



Raymond A. Mason School of Business

WILLIAM & MARY

DIVERSITY GOES TO WORK PODCAST

EPISODE 53: TI'JUANA GHOLSON – BLACK. FEMALE. ENTREPRENEUR.

Phil Wagner

Hello from the halls of the Mason School of Business here at William & Mary. I'm Phil, and this is Diversity Goes to Work. Buckle up because we're getting ready to take a deep dive into the real human lived experiences that shape and guide our diversity work in the world of work. Should be fun.

Phil Wagner

Welcome, listeners, to yet another episode of Diversity Goes to Work. Our guest today, Ti'Juana Gholson, is a member of the maximized life coaching and mentoring team and is a demonstrational life coach specializing in program development, strategic and financial planning, as well as business structuring. As a serial entrepreneur herself, Ti'Juana provides everyday mentorship, mentorship for the here and now, and coaching to small business owners or contract professionals through her company, Tag Consulting, LLC; she says, my mission is to provide support and demonstrate the how to start and how to maintain a business. She's qualified as a marriage and family counselor. Her unique and candid approach to human behavior qualifies her well for our conversation here today. She's very energized to share her knowledge through real-life and real-time growth and development in her business ventures. She's a self-starter who strives to remain relevant, relatable, and real. I trust you'll hear all of that on our podcast today. Ti'Juana, my friend, thank you for joining us for another episode of Diversity Goes to Work. It's a pleasure to have you here.

Ti'Juana Gholson

Thank you for having me. I was just about to say that person sounds phenomenal.

Phil Wagner

She does sound phenomenal, right? Did I get your bio right? Is there anything else you want to share with us? Did I cover it all? You do so much.

Ti'Juana Gholson

Yeah. And sometimes, I actually utterly do not enjoy sending bios to people because of the amount of work that is being done through this earth suit of mine. And sometimes it seems like, oh my God, that girl ain't doing all that. But if I would add anything else, it would be that I'm a nonprofit founder co-founder of a nonprofit organization, and I do a lot of my charity

and philanthropy work through the nonprofit organization, especially when it comes to business and financial education. To the small business owner, we focused on SWaM businesses over the last few years, especially helping folks getting back in shape after the pandemic. So I would add that, and I would also add that I am the proud co-founder of the Women's Business Symposium Meets the Maximized Man, which we are hosting this weekend, actually at the College of William & Mary Sadler Center. So that's all that I will add for now. We'll talk it all through as we go.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, we absolutely will. And I'm hoping, since stories are such an important part of your work, if you can take us back into your own story, sort of the story behind your first entrepreneurial endeavor and maybe some of the challenges you faced and how your community supported you, I'm thinking about overcoming obstacles and communal support and entrepreneurial mindsets, and I know that all of that is a part of your work. So, take us back and tell us a little bit more about the story behind that first entrepreneurial endeavor, will you?

TiJuana Gholson

Well, let me tell you, it's almost like it's not a first. It was a first of many entrepreneurial endeavors because I'm sure someone on your listeners can relate to trying something until you got that one thing. And that's what happened with myself and my husband, who's also my business partner in many of my endeavors. We tried this, and we tried that until we found that one thing, Phil. And what we really figured out was something that a word my husband came across. I don't know if he made it up or what, but he called it the F.A.N.A.F.I. Principle find a need and fill it. And as we were learning in small business ownership, we thought, okay, if we come up with a nice little idea, people are going to come. But what we've learned over time is that people will come if it's a need. So we found that one thing at that time, about 25 years ago in the healthcare world, that there was a need for what we do. And that's when we discovered that, okay, at that time, that was our one thing. So it was a journey. I can't pinpoint, like, some people, they've done the same thing forever. And it's like I can pinpoint the day I started, and I pulled myself up from my bootstrap. Well, we didn't actually do it that way. We kind of tried a whole lot of different things because we knew at heart that we were entrepreneurs. We just knew that for years that this is the life that we wanted to live, the lifestyle of an entrepreneur.

Phil Wagner

I love it. Now, for our listeners who may not be as familiar with you, tell us a little bit more about that one thing and maybe a little bit more about how that's developed over the last 25 years because there's a lot that has changed or happened in that healthcare space over the last two and a half decades.

