side to it that sometimes it's hard to shut it down at 9:00, 10:00 pm. That you have to find balance, and... I always say I need to get rid of that word "balance"; it's about finding harmony between work and life and home, and I think that's probably the hardest part of being an entrepreneur and of being your own boss.

Shannon Siriano:

Yeah. For me, the best part is that I don't have to get anybody's approval to do things. When I have an idea that's really good, I just want to do it. I don't want to have 10 meetings about it; I don't want to get this person's input... You know? I just want to do it. And so I have a really small core team, so we get an idea, we just do it; there's not a whole lot of thinking or planning that has to happen.

Queen Latifah:

Yeah, we're like, "This is a dictatorship, not a democracy."

Shannon Siriano:

Sometimes.

Queen Latifah:

It gets to be... It's okay. I thought you were going to say the best part was being able to choose your own wardrobe and make Queen Latifah jealous over the fact that she's not rocking that animal print.

Jay Ell Alexander:

You know, you've got to do some things 30 days coming out of labor.

Queen Latifah:

That's right.

Jay Ell Alexander:

You know, you got to do some things to cover some things up.

Queen Latifah:

Let me tell you... you did some things. She did a thing, everyone.

Jay Ell Alexander:

I appreciate that.

Queen Latifah:

I think it's fantastic. Anything else you got, Erin?

Erin Lunsford:

Yeah, we got a couple more. See how much we have time for. This one's for Jay Ell.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Sure.

Erin Lunsford:

This person in the audience says they're from Williamsburg, and they want to know how to start a Black Girls Run club, because they said there aren't any groups within an hour of them.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Thanks for that question. So, you can go to the website, [blackgirlsrun.com](http://blackgirlsrun.com). We have a button that says "Start Your Own Group/Become An Ambassador," and then you will shortly hear from me to figure out next steps in terms of onboarding you. But it's not as easy as people think just to go and start a group; it's really about sustainability with Black Girls Run. You know, people get into the diet fads, people get into the, "Oh, I need to fit this dress next week, let me go run." No, this is... So, it's about creating a lifestyle, so we want to make sure that we're onboarding the right leadership, that you'll be around today and next year, and that understanding that the people that we're bringing on, you're also leading a larger community as well. So yes, go on the website, [blackgirlsrun.com](http://blackgirlsrun.com), and we can figure out what we can work out for Williamsburg. But I'm [inaudible] girl, so we'll work something out. So, we're going to work something out.

Queen Latifah:

Do you have to be black?

Jay Ell Alexander:

No, not at all. Our running rule is just no men. We want to create a safe space for women, but I don't care if you're blue, black, red, or white. We have... Some of my best ambassadors are not even African American; one of my best ambassadors in Philadelphia is one of my strongest proponents, I think is someone who just understands the mission and that can be a cheerleader for you even when you're not in the room. And again, understanding the larger purpose, and I don't think you have to be a particular color to understand that this mission goes much more... For us to become healthier as a community is going to be all hands on deck.

Queen Latifah:

Oh, of course. And you've said "ambassadors." I mean, they are ambassadors. They're there to carry out the message.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Absolutely.

Queen Latifah:

And speak for you. But I'm still kind of into the idea of this bespoke... I feel like I want to get a ticket to hers. Like, I've got to know somebody to get the hookup.

Shannon Siriano:

Well, it is sold out, but I think I can ask if we could get you one.

Queen Latifah:

See? It's so exclusive, I can't get in! You know I want to get there.

Shannon Siriano:

Well, Megan doesn't want to update the invite list, but I bet we could add you.

Queen Latifah:

Ah, sorry, I'm booked for another women's conference in Seattle next weekend. I'm here to make sure that women become the best that they can be, whoever they are, wherever they are. That's what it's about for me. Anything else, Erin?

Erin Lunsford:

You guys want to do one more?

Jay Ell Alexander:

Sure.

Erin Lunsford:

Yeah? Okay.

Queen Latifah:

Why not?

Erin Lunsford:

One more from the audience. So, what advice would you give to someone who is struggling to find her passion?

Queen Latifah:

Ooh.

Shannon Siriano:

Well.

Jay Ell Alexander:

I don't know. You start with that.

Shannon Siriano:

I don't know that you always have to have your passion figured out to start. Right? Once you just start doing things, I think it becomes more clear. I think that was the case for me. You know, I started a fitness business as my first entrepreneurial journey, and then I sold that business, and then I was consulting. And when I was consulting is when a friend of mine was like, "Hey, we

should do an event," and once we did the first event, it clicked for me, this is what I'm supposed to be doing.

I mean, of course, women want to support... Well, I guess not "of course," but I wanted to support other women. I didn't know that was going to be the driving force for all of my work and the energy that I spend in my profession, but it just came about because I just started doing things.

Jay Ell Alexander:

And I mean, mine is simply put, happiness means everything to me, so do what makes you happy, and through that I think you will find your passion, but I think the first step is just clearly identifying what really does make you happy, what alleviates that stress, what can you walk into no matter what's going on and you understand what's going on, this is a clear path for you, and it just brings you joy? I think that's the first step, is figuring out what makes you happy.

Queen Latifah:

And I think some of those things will go against the grain sometimes, you'll find. People will disagree with what makes you happy. But we had someone up earlier who asked the people right around them to say who... to describe who she was. And she found some symmetry in that, which was something she was able to use and to channel. But I also think we have to be prepared to go against the grain, because everyone is not going to agree with what makes you happy, but nobody knows you like you know yourself. So. Got to get strong to get ready.

Thank you so much, ladies, for being here.

Jay Ell Alexander:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

This has been an invigorating conversation right after a great meal. Everybody is up and at 'em. Give it up for the ladies.

Congratulations!

Jay Ell Alexander:

Thank you so much.

Queen Latifah:

I'm going to be in Seattle. But all the best, all the best.

**Stepping into Public Life and Beyond: A Conversation with Virginia's First Ladies  
Susan Allen, former First Lady of Virginia (1994-1998)  
Pamela Northam, First Lady of Virginia**

Queen Latifah:

This is exciting. Oh, I just love this.

And now I'm going to introduce two guests. As First Ladies, they have shared a unique position in Virginia. So let's step out of the way so they can have a chat. Please welcome the present and former First Lady of Virginia... Hold on. Well, that sounded kind of weird, but please welcome the present and the former First Lady of Virginia, Pamela Northam and Susan Allen.

Susan Allen:

Hello.

Queen Latifah:

Nice to meet you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Enjoy.

Susan Allen:

Hey. Hi, everybody! We can tell you're having a good time, even from way back there, and it's so exciting to be out here with you now.

Pamela Northam:

Isn't it great?

Susan Allen:

I'm Susan Allen, this is my great friend Pam Northam, and we are so happy to be together again today with all of you.

Pamela Northam:

Great to be here. Are y'all having a good time? Yes. It's terrific.

Susan Allen:

Well, Pam just went through a big family affair this weekend. She's going to spill the beans here, give you all the scoop. Her son got married this past weekend, and I think that's a big milestone for a mom.

Pamela Northam:

It was a big weekend, let me tell you. And we only had one disaster, so I count it as a great success. They ended up married, that's all that we needed to know. It was great.

Susan Allen:

Well, it wouldn't be a memorable wedding if you didn't have one little thing go wrong.

Pamela Northam:

That's for sure. Got to have a funny story to tell someday, right?

Susan Allen:

Yes, perfect. Perfect. So, thinking about what married couples go through, and especially a newly married couple, I couldn't help but think about you starting out your married life. You

married somebody who was on one career path, a very exciting one in the medical field, and you had your own career going.

Pamela Northam:  
Indeed.

Susan Allen:  
And then you had a big change in your life. Your husband switches careers. What do you do when a partner switches careers on you? How do you adjust? Who makes that adjustment? And where do you go from there?

Pamela Northam:  
Well, I told him I thought he'd lost his mind when he told me he was going into politics. Because you know, I thought I married this gentle, soft-spoken country pediatrician, and next thing I know he's talking about politics. But we spent many years together, supporting each other through different career paths, and I knew he was choosing to do that for a great reason and to really further our beliefs, and I thought, "Well, I have to support him doing that, for sure." And will never regret that.

Susan Allen:  
No. Because-

Pamela Northam:  
How about you?

Susan Allen:  
You're in an exciting position for a spouse. It's a unique club that we belong to as First Spouse.

Pamela Northam:  
It is.

Susan Allen:  
We can share a lot of secrets, but it's a really great privilege to be a spouse in Virginia and be involved in public life.

Pamela Northam:  
It is.

Susan Allen:  
George and I got married when he was in the state legislature, so our-

Pamela Northam:  
So you knew what you were in for.

Susan Allen:

Kind of. No, not really, in Virginia, your legislators work two months out of the year, so... big deal, he was here two months. I would come down and give tours to constituents, make up my own little tour of Richmond, but we would go back and I would help him... He was practicing law at the time. I knew nothing about that either, but I'd go in the office and type or do what I could in between working tourism, which was my field that I'd go into, into marketing. But I don't think any of us in life can really predict when you marry that person you fall in love with, what will happen along your path in life.

Pamela Northam:

Yeah, I always say it's like that old Army motto: it's not just a job, it's an adventure.

Susan Allen:

That's right. Well, I called my husband Mr. Adventure, and when he decided to take different turns in his career, I couldn't help but think about my mom and the years that she was home alone with three children: my brother, my sister, and me, while my dad was in Vietnam.

Pamela Northam:

Oh, wow.

