

# Webinar

## ULI Philadelphia: Stories of Resiliency and Grit

Date: November 01, 2021

00:00:03 --> 00:00:03: Great

00:00:04 --> 00:00:07: hi everyone, thank you so much for tuning into this

00:00:07 --> 00:00:07: session.

00:00:07 --> 00:00:12: Hosted by ULI Philadelphia and our Women's Leadership initiative and

00:00:12 --> 00:00:15: our panel today on stories of resiliency and grit.

00:00:15 --> 00:00:17: The rebound of the development,

00:00:17 --> 00:00:20: design and construction industry through COVID.

00:00:20 --> 00:00:24: We're really excited to be having this very important conversation

00:00:24 --> 00:00:27: and really taking a step back to support one another

00:00:27 --> 00:00:27: here.

00:00:27 --> 00:00:31: One another and process this time that we've all been

00:00:31 --> 00:00:32: through.

00:00:32 --> 00:00:35: So before we get started.

00:00:35 --> 00:00:36: You can go ahead to the next slide up.

00:00:36 --> 00:00:40: I'm just gonna say words about the Urban Land Institute

00:00:40 --> 00:00:42: for anyone new to us so that you can have

00:00:42 --> 00:00:45: a little bit of context for today's conversation.

00:00:45 --> 00:00:48: So as many of you know you either Urban Land

00:00:48 --> 00:00:52: Institute is a member driven organization and we are also

00:00:52 --> 00:00:56: have a very important mission to shape the future of

00:00:56 --> 00:01:00: the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

00:01:00 --> 00:01:04: And we do that through several mission commitments that you

00:01:04 --> 00:01:05: can see here.

00:01:05 --> 00:01:08: By connecting inspiring and leading UM,

00:01:08 --> 00:01:12: so importantly, and you can go to the next slide.

00:01:12 --> 00:01:15: We are made up of our Members so we have

00:01:15 --> 00:01:21: over 45,000 practitioners worldwide representing all disciplines in the field

00:01:21 --> 00:01:25: of real estate planning or development etc.

00:01:25 --> 00:01:28: And here in the Philadelphia District Council we have about

00:01:28 --> 00:01:30: 900 members in the Philadelphia Metro.

00:01:30 --> 00:01:32: The state of Delaware, Southern New Jersey,

00:01:32 --> 00:01:35: Bowie High Valley and Central Pennsylvania,

00:01:35 --> 00:01:37: and so truly all of our work is driven by

00:01:37 --> 00:01:41: our members towards our mission who volunteer time to lead

00:01:41 --> 00:01:43: and contribute content to ULI.

00:01:43 --> 00:01:47: Philadelphia our members make up about 20 different councils and

00:01:48 --> 00:01:49: committees who UM,

00:01:49 --> 00:01:54: share educational experiences network, advanced menus dialogue.

00:01:54 --> 00:01:57: How seek to have a positive impact on community and

00:01:58 --> 00:02:00: put together programming like this.

00:02:00 --> 00:02:02: And today of course was put together by our amazing

00:02:02 --> 00:02:05: Women's leadership initiative in Philadelphia,

00:02:05 --> 00:02:08: which also has a global network so you can go

00:02:08 --> 00:02:10: to the next slide.

00:02:10 --> 00:02:13: So these are just a couple of examples of the

00:02:13 --> 00:02:13: year that.

00:02:13 --> 00:02:16: We have been through currently as we're recording this.

00:02:16 --> 00:02:20: It's November of 2021, so a couple of key areas

00:02:20 --> 00:02:22: that I'll highlight right now,

00:02:22 --> 00:02:25: though, I don't want to take time to go through

00:02:25 --> 00:02:27: all of the work that we do at ULI Philadelphia.

00:02:27 --> 00:02:31: On your screen you can see we just completed another

00:02:31 --> 00:02:34: round of urban planning program.

00:02:34 --> 00:02:40: We trained two classes of volunteers and then delivered this

00:02:40 --> 00:02:43: program to a two groups of community leaders.

00:02:43 --> 00:02:47: Through the city. In partnership with the Citizen Planning Institute

00:02:47 --> 00:02:48: here in Philadelphia,

00:02:48 --> 00:02:51: and these are folks who are either trained through a

00:02:51 --> 00:02:55: formal training process or have a leadership role in their

00:02:55 --> 00:02:56: community.

00:02:56 --> 00:02:59: We also are about to deliver our second program to

00:02:59 --> 00:03:02: university students at Penn and our first program to high

00:03:02 --> 00:03:05: school students at Girard College,

00:03:05 --> 00:03:09: which is actually a high school specifically for students from

00:03:09 --> 00:03:11: single parent family households.