TiJuana Gholson

Absolutely. And let me just tell you about the type of healthcare space that we're in and why it's so significant, and why we love what we do. I went to school to be a social worker initially

and accomplished that. Got my master's in counseling because I wanted to help people. Same with my husband. We wanted to help people. So, in working as a young social worker years ago, I found that there was a need, especially for people with disabilities, intellectual disabilities, mental health concerns in the community. And so we started a company. It's called Family Matters Services, where we provide in-home support to people with intellectual disabilities. So, for instance, still, if you're not really familiar with it, it is a program that's licensed by the Department of Behavioral Health, and most of our clients receive Medicaid funding, and they have to in order to receive the services, the state has developed a waiver program for them to receive the services. So, they have to meet a certain eligibility criteria in order to get the service? And the services are gatekept by local community services boards. So, if you're in the Colonial area, we have colonial behavioral health. I don't know if you're familiar with that organization, but that's our gatekeeper that refers individuals to programs like ours. Anyway, our staff goes into the home, say, for instance, you have a child with autism, and you need some supports with that child, and you still need to go to work and live life as life. We are that support service for that child. So not only is what we do a need being filled in the community. It's also a challenging need when it comes to just making sure people get the right resources. The right support that they need. And now that we've gone through the pandemic era, it's also a staffing challenge. Just trying to keep staff engaged and trying to be competitive with staff, and trying to just overall keep staff. Honestly, to be honest with you, it's been a different world since we've gone back into the world from the pandemic.

Phil Wagner

This is all very helpful, and I'm wondering, as part of that story, can you share a little bit more? I'm thinking so many folks are promised a reality in their entrepreneurial ventures that may not pan out to be true, and specifically those from underserved and minority communities. Black and brown entrepreneurs may not be able to access capital or access support in the same way. And so that revenue generation piece is really key. Can you speak to any of that? How you took this idea and made it profitable, but also overcame some of the obstacles in accessing capital, accessing support, and building that community around those entrepreneurial endeavors that really ultimately allowed it to take off?

Ti'Juana Gholson

Okay, that's a mouthful.

Phil Wagner

I know. I'm known for that. I'm so sorry. It's so bad. It's a bad habit. Seven questions in one.

Ti'Juana Gholson

That was seven in one, Phil, but I'm going to try to strip it piece by piece. Let's start from the beginning. We'll go back to your beginning. What did you do in the beginning? Let me tell you, because you hit a nerve when you said accessing capital, especially as African American woman. Initially when I decided, because I decided to step away from my job first, it was a process. In our family, we didn't have anyone to invest in us or to give us thousands of dollars

to get started and go get a brick-and-mortar building to start our business. We didn't have that, so we had to be creative. In fact, when I brought the idea up to my family, they looked at me like I was crazy. Like, why would you do that? Because at that time, I was in my 20s, my husband was in his 20s, and we had young children and just from. Okay, so it's two sides of the coin. It's the sides of the coin from your own community that says, are you crazy? Have you bumped your head? You went to school all these years to quit your job and go and be an entrepreneur and step out on a dream. You got little kids. Heard all of that. So that was my first encouraging words from people in my community and then to go to the bank, oh, no, you're too young, you're too new. We don't trust you enough to give you a few thousand dollars to launch this business was also disheartening. So, there were several times that I decided to give up. Just said forget it. But I had a bright idea, and I don't advise many people to do this. In fact, unless you're sure that this is what you want to do for your entrepreneurship path, I decided to take some of my 401K and my retirement. I had to fund my own life. I had to fund my own dream and my vision. And my husband and I, we had to talk about it, and we said, hey, if we think this is going to work, we're going to have to work this together. It's a whole lot of other pieces to the pan, but we took out a few thousands of dollars so we can launch our business. I promise you, 25 years later, we haven't looked back, and we funded our retirement. We're basically financially free and retired. We do what we do because we're still young and healthy, and we want to continue to help the community. But yeah, it was difficult to access capital. Now, speeding up from the early nineties to now 2023. Is it easier for African American and black and brown community to access capital? Not really. It's not that much easier. Now, it has been a little easy over the pandemic era because that's been for everybody across the board because there wasn't access of capital initially. I'm sure you heard of if people had their paperwork together, the PPP and the idle and all that stuff that some people were able to access, but there still was a handful of people feel that could not access that because they were small business and mom and pop thinking that they didn't have good records, that they didn't have payroll summaries, that they didn't have their structures set up properly. And that's where we found an issue with a lot of minority-owned companies. They just didn't have the structure. So, our nonprofit organization we went for a grant through the Department of Housing and Community Development to help support. When I said we helped folks shift from the pandemic, we did exactly that. We were granted funds to bring in professional partners that help to support these small businesses. We brought in attorneys that could help with them setting up their structure and developing their operating agreements, and if they were going to be an LLC, help to get that paperwork recorded. We brought in CPAs who helped with their budget and projections and their taxes. We brought in insurance professionals that helped them protect their brand and protect themselves. As key men, we brought in bankers that were willing to work with our folks and come in and teach sessions. This is what we look for. Get these documents together. You do need a business plan. You might not need to write a dissertation, but we need to know your vision, and we need to know how this business is going to scale so that you can pay us our money back one day. So we brought in the professional partners, and we even took it a little further, Phil, with human resources practitioners coming in, because a lot of small businesses don't think that they need to function like a business. You can't just hire mama and cousins and daddy is off a whim and don't have any documents because what happens when everybody's upset? Then, you can't get