Susan Allen:

And we would watch our little TV on the table each night to see if his squadron had been shot down, but that's a really tough life. And you know, we can complain sometimes about public life and the things that are said about our spouses and so forth, but generally speaking they're not being shot at. And military spouses play a special role; military families do.

Pamela Northam:

They do.

Susan Allen:

And so you learn a lot. Yes, yay for military families. Thank you. Thank you for your service. Very, very important for our commonwealth and our country.

Pamela Northam:

And I think that was good training for me. I've often said if I had any training for political life, it was my husband was in the Army for many years, and then he was a physician, so he was gone a lot. So I knew I had to be an independent person even back then, so it was great training for politics.

Susan Allen:

Yes, you make do. And I bet in all the roles that you have served in, Pam, whether private life, public life, you've been asked this question, because I bet every one of you have been asked this question, how do you find balance in your life?

Pamela Northam:

Right.

Susan Allen:

What are your tricks of the trade? Have you learned anything about balancing public life, for instance, with private life or balancing your very crazy busy daily schedule?

Pamela Northam:

Right. Well, Amy, and we talk about careers. Do you pursue your career as first lady? Do you take time off? And I really suffered with that. You know, I loved my career teaching, I loved my career working for a nonprofit in environmental work and so it was really hard to leave that. But I knew I had this amazing privilege and great honor to be able to do that work, but at a larger level in public service. So that was a real honor, and to this day, I'm so thrilled to have that.

Susan Allen:

It's true. And the fact that you can travel the entire commonwealth and work with people all over our beautiful state and talk to them about issues that are facing them. That's a real gift and a privilege.

Pamela Northam:

It is. hope, too, when you see the folks all across the commonwealth, and that's been one of my greatest joys. We talk about what are your most memorable moments as first lady and I think that's meeting everyone across this great state who, sometimes against all odds, are doing incredible work for the commonwealth and it's been a great joy for me.

Susan Allen:

So true. The people you meet certainly make this job interesting. And Pam, it's not necessarily, I'm sure you feel this way too, it's not necessarily the famous people that you might meet when you go to the White House, when they have all the governors and first ladies or when you're, who knows where meeting famous people. I remember so fondly people who would call the governor's mansion and ask if they could come by and pray or the sweet girl from Farmville with her Special Olympic medal and she wanted to give it to me, she was in Special Olympics, or just touching moments like that. Everyday people who have their struggles but want to share their joys with you as well.

Pamela Northam:

Right, right.

Susan Allen:

And that's just such a privilege of being in that position, too.

Pamela Northam:

Yeah, I had the first lady, I had the daughter of one of the first ladies back during World War II and I have an actual photo of her in the Victory Garden. You know, everybody had victory gardens to try and help with the war effort during World War II. So we have a picture of that first lady gardening at the executive mansion with her daughter. And so this 70 something year old lady had come in and said, "That's me in the picture," which is really inspiring.

Susan Allen:  
That is very cool.

Pamela Northam:  
So have you other first lady mentors yourself?

Susan Allen:  
Gosh, we all look back and think how did they do it? You know, how did Mrs. Godwin serve two terms? Having lost her child in between. Her child was struck by lightning while they were at Virginia Beach. Tragic. Can you imagine? She could hear the sirens coming and knew something terrible had happened and came back to the governor's mansion for their second tour or term and said it just wasn't the same. So, you read about stories and people who have lived in that beautiful governor's mansion in Virginia, the longest continuously occupied governor's mansion in the continental US by the way, the little fire that took place there when Governor Trinkle's son ran by with the fireworks.

Pamela Northam:  
It's true. It didn't burn down during the civil war.

Susan Allen:  
No.

Pamela Northam:  
And the story goes that it was the first lady at the time that helped to save it.

Susan Allen:  
Yes.

Pamela Northam:  
Aside from most of Richmond that did burn, she was brave enough to say, she said, "Somebody's got to stay here and be a man." So she stayed to make sure they kept water on the mansion and the capitals, two of the few buildings that did not burn. And another amazing lady who behaved well and made history.

Susan Allen:  
Yeah, yeah. So you know, sometimes you're just put into a place and you may not know what your calling is, but lo and behold, you're there at the right time to make something good happen. I don't know, Pam, you may have felt this way as well, that while you're living there, it's such a privilege and you love having so many people come through and share that, it's the people's house, but at the same time, you're a normal family. I remember the first birthday when we moved in in January, and we have a lot of March birthdays in our family. I don't know what that says, but our little boy Forrest was turning three and he just wanted a Betty Crocker cake. Now, the folks who have been at the governor's mansion working through many, many administrations

thought, all right, we finally have a little boy. We're going to have lots of candles and a big Ukrops cake.

Anybody remember Ukrops bakery? The best, the best. But no, my boy was in tears. He wanted mom's Betty Crocker, mix cake, little child. But those sweet moments.

Pamela Northam:  
Sweet little child.

Susan Allen:  
Sweet moments. Again, you're real people given the privilege and the honor of being there, hoping that you're representing the desires of the rest of Virginia, but hoping also that Virginia has recognized you're real. Now I'm going to tell, this is a primarily women's audience. I see a few guys out here, excuse me for a minute guys. This is a very funny story about having to go shopping with security detail. You may have been in this position before yourself and they want to follow you and you're busy, you have errands to run. I remember shopping in Williamsburg, we were getting ready to go on a big trade mission and I needed some extra things to take and I was in such a hurry and trying to make it home before the kids got out of school. I went running out of the store and I had put my dress on inside out and luckily a trooper was right behind me, "Miss A, Miss A, you need to go back inside the dress." What? What? So they're there to protect you and save you, save the dignity.

Pamela Northam:  
They have many, many talents. So did you, tell me about your career during your time as first lady.

Susan Allen:  
Well, leading up to that, my career had been in marketing, doing sales and promotion and tourism. Having been raised most of my life in the Charlottesville area, tourism is really big there, very, very important. And I had been a docent and worked with the historical society and done a lot with tourism. So I thought what I would do, moving into the governor's mansion, is not keep a career, so to speak, but instead to turn my career skills, organizing things, marketing things, into helping further the agenda that we thought would help Virginia. Tourism is our number two industry, so I was really happy to promote the commonwealth around the world. It was so fun to be able to do that.

Pamela Northam:  
And you did a wonderful job.

Susan Allen:  
Oh, gosh, it was a privilege, and then to work on women's health issues, too, because we are all concerned about taking care of our sisters and our children. So to work on health, wellness, fitness and breast cancer as an issue. And I know you've taken up issues that you were working on in a professional way, too.

Pamela Northam:

Right, right. I mean that's what brought my husband together first, many years ago, was our work in pediatrics. So I started out as a pediatric occupational therapist and developmental pediatrics and that's how we met. Yay pediatrics, yay. And then later we were deployed overseas, and so when we came back I was looking for a job that fit our time schedule and my family's schedule better and I actually ended up getting into teaching and became a science specialist and really enjoyed that for many years. And then, as I said, worked for an environmental nonprofit. And it's interesting where our career paths may lead and I encourage all young people, I say, "Get a great well-rounded education because you never know where you may end up." But it's really been wonderful because I looked at bringing all my work experience together and serving the commonwealth. And I think one of the main things, of course, that we looked at is early childhood care and education. So many, we have two thirds of all parents work outside the homes now and we have many families that really struggle to find quality early childhood care and education. For fragile families especially, it can be a very expensive and difficult to do. So we've worked really hard with that to make a difference in that area.

Susan Allen:

Well, congratulations on all you've done with that, Pam. And, Pam, also at the beginning of the school year, I know you travel around the commonwealth visiting schools, are there any funny stories you can tell us? Because I know oftentimes when you're in those groups, they ask questions like, "Where's your limousine? Who dressed you today? Did you pack your own lunch to eat with us?" What do you like about those schools?

Pamela Northam:

We've traveled several thousand miles across the commonwealth to highlight the amazing work that our teachers do every day and they do incredible work to get our children, do we have any teachers in the audience today?

Susan Allen:

Yay. Yay. Thank you.

Pamela Northam:

To say most people can, all the wonderful people we meet, you're talking about meeting people across the world and often I ask them, "What's inspired you?" Whether it's Pharrell or Jay Pharaoh that I met the other day so many folks like them will say, "I had a teacher that changed my life." And so it's wonderful to be able to travel and to say thank you to the amazing, I call them superhero teachers that we have across the commonwealth and to really highlight that being ready for school doesn't just begin in August getting a backpack or maybe a new pair of shoes. It begins in those critical first few years when 90% of the brain is development before a kid even gets to kindergarten. So we want to talk about those early years moving up through K-12.

But you're talking about a funny story, there's always, you know that adage, don't ever work with kids or pets? It's so true, especially in front of media. So, I try my best to read a child's story, but when you have the mayor and all the press there, it's always something will happen. So I had a brand new book about kindergarten I was reading the other day and I was so proud of my new

book and I was really enjoying it. And this little girl jumps up and says, "This book is really making me sleepy."

I said, "Well, okay." I tried to ramp up my enthusiasm a little bit there. And then I said, "Well, you know, at the end I give away," I have this first lady coins, you know, the governor has coins. And I said, "Well, I want first lady coins." So I had my first lady coins made up with native Virginia species, of course, on the back, but the mistake I made is I made them very bright colors. So the first thing that happens when I go to hand them out, including this little girl was, "Is it candy?"

Susan Allen:  
Oh no.

Pamela Northam:  
It's like, "No, sorry. It's not candy. But it's very special. You can only get it in one place."

"Can I spend it?"