00:03:11 --> 00:03:13: So for anyone unfamiliar urban plan,  
00:03:13 --> 00:03:19: this is a really. Interactive real estate development simulation course  
00:03:19 --> 00:03:23: UM that puts folks in fake roles and really engages  
00:03:23 --> 00:03:26: on what is real estate planning and development.  
00:03:26 --> 00:03:28: So this is a great program.  
00:03:28 --> 00:03:31: Work cited foreign are always seeking more partners and more  
00:03:31 --> 00:03:33: volunteers here in Philadelphia.  
00:03:33 --> 00:03:36: At the top of your screen you can see one  
00:03:36 --> 00:03:40: of our technical assistance panel projects in action.  
00:03:40 --> 00:03:43: This is a program in which ULI leverages the expertise  
00:03:43 --> 00:03:44: of our volunteer.  
00:03:44 --> 00:03:49: Members just support nonprofit and public sector projects up and  
00:03:49 --> 00:03:53: land use challenges and this month we actually launched a  
00:03:53 --> 00:03:54: new application cycle.  
00:03:54 --> 00:03:56: So wherever you are, whatever you are watching this,  
00:03:56 --> 00:03:58: please feel free to reach out to you.  
00:03:58 --> 00:04:01: Well, I Philadelphia team to learn more about that.  
00:04:01 --> 00:04:04: If you have colleagues or networks of people seeking kind  
00:04:04 --> 00:04:07: of a a lower cost and quicker way to deliver  
00:04:07 --> 00:04:11: to answer a problem and address a number of stakeholders,  
00:04:11 --> 00:04:14: feel free to contact us and then finally we do  
00:04:14 --> 00:04:15: of almost.  
00:04:15 --> 00:04:19: 30 educational panels programs towards a year.  
00:04:19 --> 00:04:21: But we are coming up on our biggest one right  
00:04:21 --> 00:04:22: now.  
00:04:22 --> 00:04:25: So on November 16th, if you're watching before then we  
00:04:25 --> 00:04:28: will have our annual real estate forecasts.  
00:04:28 --> 00:04:31: It will be in person and virtual so there will  
00:04:31 --> 00:04:34: be a recorded option at the Irvine Auditorium at Penn.  
00:04:34 --> 00:04:38: We are hitting our our annual emerging Trends report but  
00:04:38 --> 00:04:42: also talking about a lot of other interesting trans local  
00:04:42 --> 00:04:45: and global have tours in the afternoon.  
00:04:45 --> 00:04:48: Have a mentor ship. Program so we hope to see  
00:04:48 --> 00:04:50: many of you there.  
00:04:50 --> 00:04:53: And finally, this is just a really quick summary.  
00:04:53 --> 00:04:54: There's a lot of work that we do,  
00:04:54 --> 00:04:57: and if you're new and you're watching this and you'd  
00:04:57 --> 00:04:57: like to learn more,  
00:04:57 --> 00:05:00: we would be happy to talk to you about ways  
00:05:01 --> 00:05:01: to engage,

00:05:01 --> 00:05:04: to propose an idea and to work with us.

00:05:04 --> 00:05:05: So now before we get started,

00:05:05 --> 00:05:08: thank you security, I just want to thank our annual

00:05:08 --> 00:05:12: sponsors without these organizations who support our work,

00:05:12 --> 00:05:14: we truly would not be able to do anything,

00:05:14 --> 00:05:18: including run. Our Women's leadership initiative and this program today

00:05:18 --> 00:05:21: so thank you to our urban visionary sponsors.

00:05:21 --> 00:05:26: Our diamond leadership circle and platinum sponsors,

00:05:26 --> 00:05:30: as well as our silver and friend sponsors.

00:05:30 --> 00:05:32: It was a very busy year and a wild one,

00:05:32 --> 00:05:36: but we had a lot of excellent support so now

00:05:36 --> 00:05:40: I'm happy to introduce today's conversation both at the local

00:05:40 --> 00:05:41: and the global level.

00:05:41 --> 00:05:45: The mission of utilize Women's Leadership initiative is to raise

00:05:45 --> 00:05:48: the visibility and number of female leaders in ULI and

00:05:48 --> 00:05:50: the real estate industry.

00:05:50 --> 00:05:54: So I really want to thank our local WI Cochairs

00:05:54 --> 00:05:54: Kim,

00:05:54 --> 00:05:57: even Bob, who wasn't able to join us today but

00:05:57 --> 00:06:01: who was integral in putting this conversation together and

00:06:01 --> 00:06:01: a.

00:06:01 --> 00:06:04: A bar to skate for putting together our program.

00:06:04 --> 00:06:07: So remuna. I'm sorry if I butchered your last name,

00:06:07 --> 00:06:09: I'm going to turn it over to you to introduce

00:06:09 --> 00:06:10: our speakers.

00:06:10 --> 00:06:11: Thank you so much.

00:06:12 --> 00:06:16: Great thank you, Laura. Hello everyone,

00:06:16 --> 00:06:17: thank you for joining us.

00:06:17 --> 00:06:20: My name is Ramona Bartuska to I'm an architect at

00:06:20 --> 00:06:21: J KRP Architects,

00:06:21 --> 00:06:25: founder and CEO of Spec Matters and current Co.

00:06:25 --> 00:06:27: Chair of wli. We are very excited to have our

00:06:27 --> 00:06:31: three esteemed speakers and moderate are with us today to

00:06:31 --> 00:06:34: share some insight in their experiences through the challenges of

00:06:34 --> 00:06:37: the pandemic. Wli has always been a safe space for

00:06:37 --> 00:06:40: female leaders to come to to learn from and support

00:06:40 --> 00:06:43: each other and we hope to extend the space today

00:06:43 --> 00:06:45: and welcome our speakers. To this community.