rid of them because you didn't properly follow HR practices. So we bring in HR practitioners, we bring in marketing specialists, we bring in technology specialists that can help you help some of our small businesses automate so that they can scale, especially if you're a one-man, two-man show, and there's not so many hours in the day and so much strength in one body. So, automation may be something that you want to look into. So we bring in those professionals, and we have a monthly boot camp. We call it the maximum business boot camp. Those professionals, they're dedicated. They come in, and they teach these sessions to our small business participants. And then we don't just leave them there, because what we found, too, is sometimes information becomes information overload, and you get stuck and you don't know how to apply it. So what we do is we pair them with coaches and mentors that can help them to apply what they've learned in our boot camp. Which is a 16-hour session, four sessions over two days. We used to do it in eight weeks, but we found that we were losing adult learners because everything comes up, especially if you're a small business owner, everything's going to come up. So now we do it in 16 hours, two days, either virtually or in person, but we follow them for eight to 16 weeks. Everybody's situation is different depending upon their industry. You'll have some folks that have been with us several years because they're working on a prototype of a product. So we're still working on those things. And we even connect them with other community resources like the SBA. The district director actually comes and teaches in our program as well and help folks with knowing how to apply for government contracting and the relationship the SBA has with the community. What does that mean? What does that look like? Everybody heard about the SBA during the pandemic, but did anyone really knew what their function was? I don't know. So we bring those type of folks in as well, and just some of our local community leaders, like the chamber, we partner with them as well and do some great community work. So it is and has been a journey. So, from my learnings and my mistakes and my hard knots upside the head, we've poured into the program, especially with accessing capital, because everybody comes to our table wants to know how do I get money for my business. What's the process? So, we develop that process so that they can learn how to access capital. Now, for those that follow the process, it's a little bit easier. But I'll tell you what, there's still some. When you're a brand new business, and you're just getting started, there's still a lot of individual or personal liability that goes into it, which a lot of entrepreneurs don't realize. They think, oh, I started an LLC, I'm a business now. I just bossed into a bank, and they're going to give me hundreds of thousands of dollars, and they're not going to do that because your business is too new. A lot of times, you can't even access capital until year five because they want to see a history of revenues. They want to see what your PNLs look like each month. They want to see what your taxes look like. And have you been responsible enough to get your taxes done? That was one of the reasons that a lot of some of the minority-owned businesses didn't get capital during the pandemic is because they didn't have those tools or that documentation in place. Hopefully. Did I hit?

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

TiJuana Gholson

I talk so much.

Phil Wagner

You and me both. So we are a good company. I appreciate it because you show how the process is not a copy-paste process for all. That it's different, it's different by identity affiliation. But there's something else you mentioned earlier that reminds me of something of your work, and I hope you'll speak to it. You mentioned it's a little bit different if you're a one-man show or a two-man show. What about if you're a one-woman show or a two-woman show? You have talked a lot in your work and worked very closely with women specifically. Addressing those gender norms of the business world head-on, specifically as it relates to money, and financial success, and entrepreneurialism. I'm wondering, can you speak to the gender dynamics and specifically how you pour into women in this space? Any specific advice to women wanting to get in?