It was downhill from there, just, there was no pleasing this one child. And if it hadn't been camera's on, it would've been a whole 'nother thing.

Susan Allen:  
Yeah.

Pamela Northam:  
It's never easy.

Susan Allen:  
Well the coins are a new thing. That is kind of a, I think since, maybe since we went to Iraq, nationally, and we had our troops bringing back coins. I think that's when that really took off. So that's after my time, the challenge coins.

Pamela Northam:  
Anybody out there know challenge coins?

Susan Allen:  
Challenge coins, probably.

Pamela Northam:  
Military tradition.

Susan Allen:  
Wonderful.

Pamela Northam:

Yeah.

Susan Allen:

But I also think that leads to another question that I have, have you been able to, in your meetings with other first ladies from around the country, have you been able to steal any of their ideas or secrets and implement them? Are they using the coins in other states?

Pamela Northam:

In academia we call that sharing.

Susan Allen:

Sharing, sharing.

Pamela Northam:

We've got to share. We do. We share a lot in best practices and it's really important and we women, we do this really well. We think about all the women we want to encourage to go into politics and run for office today. One of the things that we know we do so well is networking, working together, don't we?

Susan Allen:

Yes.

Pamela Northam:

Yes. And I really appreciate that. Many former first ladies, as well as yourself, were very wonderful in helping me in making that transition. I don't know what I would've done without wonderful people like Anne Holton and former first lady McAuliffe. Aren't they wonderful? Yes. And so giving me hints along the way about what worked really well for them. You have to make it your own, certainly, and we all come with different experiences in our background, but it's wonderful to have mentors and we talk about standing on the shoulders who've come before us. We just did something really special this weekend, you and I both, Monday.

Susan Allen:

Yesterday.

Pamela Northam:

Was that yesterday?

Susan Allen:

We've traveled a few miles since yesterday, that's why we're confused.

Pamela Northam:

Yes, well, tell everybody what we did yesterday.

Susan Allen:

Yesterday was a dynamic day, and I hope some of you were there as well. We did the unveiling of the women's statues, the women's monument, Voices from the Garden. Yay. Super exciting. We now have an outdoor living classroom on the Capitol grounds in Virginia. Really America's first garden, first park and how exciting that's going to be when people come to look at our Capitol and they can go by the Indian Tribute, by the bell tower and walk up the hill to stand amongst these women's statues and learn about their stories. And none of these women were perfect and many of them went through trials and tribulations. Many of them did not have easy lives. And so to be able to learn and take from what they did and improve upon that hopefully makes us all better people and makes us a better commonwealth.

Pamela Northam:

I have some fourth graders, usually will come and visit the Capitol when they do Virginia studies, and I often ask them, "What did you see when you looked down on the general assembly, when you've traveled the grounds? And not often do they see something that reflects themselves. So now when our young women come as fourth-graders this, they will finally get to see a monument to women in Virginia. So we're so excited about that.

Susan Allen:

It's really fun.

Pamela Northam:

And it's not just an amazing work of people who put all this together. It's been a long time in coming for you all I know, but what's even more exciting is I've been thrilled to, since we've been in office, we've had the first most diverse general assembly ever with the most women in the general assembly. So we have, exciting living legacy as well. And this has really been an exciting time. Their influence on legislation is really being seen with some exciting things like Medicaid expansion and other things that really have helped people that I hear on a regular basis say that, "This has helped me personally, an my children." So it's wonderful to hear.

Susan Allen:

To have women involved all the way around is crucial. We started an organization, Jennifer Byler Institute, many years ago where we were training women how to be involved in campaigns, not just as a candidate, because not everybody wants to be on the front lines.

Pamela Northam:

Right.

Susan Allen:

We need good women doing research, studying issues, making sure our legislation is written carefully, making sure we raise funds to help with issue awareness and work in helping candidates. So keeping women involved has been a crucial part of making Virginia stronger. And we're so excited to see more and more women stepping up to the plate, being engaged. It sometimes is difficult because women tend to be juggling a lot, whether it's childcare, whether it's parent care, whether it's in between jobs, careers, volunteering, but I love Senator Blackburn's book, she's from Tennessee. She wrote a book about women using all of their skills and not

forgetting that when you're filling out your resume. For instance, Senator Blackburn became a Congressman when she first ran for office by using skills she had acquired in the PTA. Don't sell yourself short when you're involved in your child's school. Don't sell yourself short when you're involved in college in some organization or sports or involved in trying to help your place of worship. All of those skills transfer to being super engaged and super helpful in the public arena and we need-

Pamela Northam:

Public service makes a big difference.

Susan Allen:

It does. We need your voices out there and so-

Pamela Northam:

I think of Reshma Saujani, anybody know Reshma out there, who started Women who Code? I know you all know this because my daughter's here and she's a local web developer with some women who code. Stand up back there, Aubrey, you girls stand up. Women who Code, come on, yeah, there she is.

And Reshma says, "We have a bravery deficit." She said, "We teach our girls to be perfect. We teach our boys to be brave." So we need to be teaching our girls to be able to get out there and make some mistakes, right? And be able to have the courage to continue and I think we're doing that more now. Run for office.

Susan Allen:

Yes. At all levels and engaged in all components of occupations in any way you can be. And those are the kinds of things that I think we also hear as we travel the country and we meet with other first spouses. Whether they're talking about issues or engaging people in their states, that's something that I really cherished when we were in office, taking ideas that were occurring and being done very well in other states. Whether it was from planting pink dogwoods to honor breast cancer survivors, an idea that Mrs. Voinovich, the first lady of Ohio at the time, had been doing, or whether it was talking to Evan Bayh's wife of Indiana, again of the other party, but talking to her about how she was engaging women in particular in her state.

Pamela Northam:

Right.

Susan Allen:

But working peer-to-peer, sharing within the sisterhood, the ideas that help bring all of us up and engage people in a better way in our communities and in our states.

Pamela Northam:

Yeah, I think this is a really interesting time, because you know 2020 is the hundredth anniversary of women's suffrage, right? And we have a really exciting opportunity now, we talk about the equal rights amendment and we have a great opportunity. I wear, I'm wearing this

locket that belonged to my great-grandmother and my grandmother had it and then she gave it to me and I hope someday to give it to my daughter, just news, Aubrey. But when my grandmother gave it to me, I think about her story and she was unusual for her time. She was a woman who studied at University of Texas to get her geology degree. And we're talking right at the beginning of the Depression, and her father passed away suddenly. So she had to figure out a way to take care of her mother and her brothers and continue her education.

But she persisted. She got through with her education. She took her degree and she went out to get a job to support her family. And she was told, Oh no, no, no, we're not hiring women. Have you not heard there's a depression on? So she kept persisting and she got a job as a secretary. Secretary. She did the work of a geologist, but she was paid as a secretary.

And so I fast forward, she did great and put her brothers through school as a matter of fact, and was a terrific grandmother for me. But I think now we fast forward a hundred years later and ladies, we still aren't getting paid the same amount as our gentlemen. So, we still have work to do, right?

Susan Allen:

But I think that also speaks to your grandmother's tenacity, but her willingness to not take offense at her title of the moment, but just to go straight through that and continue on and persevere. And that's okay too. I think women sometimes are pigeonholed.

Pamela Northam:

Yes.

Susan Allen:

And don't get distracted by the things that are going to hold you back. Keep going down the road and the path that you're meant to go down and you'll succeed and be fine as your grandmother did. And what a great role model she was. That's terrific.

Pamela Northam:

And never ever give up.

Susan Allen:

Never give up. That is essential for sure.

Pamela Northam:

That's for sure. Yeah. So what's the next chapter for you?

Susan Allen:

Well, next two weeks we're moving to Virginia Beach, leaving Northern Virginia. I mean, there's a weird chapter out of nowhere in a way, but truly my husband and I have figured out we can work from anywhere because of the internet. So I'll continue to advocate for the Virginia Capitol Foundation and improving the Capitol, the grounds and the executive mansion. I still advocate for President Reagan. I did write a children's book about his life. It's not a political book, just

about how a boy who grew up and had dreams and his path took him on to become President of the United States. There were no other children's books about him, and I thought that young people needed to know his story too. But certainly trying to do whatever I can in my small sphere, in my daily walk to make other people's lives happier and better because I think we have that capability every day to do something before we shut our eyes at the end of the night to make somebody else's life better. Even through a final email at the end of the day, somehow, some way we can put a smile on somebody else's face. So if, for the rest of my days, I hope that's what I have, I can continue to aspire to do.

Pamela Northam:

I know you put a smile on my face. So what did you think about challenges that our young people face in Virginia today?

Susan Allen:

Gosh, well you're out there on the front lines. You see it, too. We have two children who are married. I think the difficulties for young people are making ends meet, trying to have a job, hold down a job where they can make ends meet and afford a house someday. Kind of the all American dream. I think that's a tough one. But keeping young people engaged I think is part of the solution because they're going to have to have the answers.

Pamela Northam:

Yeah.

Susan Allen:

What are you seeing when you're around young people too?

Pamela Northam:

Oh, I think they're the answer. I think you all make us feel so helpful and hopeful and I really appreciate all that that I see in young people today. They are so innovative and creative. I love their collaborative spirit, the way that they work together so well to really move us forward here in Virginia, and I think there's a lot of challenges left. We talk about maternal fetal health impact, we have twice as many African American women are affected by maternal fetal health issues than there are white women. So we're really addressing some of those issues today, as I talked about early childhood care and education, that's a challenge for our young people as they move out. But I see them addressing that in really creative ways and working with us on those issues.