TiJuana Gholson

Yeah, listen, I am a champion of women. I'm sure if you perused my website or looked at some of my Facebook followings, I champion women. That's one of my platforms. I have a network of over a thousand women on Facebook called Ladies Impacting Professional Systems, where I invite women to come and share about their businesses as well as a place for them to network. Before the pandemic, we used to do what we call business mobs, and we used to put, I call a hootie who out and say, hey, we're going to meet at so and so's restaurant tonight. Let's go and give them a big day. And we will all meet there and network and that person would host, and we will go, and we will spend money in that person's business to give them a good day. I love celebrating, and I love helping women and women entrepreneurs. I don't know if you know, we're having a gala coming up on the weekend, and we are actually celebrating nine leading women here in the Historic Triangle area.

Phil Wagner

Wow.

TiJuana Gholson

And yes, these women have many of them. They are in positions where it's the first time that a lady has been in this position. And I don't think a lot of the community have paid attention. One thing, and they're not it. Once we started writing a list, I mean, it is so many women in the historic triangle area. I'm like, what? These women are in these particular positions, and nobody's saying nothing. I wonder if it'd be that way if it was a dude. Because historically, women have had struggles in the workplace from unequal pay, which still is unequal. It's not the same. It's not. I know a lot of people think it is. It's not the same. And then, if you couple it with me as an African American woman, I feel that we have to always do bigger, better, two, three, four steps ahead and do a little more and push to prove more than the average. And I speak with leading women all the time, and they range from the overachiever because a lot of our personalities are formed because of the struggles that we have as women and the struggles

with gender, quote, unquote, gender norms in jobs. So then we'll become an overachiever, that one that won't leave the office at night, daggone near losing their relationship at home because they're trying to be just one step ahead of their male counterparts. And then we have that alpha male personality, female that she's the lead, but nobody likes her because she's being mean like she's trying to portray herself like her counterpart, male counterpart. Then we have the people pleaser, that one that don't know how to say no. And then they're burnt out, and they're no longer liking their jobs or their positions. And then there's another one, Phil, that I call the I'll never be enough person.

Phil Wagner

Oh, yeah, yeah.

TiJuana Gholson

I will never be enough. Just you know. Just barely making it and apologizing. I encourage women just to own where they are. Just own where you are. Just simply be yourself in any situation because it is so hard to try to be all of these pieces. And one thing about us as women feeling, I'm sure you probably heard it from the women in your life, is our job don't just stop at the office. When we get home, there's another job there waiting for us, too, just until we go to bed at night. So burnout is real in our life. And it's because of all those things that we're fighting during the day with gender norms and trying to be accepted. But back to our leading ladies. I'm telling you, here in this town, we have some phenomenal leading ladies. Um, from the president of William & Mary is a leading lady, and we have president of our local hospital, Sentara, is now a leading lady. We have the president of the chamber; we have president of the local community college. We have so many leading ladies here, and we've decided that we're going to shed some light on that this weekend as well.

Phil Wagner

I love that. And I'm reminded that in those contexts where you may face additional barriers or obstacles to reaching success because of gender dynamics, because of racial dynamics, that there's something very impactful that's so necessary in that space, which is something you preach to, I think, and you preach so significantly or so regularly to the power of relationship and collaboration. And I'm hoping we can park there a bit. Because while you have done a lot right, I want to give you full credit for everything you've done. You've also spoken to how you had to link arms with others, you had to build relationship, you had to build collaborations, and you encourage other women to do that, too. Can we talk about relationships and collaborations and partnerships and the role that those play in your success?

TiJuana Gholson

Yeah, absolutely. When I say relationship, I call it relationship capital. Some people call it relationship currency. When I say that it is number one, a lot of people think, oh, cash is king. Yeah, cash is okay. Cash is king because we need cash for the world to go around. But I'm going to tell you, at the end of your lifespan, and I've always said this to my close friends, and that's why I show up for people, is at the end of my lifespan. If I'm lying in a hospital bed, I

don't want a pile of cash lying around me. I want all my friends and family around me, rubbing my head, holding my hands, telling me that it's okay, I'm going to be okay, and that I can walk into the next phase of whatever the next life is. That's what I want. So it is so important that as you are climbing your ladder of success and as you are leading as a person, that you don't leave your relationships behind, that you look to build new relationships, and that you foster and nurture those relationships because it's not enough to just meet someone, exchange a business card and see them at a couple of meetings and networking events throughout the year. It takes it to another level. When you take that business card, and you actually send them an email, you actually make a phone call, you offer to go out to coffee with them, and you get to know that person because everybody behind every title, behind every degree we have, behind all the experience we have in our fields of study and the expertise that we walk around with is just a good old fashioned person. It's a human underneath all of that. So I would say that is one of the areas that is most neglected when you're thinking about work. Because think about it in a traditional, and again, this is navigating gender norms. We're going to link it back to that. In the traditional male roles of society is, you don't bring your emotions because this is what I was trained and taught back in the 80s as I was growing up in the work world; you don't bring your emotions to work. You don't get to know people. You don't tell people your business. You don't do that. It's work. There's a separation between church and state. There's work, and there's home. You don't get involved. We were told that for years. I'm in my fifties, so just to give you a little marker to my era. So we were told that for years, that you don't mix that. Now we're being told, okay, we need to have relationships because people are so distanced from one another. Now, we're being told to have relationships and collaborate. We can't do anything by ourselves. We're not in the world by ourselves. We've been in silos. Yes, we have. We really have been in silos for years because that's the way our society initially trained us. Now, and I see it sometimes in struggles, and I even struggle because I hate networking. I'm going to be honest with you. I love putting on functions for other people to network, but I don't really care for it myself, so I have to make myself do it. So now, when I go to an event that's not my event, I make a point to talk to two or three people, and then I say, and I write on the back of their business card where I met them at and the date. So I won't forget because I'll forget when I get to my office. And I make a point to send them an email the next day when I get back to the office to start forming a relationship. Otherwise, it won't happen. It will be. We'll be at the next networking event a year later, saying, hey, didn't I meet you at? Yeah, but you have to actually make those efforts to build relationships, and it's so important. Now let me tell you the reason that I don't feel like I'm so successful because I'm so brilliant. I feel like I am successful because of the relationships that I've had over the years. That even today, I called on somebody that knew somebody that called that person because being the somebody that I called, we have a relationship. We have built a relationship over the years. We have trusted each other with our brands. And that was such an easy doorway to meeting someone that I may have felt a little weird about meeting because I don't know them. So relationships, that's what relationships does for you. Relationships gets your name called in rooms that you're not in. Relationships is the difference between, okay, oh, you guys know about Ti'Juana Gholson does that. Okay, well, we don't know her, so we'll drop her in the bucket of if we need someone else, we'll call her. But if someone was in that room that had a relationship with Ti'Juana, oh, Ti'Juana, yes upstanding. Girl, you know she

runs the maximum business boot camp every month, and she does a great community. Work with her. I mean, just going on and on about you, that relationship will get you noticed, and a lot of people don't understand that. That's why I harp on it, and that's why I preach that you've got to build relationships, and relationships can help you. Can lead to collaboration. Someone might call you to say, hey, I'm working on this project. Would you like to come and work with me? And then, when you need someone, you can call them back. So that's the power of relationships. And for me, it has been phenomenal. I've been called around so many tables because of relationships with someone else. I'm in a few collaborations right now, just doing good community work with other folks. I have this saying that I got from one of my friends. Many hands make light work. When you collaborate, and you bring people to the table, you're not trying to do everything by yourself, and you're not trying to be the whole community by yourself. You're going to find that there's so many other people that have same or similar heart to you, and if you come together, you can make miracles in a community. So, that's why I harp on the power of relationships and collaboration.

Phil Wagner

So powerful. It's so powerful. There's something you mentioned earlier, and I keep wanting to come back to it. This feels like the right opportunity because you talk about those feelings of self-doubt or insecurity or even just what we might call imposter syndrome. Have you ever struggled with those in your journey, specifically when it came to making those big business decisions and having to kind of do it afraid? And I'm wondering if you have any advice that you can pull from your own life for how to overcome that imposter syndrome and, specifically, how women can work to overcome those barriers so they can really succeed.