Susan Allen:

Well, I found that to be true when I would spend time going into different churches, the Hispanic churches or the African American churches, the women were the powerhouses in those communities, and the women were the one who would grab their sisters and say, "You've got to get that mammogram. You've got to go to your annual physical. You've got to make sure that you keep your diabetes in checks." And so it's women taking care of women, I think has the most powerful ability truly to change the world. I've done a lot of international events, too, trying to raise money for orphans in Pakistan, or earthquake victims overseas, and you realize that the women in those communities, if you teach one to read, you're teaching 12 to read. If you teach

one how to care for those who are sick in her family, you're taking care of many more than just one. We have that same thing happening here in our country, in every city, in every rural area, and as long as we commit ourselves to taking care of the women in our sphere, in our circle, I think we're going to all be stronger for it.

Pamela Northam:

I love that. I think it was Michelle Obama who said, "As women, we must stand up for ourselves. As women we must stand up for each other. As women we must stand up for justice for all," and I love that.

Susan Allen:

Way to go, Pam. Very true.

Well, it was Eleanor Roosevelt who said that the first spouse must always learn, be on time, to speak very little, and to wave, lean back very far in the car and wave in the parade so that everybody can see the elected official. Thank goodness. Times have changed.

Pamela Northam:

Well, I think it's time, our time is up, so I think we better to get some coffee. What do you think?

Susan Allen:

Yes. Yes. It's been a joy to be with all of you.

Pamela Northam:

Thank you all.

Susan Allen:

My friend, Pam. Thank you all for being here today.

Queen Latifah:

You know, I would've had you rocking for 20 more minutes on the same song, then we would've had to go to rehab, no, no, no.

Might as well have ran the whole gamut. Thank you again for sharing. It cannot be easy being a first lady. Not the first lady of a politician and surely not the first lady of the church.

You know what I mean? When I think about it.

### **Story Slam**

**Pam M. Mines, author, entrepreneur, and special needs advocate**

Queen Latifah:

Now, our third storyteller is a mother who met her worst fear head on and changed lives across Virginia. Please welcome Pam Mines.

Pam M. Mines:

Wayne. He's driving his first car and it is a nice red when he's pulled over by a police officer. I mean, he gets nervous like anyone in this room would be, but this time the interaction would be just a little bit different because Wayne has autism. So he sees the car, he sees the lights, he even hears the siren. But instead of pulling over to the side of the road like you or I would do, he goes lane to lane because, in his mind, he needs to get out of this officer's way. So by the time he does pull over to the side of the road, the police officer is cautious because in his mind, this young man is eluding police and he has something to hide. So when he walks up to the police, I mean to the car with his hand on his weapon ready to draw. He's nervous because in his mind he thinks something really bad is about to happen. Either result, either response is going to have a really bad result.

This story hits really close to home for me because I have a 15 year old son who has autism and I started thinking, you know what if my son were a teenage driver and he was pulled over by police? Might his noncompliance, his loud noises, his sudden movements or even his lack of understanding, cause the police officer to draw their weapon and shoot. If my son were shot, would it be a justified shooting? My response was a very real and terrifying yes.

So I knew right then I had to do something. I had to do something immediately. I knew I had to do something in honor of my son. Not in memory of him.

I firmly believe that tragedy should not dictate the urgency of necessary change. The prevention of tragedy should.

So I started thinking, what if there was an innocuous code that we could add to driver's licenses or identification cards noting that the individual does in fact have autism. So I kind of jumped into Pam mode and started talking to legislators and law enforcement, some DMV administrators and some other municipals to see what we could come up with as a universal response. So that law enforcement would know that my son JP has autism. Well, July 1st, 2014 my son JP was the very first person in the state of Virginia to get a specialized ID now known as "JP's Law."

Today there are more than 1700 individuals who have this specialized ID and we're trying to take this law from being a state law to a national law. And, again, in pure Pam fashion, I had a meeting with the DC DMV administrators and in April of 2019 our nation's capital adopted JP's Law.

Now, initiating JP's Law and having to go through the Virginia General Assembly and DC and all of that stuff, it was fantastic and it felt great. And though I would not change a thing and I love my son dearly, I just want you all to know that I did not raise my hand and say, "Please give me a child with special needs so I can prove my advocacy, write a law talk to the DC DMV and my husband and I can show you just how well we can handle all these challenges."

So there is an ending to Wayne's story. Wayne did not have a JP's Law ID, but his mom heard about it on the news, and so she contacted me and I reached out to local law enforcement. They went by there, talked to them about the judicial process, so when he went to court, he had a fresh

haircut and sharp suit and he was ready. Judge called his name and had him come to the front and ordered him to driving school. And then he also allowed his mother to go to driving school with him. So she could kind of explain things as it happened. Then right after that, I got a letter from Wayne's mom that said, "Today was very positive. Wayne went to court, very anxious and nervous, but when he came back, he had a more secure confidence, more confidence, a secure sense of self because of this positive experience." And then I said, "How many of y'all can raise your hand and say that you go to court and then you come back and you're talking about some kind of positive experience?"

I hear from families all over the world about the importance of JP's Law, and their fears as it relates to police interaction. And I share their concerns, and I've took a proactive approach to it. And now you know who my son is, not who he was.

You do not have to wait for tragedy to initiate positive change. I know this for sure because I'm a mom. I'm making history and I did it not because I thought I could, but because I never thought I couldn't. Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

Gosh, wow. Thank you, Pam. Now I see why you were doing tai chi backstage and warming up and doing all that. You had some power to bring on this stage. Thank you so much for that amazing story. Never underestimate the ability of a mother to change the world.

## **Story Slam**

### **Lisa Renshaw, entrepreneur and owner of Penn Parking**

One more story coming up next. When the boys told our next speaker to park it and move along, she said, "No," and took a chance on herself. Wait until you hear her story. Please welcome Lisa Renshaw.

Lisa Renshaw:

Hi. I was born an entrepreneur. When I was a kid, I bought the comic books and I clipped the coupons off the back on how to start your own business. You know the kind, buy 12 boxes of Christmas cards, get 24 boxes, make 100% profit, and then there was the one, everything you need to bronze baby shoes and get rich. When I was in my early teens, I remember working long hours before work. I'd be both before school and after school to make these little wax candles. I think I made a hundred of them to take to our local craft show. I sold three.

When I was 21, I met this guy named Kenny. Kenny was starting his own parking business, and I went up to him. I introduced myself and I said, "Look, I'll quit my job, work for you, no pay for three months, help you get the business off the ground, and then I'll be there from the start."

Well, Kenny jumped at the opportunity of having free labor, and so here I was. Now when I was working with Kenny, I said, "Look, there's a train station about a block away. There are three parking lots between the train station and our garage, but I'm sure people will walk further for

covered parking." Kenny patted me on the shoulder and said, "You don't understand big business, baby doll."

Unfortunately, Kenny was right. Kenny needed \$3,000 to pay off some back parking taxes with the city. So, I used my credit. I borrowed \$3,000. I handed the \$3,000 to Kenny, and Kenny left with my money. So here I am, 21 years old, \$3,000 in debt, in the middle of a bankrupt garage in Baltimore city. I didn't know anything about running a parking business. Heck, I didn't even know how to drive a stick shift. Now I can say when I was a kid, I didn't grow up to dream that I would park cars for a living. It was just the first opportunity and I jumped at it. If it had been a cookie shop, I'd be baking cookies today, and if it had been a janitorial company, I'd be scrubbing toilets today.

The very first day that I was on my own and Kenny had left, I had to act quickly, so I ran up the street to find the owner of the garage. I was going to get my own lease. I found him and he was the nicest old man and he looked at me and said, "But, you're just a little girl. You come back next week and we'll talk about getting a lease on the garage." Well, I came back next week and the following week. It took me three months before he'd give me a lease on that parking garage. It was now my business, so that first 15 hours I did the following, and I made a list to keep it. I changed the locks on the garage. I named the company Penn because we were near Penn Station. I parked the few cars that were in the garage. I established my first electric, phone, and bank accounts. I cleaned some trash out of the back room of the garage and I chased the rats that were living there.

I called my dad and he came down and he barricaded that room that I had just cleaned out and it was soon to become my home. That evening at 12:30, I closed the garage gates and I went back to lay on a rolled out piece of carpet that I had put there for a bed and I laid there and I went to sleep for the first time in my parking garage. Three and a half years, I'm still sleeping in that parking garage.

Now, life in a parking garage is not as glamorous as you may think. I'd get up at 5:30 in the morning. I'd open up the gates. I would welcome the customers as they came in. I would park the cars and also wax and wash their cars for additional money. When my one employee came in at 7:00 AM, I would leave the garage, run up to my competition's parking lot, hand them a flyer, Park Any Five Days and Get a Free Car Wash, and I told them, "You parked in the wrong place." I'd run back to my garage in the afternoon and do everything in reverse. I'd greet the customers as they came back. I climbed one, two, three, maybe four flights of steps to bring their cars back down to them and then came the pay off. I got to collect their money.

Ten o'clock in the evening, my mom would call me every single day to make sure I was okay. At 12:30 AM, I'd go close the gates of the garage, go lay on that rolled out piece of carpet in the room that the rats had once played and I would dream of good things. That was a good day because on a bad day, I'd have to open the garage at 5:00 AM, a half hour early. It had snowed the night before and somebody had to shovel the snow out in front of the garage.