Ti'Juana Gholson

Yeah, I've definitely been in spaces and in places where I felt like, why am I here? And looking over my shoulder like, do I supposed to be here? And it took some time to get to the place where I felt like I should be here and I should be in that space. And I know for a lot of women because I talk to a lot of women and I have a lot of women friends. Believe it or not, I got a lot of friends. And we all have felt that way in spaces, especially when it's a situation where we're the first and that pressure of am I going to be good enough in this space and am I going to represent the rest of my women friends or the society of women? Am I going to represent us well? So there's definitely feelings of a sense of not being good enough that I've gone through and I've had to overcome. And sometimes, every now and then, it will rear its head up because I truly believe that life is a journey, not a destination. So we're always growing, and we're always learning. So one of the things that I had to do for myself, Phil, is I had to make sure that I educated myself. And I'm not just talking about institutionalized education because lifelong learning is lifelong. Even after you get your papers, I mean, your papers stood on the wall, but those four to six years, sometimes eight for some people, are condensed to that time. But life changes. The world changes, rules change, depending upon the industry you're in, laws change. And so you always have to constantly keep yourself well informed. And that's one of the ways for me that helps me to overcome insecurities, to be very informed on not only what I'm doing, but if someone calls me to a meeting like today, I was called to a meeting with

Senator Warner to talk about tourism. Okay. Educate yourself on what's going on in the community before you show up to that meeting because somebody might ask you a question. You know what I mean? So, you might have an opportunity to share some input. So, for me, education and continuously educating myself has been one way. And then also, I just decided one day, and some of this have come with age, Phil, that I'm just going to be authentic. That's my superpower now. You know what I mean? I'm tired of being somebody else. I'm tired of dressing like somebody tells me to dress or the messages you get in media or you get in the magazines. And I'm tired of what do I like? Who am I? What makes my heart sing? Taking that time for myself as a human being to self-care. And I know this might sound, like, weird to be talking about. How do you overcome that? That is one of the ways that. Just to get to know who I am and how I want to represent myself. And I just found it's just easy to be authentically me because if I do anything else, it's too much rehearsal. It's not natural. So, if I was to encourage women today, it's just find out who you are, know what it is that you want to do. Because even I can even tell you in my earlier years, I got a whole degree in something that I didn't want to have a degree in because my mama was a nurse, and everybody else in my family are nurses, and I'm going to be a nurse. And I hated it. So that was the start of the feeling of not good enough. So, I had to go back to school and do what I wanted to do. You know what I mean? So it's challenging, but I would just encourage women to just be true to yourself, walk in truth and transparency, be authentic because that's where you're going to find your power. I don't know how else to be.

Phil Wagner

No, I love it. And I think your life is such a testament to that, living out life and living out sort of entrepreneurialism through that authentic lens. And it's worked for you, right? I mean, you staying true to yourself, that's resulted in positive gain, right?

TiJuana Gholson

Yeah, absolutely. I have this saying that I like to live my life out loud, authentically, with no apologies and no regret, because I don't want to one day wake up and I don't even know myself because I've been living my life from a script of someone else's life or what the norm says I should live life. I want to live my life authentically because, at the end of this thing, I don't want to have any regrets on did I do what I set out to do or did I do what I was put here to do. I don't want to have those regrets. I just don't want to have those regrets, Phil. I have some friends that are nurses that say that, and I have a friend that's a hospice nurse. And one of the things that she says that a lot of folks at the end of their term in life say that they wish they would have done that, especially people that worked hard and that worked a lot of hours, and that had such big lives, is that they wish they would have spent more time with family. I don't want to have that regret. So, I try to make sure that's a part of my self-care. First, taking care of myself, and knowing who I am authentically, and taking time, carving out time. I actually schedule time for myself, but I also schedule time for those that I love. And it sounds like you got to schedule time. Well, when you are doing a lot in life and in the world, in the community, and you feel like you're called to doing these things. Yeah, you have to schedule time. So there's times that I just totally unplug, and it's all about me. And then there's time I

totally unplug. It's all about my family. Then there's times I totally unplug, and it's all about my friendship circles. Because again, relationships, you got to keep relationships. There's a saying it's lonely at the top. It's lonely at the top because most people don't keep and nurture their relationships. I want to be just as successful in my relationships as I am in my business.