I remember on Wednesday nights, many times I'd pray that God would send the cars in on Thursday, so that I could pay my one employee on Friday. I also remember that throughout the years I've had a gun held to my head and a knife to my throat. I've navigated the recessions and I've navigated the banking crisis. I've worried about getting health insurance for the people that work with me. I've spent my years trying to build the company, and I often say, "Was it worth it?"

It certainly was. Today, Penn Parking has parking garages in Virginia, Maryland, and D. C. We have 45 of them. We employ over 200. We've not only survived, we've thrived. One of the things I'm most proud of is that we've remained independent. Large conglomerates out there have bought out most small parking companies or run them out of business. I can also say, Penn Parking is the only woman-founded parking management company in the history of the United States of America. Thank you for letting me share my story.

Queen Latifah:

Yeah. Wow, that's what I'm talking about. Yes. Well, please enjoy a quick break and be back in your seats by 3:30. Go stretch your legs, talk to somebody, don't come up here and try to steal my ring that fell off. And I guess, I'll have a new stack of books when I get back. Give it up for the Miss-Behaviors, ladies and gents.

No, I don't know how you hit the notes you just hit and then say, "Thank you very much." Yeah. I mean, all up in the air, girl. You bad. She's bad. I know she's bad. Once again, the Miss-Behaviors, you all.

Okay, how we feeling? How we feeling, ladies and gents? How we feeling? You feeling inspired, invigorated? You had a break. You stretched it out. You ready? Ready for some more?

Audience:

Yeah.

## **Coffee Talk**

**Nancy Redd, journalist, entrepreneur and former Miss Virginia**

Queen Latifah:

Okay. We are so lucky to talk to my next guest. She was crowned Miss Virginia in 2003, while getting her degree with honors from Harvard. She's gone on to write several books for women on topics like body image and pregnancy. She's also one of the founding hosts of HuffPost Live. Please welcome Nancy Redd. Come on, Nancy. Give her some respect.

Nancy Redd:

Hello.

Queen Latifah:

Dang, I want a talk show, just so I can have a house band like them just rocking.

Nancy Redd:

They are amazing. Give these ladies a round of applause, they are rocking it out. Amazing.

Queen Latifah:

Nancy, I am so excited to have you here. Queen Latifah interviewing the Queen of Virginia. Queen of Jersey, Queen of Virginia.

Nancy Redd:

It's a match made in heaven.

Queen Latifah:

Genia to Jersey.

Nancy Redd:

Genia-Jersey.

Queen Latifah:

You know what I mean? You have such a great story to tell from being Miss Virginia to winning \$250,000 on a game show, to being a best-selling author with a new book coming out soon.

Nancy Redd:

Yes, all of that-

Queen Latifah:

Oh, that's very exciting. I want to talk about that, but let's get started. I love the books you have written about female body image. What makes Miss Virginia...? I mean, we talking the winner of the swimsuit competition. The winner of the swimsuit competition. The part when they put the swimsuit on, the two pieces, the barely there. Anyway.

Nancy Redd:

There was butt glue involved.

Queen Latifah:

There was butt glue. She earned that win. What makes you want to become an advocate and an author helping women to love their very own bodies?

Nancy Redd:

It was exactly that, because...

Queen Latifah:

The butt glue?

Nancy Redd:

It was the butt glue. Definitely, the butt glue was the turning point.

Queen Latifah:

You was like, "That's enough."

Nancy Redd:

But most importantly, when you're in these moments and you have achieved the success and you realize a lot of it is empty, and a lot of it is fake. Here I was, having worked very hard for this accolade that I thought was going to be life-changing in how I thought about myself and it would take away all the insecurities and all of the emotional damage and baggage that I had. In fact, it made it worse. I was like, "What's going on?" I win this competition. It's an amazing experience. I become a model. I get my first magazine cover. It's on the cover of Women's World magazine and I'm in stores nationwide and I'm in Martinsville, Virginia at this point. Who!

I don't get the magazine before my boyfriend, who was still at Harvard, who's now my husband. I was like, "Can you go get it on the stands?" He was like, "Sure." And he goes, and it was before cell phones had cameras. We are that old. I was like, "What does it look like?" He was like, "Doesn't look like you." I was like, "What's going on?" He was like, "They've done something. I don't... I mean, you have extra teeth."

And he was like, "And I know that body, and you are small, but you're not this small." Basically, it was a very rude awakening for me on what airbrushing was, and I realized here I am. I have busted it to get in this little butt glue swimsuit, and I'm still not good enough for the cover of a magazine. I was like, "You know what? I'm not buying into this fakeness anymore. I'm also interested in eating a taco." So, I decided-

Queen Latifah:

A taco? That's like trying to eat one Dorito.

Nancy Redd:

Well, yes.

Queen Latifah:

You would need some tacos.

Nancy Redd:

I needed some tacos and a reality check and some perspective. So, I got the taco and I decided that I wanted to help women understand from the inside out that this is all a scam. Beauty comes from within, confidence comes from within. It has nothing to do with your scale, size, or what a picture in a magazine tells you. That's how I started my career with my first book, Body Drama, then Diet Drama and Pregnancy OMG. The cycle continues because I want every woman to be able to look in the mirror and know that they can see someone who looks like them in print and we are not perfect and we can be stinky and we can be weird and we can have issues, but that's who we are and we are strong, powerful people who deserve to see ourselves and be comfortable with ourselves.

Queen Latifah:

We can be stinky sometimes. I don't know about you, but I got a lot of friends who struggle to find that perfect deodorant, the one that actually works.

Nancy Redd:

Yo, are we sharing tips here because-

Queen Latifah:

I know what works for me, but I've seen people run the gamut of this and the crystal and the-

Nancy Redd:

See, I'm on Stridex pads right now. Apparently, Stridex pads get rid of... Anyway, this is off topic, but...

Queen Latifah:

I know. I'm using some shit, this natural stuff. It works for me. Something, with the natural, you've got to apply more often.

Nancy Redd:

And be careful and sometimes you got to-

Queen Latifah:

Yeah, don't try that one-a-day thing with some of the natural ones and think, "Oh, no, I'm good". No, you're not good. You're not good. Unless we're going for Sheer Essence. If that's goal, you're good. Which is fine, too.

But why do we still get caught up in the drama of what we wear and how much we weigh and what we look like? What do you think that's all about?

Nancy Redd:

It's the crab bucket mentality. You always hear the phrase, you are the sum of the five people... the average of the five people you spend the most time with. And that goes for how we talk about ourselves and how we feel about ourselves, too. If all your friends are sitting around like, girl, are you going to wear that? Girl, you going to wear your hair like that?

Queen Latifah:

That's why I hang around with boys so much.

Nancy Redd:

Boys are no better. It's funny. Boys are some of the most dramatic when it came to how I looked, especially because I'm a Southern girl. Especially growing up, we were supposed to look a certain way and talk a certain way and be a certain way. Some of my boyfriends were inappropriate with the expectations they had of me, and I was very happy that when I found my husband, and I was telling him I was going to write this book, my previous boyfriend literally called me up and said, "You will ruin your political career if you have these naked ladies in a

book with your name on it." My current husband was like, "That's great because I'm tired of women being worried about their roles. Anybody who's worth it doesn't care about a role."

To that point, so what happens is you get in this group of people, men and women, and it's like, "Oh my gosh, I just feel so fat and ugly." Now if you have a type of friend who's going to go along and say, "Oh my gosh, no, I feel fat and ugly," you need the person that's going to shut that down. I like to think of the person that's political. And so I feel like Maxine Waters' catchphrase can be used for many things.

Queen Latifah:  
That's my girl.

Nancy Redd:  
Reclaim your time. Reclaim your time when you talk about your body. Don't say anything negative about your body or anyone else's body. Just exist and do the best with whatever you've got because it's here.

Queen Latifah:  
I was about to say, "Please don't say nothing bad about Maxine Waters because I loves me some Maxine Waters. That's my hero, Maxine Waters."

Nancy Redd:  
Let me tell you, we would be in blows if you wanted to say something negative about Maxine Waters.

Queen Latifah:  
Oh, my goodness.

Your resume is remarkable, from Miss Virginia to Harvard to bestselling author, but what I really want to know is how you won 250K on Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?

Nancy Redd:  
Okay, can we just talk about...? This is really funny, because we know each other, we're going to talk about this later, but she's being real, real modest because you know why I was able to win \$250,000? Because I had a role model, because this lady had gone on Millionaire and won \$250,000 before me. She's like, "Oh, how you do that girl?" You knew all the tricks.

Queen Latifah:  
They didn't know. I was so excited.

Nancy Redd:  
Oh, it was very exciting, and Regis was very intense and the light.. boom, boom, boom.

Queen Latifah:  
You should feel me squeezing these papers right now just at the thought of it.

Nancy Redd:  
Oh my gosh, it was real.

Queen Latifah:  
Mine had to go to charity unfortunately. I had to donate that.

Nancy Redd:  
Ain't nothing wrong with a little tithing. That's why you blessed now.

Queen Latifah:  
It's true. But you know what? I believe that. I believe that. I started my year donating money and my accountant, I know he is like, "What are you doing? You don't have that to give." And I'm like, "It'll come back, it'll come back." I've always been like that through the years because I just know somebody else needs this.

Nancy Redd:  
Absolutely.

Queen Latifah:  
It'll come back.

Nancy Redd:  
Absolutely.

And so I ended up on Millionaire because I was at Harvard and I come from this really small town. It's the best town in Virginia. Sorry, you all. But Martinsville is the best town in Virginia.

Queen Latifah:  
Some of my cousins are going to want to debate that with you.