Phil Wagner

Good. This is great. So I hear for you the advice that you're going to give to other people is keep those relationships close at hand. Schedule time for yourself. Self-care. Live life unapologetically. Any other tidbits or insights? As we wrap up this conversation, I'm thinking specifically to women, but maybe for all of us listening, the things that we can glean from your life to be more successful and to find the joy in those entrepreneurial endeavors.

TiJuana Gholson

Well, I'll tell you, these are tidbits, not just for women. I think men struggle in this area as well, especially when it comes to self-care, especially when it comes to making sure that you're okay. Entrepreneurs people say entrepreneurs get it done because entrepreneurs are typically folks that are hard workers. Work doesn't never. It never ends for an entrepreneur. Your mind is always on because you're always thinking about your business. So you definitely have to make sure that you balance that. And what does balance mean? It means something different for everybody. Everybody's life is their life, and you have to figure that out. So I encourage women and anyone that hears this to just sit with themselves and explore and discover. First of all, remember I said I was in a whole degree program that I didn't want to be in because I didn't know what my value was. I didn't know what I really wanted. So sit with yourself and explore what your value add. What value do you bring to the world? What comes to you naturally in your heart that you would do uninterrupted? Think about that. I would encourage them to do that. Going back to what I said, how I overcame a little bit of insecurity is after you find out what your value add, I would encourage them to explore how they can educate themselves to strengthen that value. And ask yourself, is what I'm doing now truly what I desire to do in life? Or did I choose this path based on some other element? Was it familiar family influence, or money chasing, or outside influence, like TV? I would explore why I do what I do. And that's the only way, in my opinion, that we can live our lives with no apologies and regrets because we've got to know why we are doing what we're doing, getting to the root of who we are. And then we add those other elements in there, like taking care of self, and nurturing your family, nurturing your friends. But first, we got to sit with ourselves. And that's the scariest place that I've found in life; is really exploring who you are. Because we have so many messages that have been told to us from so many people, from our families to our education system, to our teachers, to whoever that's been influential in our lives have, we've picked up all these messages. And a lot of times, we don't know exactly who we are and what value we add to our world and to our community. So, I would encourage people to start with yourself first. And if you start with yourself, then you can start adding all those other pieces in there. What's important to you? What is your theme of life? And don't forget to put yourself number one when it comes to self-care because there's nothing you can do to help anyone else if you don't have a full glass yourself.

Phil Wagner

I love that. Ti'Juana, this has been so insightful, and it's such a privilege to chat with you. I think my last question is, how can our listeners follow you? How can they support you? Where can they find you so that everybody listening can keep up with the amazing things that you're doing?

Ti'Juana Gholson

Awesome. Well, my name is Ti'Juana Gholson, and Ti'Juana is spelled just like the city in Mexico. Gholson has a h gholson, so it's tijuanaholson.com. You can find me, I believe, on the web page. You could even have a contact. And it'll go right to my email, but you can also find me on Facebook. I have an Instagram. But look, didn't I tell you I was in my 50s? We're a little slow to Instagram, but my grandkids say that Facebook is for old people. That's why I park at it over there with the old people. But yeah, so you can find me on social media, you can google my name, and you'll find me some kind of way. But hello@tijuanaholson.com will get you right to my email if you want to talk. And I answer. I answer my emails. I even answer my messenger, so you know, for good people. So there you have it.

Phil Wagner

Thank you, Ti'Juana. Such a privilege speaking with you. Thank you for the amazing work that you do and for letting us be a part of that. Thanks for sharing your journey with us. A true privilege chatting with you today.

Ti'Juana Gholson

Thank you so much.

Phil Wagner

Thanks for taking a second to listen to Diversity Goes to Work. If you like what you heard, share the show with a friend. Leave us a review on Apple podcasts or wherever you listen to podcasts, and reach out because we're always looking for new friends. And if you'd like to learn more about any of our programs or initiatives here in the business school at William & Mary, be sure to visit us at mason.wm.edu. Until next time.