Nancy Redd:  
Oh, man, your people need to talk to my people.

Queen Latifah:  
They going to be like, "No, Manassas, no, Woodbridge, no, Alexandria, no, Tyson's Corner." But they all up there, so don't worry.

Nancy Redd:  
I get to Harvard. It's like me and 1,599 valedictorians. I was not the valedictorian. Child geniuses, Natalie Portman, and it was me in this freshman class. I'm like, "This is not going to go well." And I was right because it wasn't, because I was trying to compete with these incredible beasts. At Harvard, everything is a competition. To do volunteer work, there were 20 slots, 200 people would sign up, so you had to compete to wash the dog. And I lost. I didn't get to wash no dog.

So I called my mommy up and I was like, "This is not working out." She was like, "I knew it wouldn't." And I was like, "Thanks, Mom." She was like... No, no, it was actually cute. She was like, "No, no, no. They told us in the parent orientation that all of your children are used to being the best at whatever you're doing. Fifty percent of you all going to be in the bottom, so you're going to have to figure that out. And my brother said, "You need to find some stuff that none of these other people can do or want to do. Most importantly want to do." A lot of my career is finding that one random thing that no one else wanted to do and then doing it really, really well. I mean, everyone wants to do it.

Queen Latifah:

So what was that for you?

Nancy Redd:

Millionaire. I stood in the line, no one wanted to go with me, stood in the little sad land, camped out and took the little test and did the crazy audition-

Queen Latifah:

Oh, man, you did it from the... You really, really did it-

Nancy Redd:

It was also before email. So I literally had to wait for a postcard to come in my inbox, in my little mailbox and I was so afraid that it was going to get lost because Boston winters are hardcore. And then one day I get this postcard that you've been selected. Oh, my God! Oh, my God! It was really fun. When I did it everyone was, "Oh, you should have taken us with us to the audition." Well, I mean nobody wanted to ever do the stuff I wanted to do. So you have to carve a path for you that is one that only you can do. Each of you in here can do that.

Queen Latifah:

Now to her credit, she donated a huge chunk of that money to the 4-H Club.

Nancy Redd:

Oh, yes.

Queen Latifah:

I don't want you to think she just stuck it all in her pocket and just hid it. Why was the 4-H Club so important to you?

Nancy Redd:

First of all, I bleed green. Any 4-Hers in here?

Queen Latifah:

I'm classic 4-H.

Nancy Redd:

Woo hoo! 4-H changed my life, saved my life. If it wasn't for the wonderful women of Virginia 4-H I would not be here today at all. I'd probably be under the ground.

Queen Latifah:

For those who don't know, tell them what 4-H is.

Nancy Redd:

4-H is the oldest youth organization in America. It helps young women and men figure out leadership skills. It's basically learn by doing. There are a lot of other great organizations, too. Girl Scouts is amazing. Future Farmers of America is amazing. Girl State is amazing. There are so many great things... 4-H was the club that was afforded to me being in Martinsville in Henry County and it taught me my public speaking and leadership skills. So the fact that I'm not terrified and my pits aren't sweating with stinky sweat because I'm sitting next to Queen Latifah is because of 4-H.

I really believe in tithing, not just to your church or your religious organization, but also professionally. I think sometimes we think, "I don't have any money. I can't be given anything." I happened to, at that point in time, have a bunch of money so I could give. Sometimes I do have a bunch of money and sometimes I do give, and sometimes my accountant's like, "No, thank you."

Queen Latifah:

Right, right.

Nancy Redd:

But sometimes you have to put your emergency mask on. But what I can always do is professionally tithe. What all of you in here can do is professionally tithe. You get a great opportunity? Literally one of the first things on your bucket once you get your bearings is to bring someone else up with you. For example, I still have all these dreams. We still have all these dreams. We've accomplished stuff but we have dreams and goals and one of my dreams just came true because I got the opportunity to write for a publication I have always wanted to write for since I was a little girl. A person hooked me up with it. Literally, the minute I get in the institution, I bring up another person along with me because that's how it works. We create a community, and that's what this is all about, and I hope you're networking and got your business cards all out because magic can happen in this room.

Queen Latifah:

I love that. Professional tithing, I've never heard that.

Nancy Redd:

I just made it up. We should TM it.

Queen Latifah:

You should, you should, before I get to it unless there's some TMers in here. Is there a lawyer in the house? I've got to have a lawyer now. She's got me covered for TMing, professional tithing. At the top of the year we PT.

Nancy Redd:  
Okay.

Queen Latifah:  
Or all throughout the year you can professionally tithe. I think that's great because some of my colleagues sweat equity... But you really put into another person, and you bring them up and a lot of people are here for that purpose today, so that's a wonderful thing.

Our audience may not know that we have met before. We met actually on HuffPost Live.

Nancy Redd:  
Yeah, we did.

Queen Latifah:  
Which was fun.

Nancy Redd:  
It was amazing.

Queen Latifah:  
I loved HuffPost Live.

Nancy Redd:  
What's funny is I was here in Richmond for a writers' conference. They'd brought me in to speak about seven years ago, and I get this call and they're like, "We would like you to come to New York to audition for this new talk show." And I called my husband, and I was, "They're not paying my way, I won't go to no audition."

He was like, "Follow your dreams. You've always wanted to do this, and nobody's paying your way at this point, so you might as well just go and make it happen." So I was here and literally in between the things I was supposed to do, I got on a train, I went there, and I did the audition. It was like 10 minutes. They're horrible and terrifying, because you do these things and all this work for five minutes.

Queen Latifah:  
It's the same as an actor.

Nancy Redd:  
Exactly.

Queen Latifah:  
We hate it.

Nancy Redd:

Exactly. It's horrible. I come back to Richmond, and I'm sitting here in the exact same hotel room that I'm in at this moment, which is crazy.

Queen Latifah:  
That is weird.

Nancy Redd:  
I do this audition, and it changed my life. I took a chance. I took a chance even though I didn't want to because I wanted to be treated like I was supposed to be treated, and thank goodness I did, and I met you, and I met so many people. It was an incredible time until it ended. We know what it's like to lose a show.

Queen Latifah:  
Several times. Don't get your tooth chipped. I'm still a little mushy about it. I'm a little emotional.

Nancy Redd:  
I know, right? It always, so I was like...

Queen Latifah:  
Especially on a cliffhanger. You win some, you lose some.

Nancy Redd:  
I like to say-

Queen Latifah:  
I liked HuffPost Live because you were able to talk about a lot of very important topics. You were able to really dig in on some real news issues and of course pop culture, but you were able to talk about some things. How'd you really feel about that going away?

Nancy Redd:  
I had no idea how lucky I was because HuffPost offered us a platform. I could talk to you about anything. I could ask you any question and you could give me an honest answer and that was it. There was no editing. After that I was tapped to be on a talk show pilot for Fox. It was a very different experience and we'll leave it at that. It was good it did not last the entire period of time I was scheduled to do because I was used to speaking my truth. I didn't write a book that showed cellulite and dandruff to decide to "tighten up my positions" on the current political administration. I think it was a great example of sometimes even when you think you're moving up in the world, you have to just do a full stop and recalibrate because success is not the most important thing. Being true to yourself is way more important than dollars in your pocket.

A lot of you out here, you're very aspirational. We all are. That's why we're here. You've taken this time to sit with us and gather this energy and this power. But just know sometimes what seems like the only opportunity you have to make it, because at that point, after my show shut down, it seemed like it was the only opportunity and I'd lost it. But there's this Buddhist phrase,

"How do you know it's a good thing? How do you know it's a bad thing?" And one of the best things of my life was that pilot not working out. It changed my life. And I'm here with you today.

Queen Latifah:

That's right. Buddhism also gets you used to suffering. It's a normal thing.

Nancy Redd:

Life is suffering so we've got to make the most of what we have.

Queen Latifah:

That's right. Once you start there, it's all uphill from there. Where are the best stories being told about women happening today you think?

Nancy Redd:

At the kitchen table. I go home every summer for at least two months primarily because my children are not going to not know the South. Literally, 80% of my time is spent at the kitchen table with my mama, just gathering her wealth of knowledge.

Queen Latifah:

I miss mama now. We spent so much time at the kitchen table.

Nancy Redd:

So much time at the kitchen table.

Queen Latifah:

The kitchen table. So go on, please.

Nancy Redd:

I think that we need to look to people like me and Queen and Instagram celebrities and talk show hosts and everything as a source of inspiration. But do not underestimate the people in your own family that got you here. And especially the powerful women who grew up in a different era. My mama grew up in segregation. She went to a one room school. But you know what? Most of those people in that one room school are doctors, lawyers, super-successful people, business owners. They rocked it out. If they could do that and they didn't even have Gmail, I would take that advice. I'm going to take it. It's much more valuable than a \$29.99 marketing starter kit. And it's free and it's super fun. And also they're so, they want to be talked to. They want your respect, and they deserve your respect because they have made it and they have gotten us here. And I think forgetting the past is how we are going to not have such a bright future. We really need to go back and gather some of that truth and power.

Queen Latifah:

You're absolutely right. We had Chief Anne Richardson on our stage earlier, who is the first chief to lead the Rappahannock Nation and what she spoke about was the dreams... ushering in the dreams of the past and nurturing the future. Remembering history, remembering those

ancestors who got you here, remembering the dreams that you had and you hoped for and those that aren't finished beginning to complete. So there's always a road to travel for us.

Which brings me to this question. You have traveled many roads. You've driven many places, gone up many avenues. What is your North Star? What keeps you pointed in the right direction?

Nancy Redd:

I have two small children. I have an eight year old boy and a five year old girl, and they are hilarious. I feel like being a parent sometimes it's like dating because I'm trying to be my best self with them all the time because I don't want them to turn into ruffians. I can't yell at them because I can't be yelling at the kid on the street. So I'm always thinking, "What can I do to inspire them to be good, productive citizens?"

My son is a perfectionist to the point where he acts out instead of doing what he's supposed to because he's afraid of messing it up. So every morning we start off and we say... We do call and response, but that would not work because you don't yet know this. It's, "Nobody's perfect. Everybody's doing their best." And that is a very powerful phrase for someone, like many of you. If you're here, you all are pretty type A because nobody's signing up and going into a conference and getting here and getting your hotel, unless you've got a lot on the ball, which means you're very hard on yourself. I have imposter syndrome. I literally sometimes sit in my bed and literally before I came here, I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I'm going to not do it."

Nancy Redd:

Sometimes sit in my bed. Literally, right before I came here, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm going to not do well at this." And my husband was like, "You're going to do great. Stop it!"

Queen Latifah:

I like your husband.

Nancy Redd:

You know him. My husband was in a movie with you. You want to hear a great story about Queen?

Queen Latifah:

Snitches get stitches. Just going to throw that out there, if it's a bad one.

Nancy Redd:

Okay. I won't tell that story then.

Queen Latifah:

I'm just kidding.

Nancy Redd:

Is there a lawyer in the house?

Queen Latifah:

It's same lawyer that's going to trademark us. We got public defenders here. I'm good.

Nancy Redd:

No, it's just about how she is so committed to the glow up. My husband, it was a long time ago. It was this amazing movie called Just Right. It was the first of its kind, so great.

So, Debra Martin Chase, who is a peach of a person, cast Rupak, my husband, in a small role and he has a few scenes with her. It's very exciting. They actually made it to the movie. Thank you residuals. But he's sitting there and he was dude with Queen Latifah. He was one of her assistants in the movie. And so they're sitting there and she's like, "Why didn't they give you a name?" And he's like, "I don't know. I didn't ask for a name." "Get this man a name! This man needs a name." And literally, he comes home and was like, "Queen Latifah gave me a name."

Queen Latifah:

He right. I can't stand that. Don't put me in a scene with somebody and he's just guy number three. I need to see him as someone. I don't care if it's an extra. I need to see you as someone. You are somebody to me.

Nancy Redd:

Exactly. And it's a great example of what we were talking about, the beloved late Toni Morrison said, "If you are free, it is your job to free other people." So, she freed my husband from not getting residuals, because when you don't got no name, you don't get residuals.

Queen Latifah:

It was also a producer on that movie. So, I had to break off a little chunk for him.

Nancy Redd:

I appreciate it.

Queen Latifah:

Which was no problem.

Nancy Redd:

Thank you.

Queen Latifah:

We got a five and a eight year old and baby needs shoes. Baby needs shoes. Oh, that's awesome. So, now you have a book coming out. You have a new book.

Nancy Redd:

I have a new book. Yay!

Queen Latifah:

A new book.

Nancy Redd:  
It's my very first children's book.

Queen Latifah:  
Is it?

Nancy Redd:  
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Queen Latifah:  
What is it about? Give us some deets.

Nancy Redd:  
Okay, so this will be fun. So, first, I'm going to ask you a question. It's a little personal. So, as you can tell from my books, I like to take the personal-

Queen Latifah:  
Why she keep asking me questions?

Nancy Redd:  
You know what? It's so hard to switch it off.

Queen Latifah:  
I'm ready. I know. I know. Go for it.

Nancy Redd:  
Okay. When you go to bed at night, what do you put on your head?

Queen Latifah:  
Nothing.

Nancy Redd:  
Excuse me?

Queen Latifah:  
I know, I know. I'm a unicorn. Respect my horn.

Nancy Redd:  
What are you supposed to put on your head at night?

Queen Latifah:  
Like a bonnet or a silk pillow.

Nancy Redd:

How many of y'all wear a bonnet on your head at night, or scarf or something? Yep. Yep.

Queen Latifah:

I've been wearing it the past couple of days. Somebody gave me one.

Nancy Redd:

So you do wear a bonnet.

Queen Latifah:

Well, I've been flying on a plane trying to figure out how am I going to hide this bonnet under my headphones under this hoodie, so nobody sees me wearing a bonnet on the plane?

Nancy Redd:

Well, precisely.

Queen Latifah:

I made it work.

Nancy Redd:

I personally think that we must de-stigmatize things like bonnets because it's ubiquitous in our household.

Queen Latifah:

I sleep to wild.

Nancy Redd:

I mean, we can talk about how to keep your bonnet on.

Queen Latifah:

I don't want no bonnet on my head.

Nancy Redd:

I got you. I got you, boo.

Queen Latifah:

This is very tender subject for me, as you can tell.

Nancy Redd:

Exactly! It's a tender subject for us all.

Queen Latifah:

Can't make me wear no bonnet.

Nancy Redd:

You're going to wear that bonnet!

Queen Latifah:  
I'm still not over the hot comb at the stove with the oil.

Nancy Redd:  
How your kitchen?

Queen Latifah:  
And I'm tender headed.

Nancy Redd:  
Handle your kitchen. Oh, okay. Okay. All right. Okay, so long story short-

Queen Latifah:  
I'm trying to save my edges, man.

Nancy Redd:  
We could be here all day about this.

Queen Latifah:  
I know, right? So, please, please, continue.

Nancy Redd:  
The point of this is, I love talking about this. It's why I wrote a book about it. So, I'll try to get my daughter to wear her bonnet because her hair was a mess. It was such a mess. I went on a work trip and my husband, Hair Love that book had not yet come out. So, my husband was not up to, it's important to know how to do your daughter's hair.

So I came back and my child's hair was so tangled. I literally had to fly to Virginia, so my mama could get those tangles out, because I could not risk CPS hearing the screams and thinking I had done something to her. So, my mom was like, "This child needs a bonnet." I was like, "She won't wear the bonnet." She was like, "She going to wear the bonnet."

And so my mom, of course, grandma means business. This is why I sit at the kitchen table and get my advice. And so, my daughter was like, "Well, Doc McStuffins doesn't wear a bonnet." Where is the lie?

Queen Latifah:  
Doc McStuffins don't wear a bonnet.

Nancy Redd:  
I know! I realized I need a resource. I'm Googling. I'm like, "Ooh, there's no resource here." So, I went to Random House and I was like, "I have your next best seller." Because every black girl in America needs this book, and it's called *Bedtime Bonnet*.

It's the first ever book to celebrate and de-stigmatize black nighttime hair rituals, because, in the same way that I really felt, 15 years ago, we're comfortable talking about cellulite and airbrushing now. When I first started this journey, Oprah hadn't even said vajayjay. So, I am really excited with *Bedtime Bonnet*, which is available for preorder now. We're doing a big cover reveal with theGrio next week that we're doing to de-stigmatize it. You don't have to be so ashamed of your bonnet when you're on the plane.

Queen Latifah:

No, I like my bonnet. I actually do like my bonnet, but not as much as my silk pillow, which gets me out of the bonnet game.

Nancy Redd:

That's a good one.

Queen Latifah:

You're going to have to have something like that because every kid ain't going to wear that bonnet.

Nancy Redd:

It's true. We should go in on this.

Queen Latifah:

But it's true. All my friends, there's so many different choices. There's the bonnet, there's the scarf, many kinds of scarf.

Nancy Redd:

In the book we talk about the durag.

Queen Latifah:

The way you tie the scarf. Of course.

Nancy Redd:

The mama has a pineapple.

Queen Latifah:

We going to go this way, or we going that way? Then we flipping it? Are we tucking it in?

Nancy Redd:

100%.

Queen Latifah:

Are we going to wrap it? Or are we going to straight a mugger style and put on the stocking cap. And come all the way down and it's a stick up. You know what I mean? You know what I mean?

Nancy Redd:

Set it off!

Queen Latifah:

Set it off, everybody. The hair bonnet trilogies.

Nancy Redd:

Again, that is the statistic. People are like, "Oh, a wave cap means you're going to stick it up." So daddy is wearing a wave cap, he's wearing a stocking cap in this. So, we need to normalize these things because they are synonymous with stereotypes that are unfair to something so ubiquitous.

Queen Latifah:

Absolutely.

Nancy Redd:

So Bedtime Bonnet. Hope you're interested.

Queen Latifah:

We're interested. So thank you so much. Erin, Erin. We got some audience questions for you.

Nancy Redd:

Ooh, yes we do.

Erin Lunsford:

Nancy, I'm so honored to be talking to you because inclusive body positivity is a cause that I'm really personally for and like to promote. So, honored to be asking you some questions on behalf of the audience. First one, someone from your home Girl Scout council is here.

Queen Latifah:

Girl Scouts!

Nancy Redd:

Girl Scouts! Yay!

Queen Latifah:

And wants to know how you think Girl Scouts influenced your path.

Nancy Redd:

Oh my goodness. I'm so glad I gave y'all a shout out when I was talking about 4-H because, again, there's so many amazing organizations. Girl Scouts was so important because I couldn't get involved in 4-H until I was eight, but you want to know who was a Daisy? I was a Daisy. Judy Gravelly of Moral Hill Missionary Baptist Church had my little troop, and we were so cute. We would get in that church basement and we would do our little crafts, and we would learn how to actually like sit still in a group, and complete something, and sew our little patches.

There were no iron on patches at this point. We sewed our patches on. Therefore, I learned how to sew. And I remember vividly, oh my gosh, I haven't thought about this in years. I remember the crossover when I became a Brownie. Oh, my gosh. I remember crossing over the bridge and I felt like I had become the president of the United States. It was very exciting. So, it's just done so much for me. It was my first entree into leadership and for many of us.

Queen Latifah:

You know, it was so interesting. These all feel like rites of passage, and I think rites of passage are so important because kids need a reason to want to grow, to want to mature, and to know that there are things that are not for them yet. Well, we're talking about in an age of information where they have access to so many things, and those things aren't for you just yet, but you work your way up to them. You earn your way. I wanted to hang out with my older cousins. I wanted to be able to do things. I wanted to get my driver's license. These are things that you aim for on the course of becoming an adult.

Nancy Redd:

You know, kids now, they don't want driver's licenses. They don't want anything. And honestly it's because of lethargy, and being involved from an early age with organizations like Girl Scouts where there's a hierarchy, and 4-H and Boys and Girls Club, where there's a group and you grow within the group, is one way to stop that. Because I'm sure all of us can think back to our childhood, and we were being part of a group where you could be elected. The reason I got to Harvard was because I was in 4-H. I was elected president of my local 4-H club. Then I would got to go to state and was elected president there. So, I learned all of these things. But if you don't have anything, you can't be elected president of the Instagram club. So, it's hard to translate those skills of, "I can like 8000 pictures in a minute," to real life success. What do you do? So, I think that's brilliant. That's such a great point, is being involved in Scouts and 4-H and these organizations gives you something to look forward to.

Queen Latifah:

I concur. And it gives you people to look up to. But all I can think about is bonnet battles. I think you should create something. There's got to be some bonnet battles.

Nancy Redd:

Yo. We got a lawyer, we can...

Queen Latifah:

Like, who's got the best bonnet? Let me calm down. I'm jumping around too much.

Nancy Redd:

I know. It's mind blowing when you think about the bonnet, but we have questions to answer.

Queen Latifah:

Yes, we do. What else did we have?

Erin Lunsford:

Nancy, how do you handle rejection?

Nancy Redd:

Oh, I enjoy my rejection very much because I like throwing pity parties for myself. I am the biggest baby. This is very important. I am rejected from like 80% of the things I try to do. I will give y'all a secret. I just told someone this yesterday, and they didn't believe me. Everybody has an Achilles heel they can't do. I cannot get accepted into grad school. I have tried to get accepted into a PhD program for 10 years. I just got rejected like three months ago. I get rejected from every PhD program I apply for. I do not know why. No one wants me to be Dr. Redd. I think it's because they know that I really just secretly wants to be Dr. Redd. No matter what I do. I mean, this time I went all out on my application. It was beautiful. I had multiple people look at it. Nope, I didn't even get wait-listed.

So, I love it because when I do get something, it tastes so much that better because I know it is not guaranteed. Sitting here with you, being invited to do this, is not a guarantee. Getting my book sold?

Queen Latifah:

It's guaranteed. Let's just put it out there. It's a guarantee.

Nancy Redd:

Okay, well I'll take that blessing. I'll take that one. But you just got to keep hustling y'all.

Queen Latifah:

Yeah, you take a chance on it.

Nancy Redd:

Because there are so many people out here who the biggest success of all came after 2000 failures. The creator of Potpourri. You know Potpourri? I was reading this amazing Forbes article about her. She went bankrupt like three times. That girl started a wedding dress business, and then she has some other hustle that didn't work, and then all of a sudden she was sitting, she was, "I'm never starting another business anymore." And someone went poop in her bathroom during a dinner. She was like, "This is it! No! This is my idea. This is me!"

Queen Latifah:

I could paraphrase that.

Nancy Redd:

And her husband was like, "All right baby, I believe in you. We going to find something that masks the smell of this." And now she's worth, like, tens of millions of dollars. She was laughing all the way to the bank. I'm just saying, whenever you're getting down on yourself, just remember, the creator of Potpourri is an almost billionaire, and she started with a failed wedding dress business. You can do it, too.

Queen Latifah:

Boy, you said that so politely. But I'm hearing the dirty version of that in my brain right now, and it is so funny.

Nancy Redd:  
It's the good Southern girl in me.

Queen Latifah:  
I know, and I'm from Jersey.

Nancy Redd:  
I know my levels.

Queen Latifah:  
I'm not hearing that version. Oh, my goodness. That, I think, is amazing. So you get back up and you keep fighting again.

Nancy Redd:  
Keep on fighting.

Queen Latifah:  
That's right. Thank you so much. This has been such a great pleasure, Nancy. If anybody's got the hookup, we got to get her that PhD. Give it up for Nancy!

That was awesome.  
Nancy Redd:  
I love you so much.

Queen Latifah:  
Thank you. Wow.

Nancy Redd:  
Thank you. Thank you so much.

### **Keynote Introduction**

#### **Kathy J. Spangler, executive director of the 2019 Commemoration**

Queen Latifah:  
Oh my goodness. So good. And now I would like to introduce the executive director of the Virginia 2019 Commemoration American Evolution, Kathy Spangler. Come on, y'all. Give it up for the woman. Let me come to you.

Kathy Spangler:  
Thank you.

Queen Latifah:  
Let me say, this has been amazing.

Kathy Spangler:  
It's been great, hasn't it?

Queen Latifah:  
Thank you so much.

Kathy Spangler:  
Thank you.

Queen Latifah:  
All right. Have a great one.

Kathy Spangler:  
Come on, again! The Queen! This has been amazing. We're so glad you're here. We had been planning for this for four years, to have you join us to commemorate and celebrate 400 years of women's achievements and impact. This is for you!

Over the past four years, American Evolution and key partners from across the Commonwealth have focused on the women pillars through the commemoration themes of democracy, diversity, and opportunity. I would like to thank the Virginia Women's Conference and Senator Mark Warner for allowing us to share your event this year as you celebrate your 10th anniversary. Please.

You heard it earlier, but just yesterday, the Women's Monument on Capitol Square was dedicated and we are proud that this is one of the legacy projects of the 2019 Commemoration. I'd like to congratulate the Capitol Foundation and the Women's Monument Commission. It was a years in the making event.

Earlier this year we hosted two signature events with our partner, the Virginia Arts Festival, the "Virginia International Tattoo," honored women in the military to sold out crowds, and our newly commissioned ballet by the Dance Theater of Harlem was created by an all women team, and now they're touring the country with *Passage*, the commissioned work that we brought forward. At the Jamestown Settlement, the special exhibition "Tenacity: Women in Jamestown and Early Virginia," has received national acclaim, and is still open until January 5th. Please come visit.

"The Cosmologies from the Tree Of Life" exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts was curated by Ms. Valerie Cassel Oliver. Women have been throughout this commemoration. I also encourage you to visit the free New Virginians exhibit at the Library of Virginia, where dozens of stories of immigrant women from the Vietnam era are showcased.

Partnering with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, I think we have a contingent here in the room, the Virginia to America video series features women such as Maggie Walker and Barbara Johns,

as well as the leaders of the Virginia Women's Suffrage Movement. If you were looking for stories of courageous and accomplished Virginia women's, the Virginia History Trails app is a quick and easy way to explore Virginia.

Now, I have a favor to ask. We are so close to achieving our download goal for this award winning app, so please help me out. Pull out your phones or find it in your bag because it's in your bag, the URL, but download the Virginia History Trails app now. Help us. We want to get over the top. Can I count on you? Thank you.

Although we're nearing the end of the commemorative year, we still have a number of exciting programs. I'm not sure we're going to talk today, but we have a number of exciting programs, including a statewide finale, the entire month of November. Please join us November 1st through 30th for the American Evolution Customs, Cultures, and Cuisine Festival presented by Town Bank.

And oh, by the way, let's just keep it going. This coming weekend, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has a women's empowerment forum you may also want to consider. Showcasing women's achievements has been a priority this year, but it won't end December 31st. Please mark your calendar for the Centennial Commemoration of women's suffrage, coordinated by the Virginia Museum of History and Culture.

We've had so many tremendous partners this year for the commemoration. As I reflect on this year, the 2019 commemoration, I am so grateful for all the sponsors, the partners, the individuals, the participants who have supported, participated and promoted Virginia's role in the creation of the United States. I'm also grateful to the 2019 commemoration staff team and our contractors who have been so committed to American Evolution, and I'd ask you to share your round of applause for all those who worked on this and our events year long. It's been a tremendous year, and we're really grateful for you being here.

But it's really my special opportunity this afternoon to introduce our closing keynote speaker for today. Mika Brzezinski is cohost of MSNBC weekday morning broadcast Morning Joe. Her book, for sale outside in the lobby, please pick a copy up, *Knowing Your Value: Women, Money, and Getting What You're Worth*, explores women and financial negotiations, and includes tips for negotiating salaries and compensation packages. Mika has had many roles, including journalist, talk show host, political commentator and visiting fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics. It's now my pleasure to introduce and ask you to join me in welcoming Mika Brzezinski.

Queen Latifah:

Woo, yeah. What an amazing day. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. It was a pleasure and of course an honor to be your host. Remember ladies, always go first. Ladies first. If we work with each other, then we use that U-N-I-T-Y. All right. Thank you for coming to the Women's Achieve Summit. We'll see you again next time. Having achieved something. Feeling good and passing it on to the next. Thank you so much. Thank you to the Miss-Behaviors. God bless y'all. Y'all take good care. Peace.