00:06:46 --> 00:06:48: While the industry is eager to jump back into the

00:06:49 --> 00:06:49: new normal,

00:06:49 --> 00:06:54: the Women's Leadership Initiative Committee is intentionally pausing to create

00:06:54 --> 00:06:56: space for reflection and reawakening.

00:06:56 --> 00:07:00: Inspired by the quote, Your story is worth sharing.

00:07:00 --> 00:07:03: Our program today aims to bring together inspiring female leaders

00:07:03 --> 00:07:06: in the land use industry and provide them with a

00:07:06 --> 00:07:09: platform to unpack challenges of the past year and a

00:07:09 --> 00:07:12: half. We hope to address topics of resiliency,

00:07:12 --> 00:07:14: navigating shifts, and reacting to issues.

00:07:14 --> 00:07:18: Of diversity, equity and inclusion while at the same time

00:07:18 --> 00:07:21: learn from those who persevered from the front lines,

00:07:21 --> 00:07:25: maintaining, growing and adapting to the challenges of our times.

00:07:25 --> 00:07:28: I will get us started by introducing our moderator for

00:07:28 --> 00:07:28: today's panel,

00:07:28 --> 00:07:33: charnelle Hicks. Charnelle is a president of Ch Planning and

00:07:33 --> 00:07:36: Enspire Green ACH planning subsidiary.

00:07:36 --> 00:07:39: Stage planning is a leader in mobility planning,

00:07:39 --> 00:07:42: equity planning and environmental justice.

00:07:42 --> 00:07:45: They serve as consultants to the nation's leaders in Vision

00:07:45 --> 00:07:45: Zero analysis,

00:07:45 --> 00:07:50: safe routes to school and complete streets planning and analysis

00:07:50 --> 00:07:51: with offices in DC,

00:07:51 --> 00:07:55: Philadelphia and Fort Lauderdale. Their work centers on Equitable Access.

00:07:55 --> 00:07:58: Our communities of color, people with disabilities,

00:07:58 --> 00:08:01: immigrant communities and youth. Charnal you've done a lot of

00:08:01 --> 00:08:04: work in the City of Philadelphia and we have always

00:08:04 --> 00:08:06: and you have always been tuned in and aware of

00:08:06 --> 00:08:09: its development. We're thrilled to have you here today to

00:08:09 --> 00:08:10: guide our discussion.

00:08:10 --> 00:08:11: Take it away, charnelle

00:08:12 --> 00:08:16: thank you, Ramona. We're going to have the the panel

00:08:16 --> 00:08:21: is going to write a little differently than the usual

00:08:21 --> 00:08:22: ULI panel.

00:08:22 --> 00:08:27: We are going to start by having each of our

00:08:27 --> 00:08:30: panelists share a story.

00:08:30 --> 00:08:35: And tell about how they persevered through the pandemic.

00:08:35 --> 00:08:39: And then we'll come. Each of us will have some

00:08:39 --> 00:08:42: questions and answers are moderate.

00:08:42 --> 00:08:44: Each is each of us will kind of go and

00:08:44 --> 00:08:44: turn.

00:08:44 --> 00:08:47: I'll introduce the other panelists as we go through,

00:08:47 --> 00:08:52: but first I'll start with my story with Ch planning

00:08:52 --> 00:08:54: and Inspire Green.

00:08:54 --> 00:08:59: So this photo we just took about a month ago.

00:08:59 --> 00:09:03: This is me and two of my staff members getting

00:09:03 --> 00:09:06: together for the first time after the pandemic.

00:09:06 --> 00:09:12: As many folks who are listening today experienced back in

00:09:12 --> 00:09:13: February,

00:09:13 --> 00:09:16: we went home for what was going to be a

00:09:16 --> 00:09:21: week and then a month and then we haven't fully

00:09:21 --> 00:09:26: returned and we each of us had our our challenges.

00:09:26 --> 00:09:29: The work that we do is urban planning,

00:09:29 --> 00:09:33: zoning and design for infrastructure development,

00:09:33 --> 00:09:38: development and communities. A big part of our client base

00:09:38 --> 00:09:41: were was in transportation.

00:09:41 --> 00:09:45: Airports were one and transit,

00:09:45 --> 00:09:50: so you can imagine the hit that our business took.

00:09:50 --> 00:09:56: Bye. Early May, more than half of our clients had

00:09:56 --> 00:09:59: pulled back entirely.

00:09:59 --> 00:10:04: We took advantage of kind of.

00:10:04 --> 00:10:09: Our pre position or predisposition toward corporate

00:10:09 --> 00:10:14: engagement,

00:10:14 --> 00:10:18: communication and working with elected officials to help to

00:10:18 --> 00:10:24: shape the PPP and how that would look.

00:10:24 --> 00:10:28: In my business, I looked at our our folks.

00:10:28 --> 00:10:29: One of our staff members in the picture here had

00:10:29 --> 00:10:34: kids at home.

00:10:34 --> 00:10:36: Who are going to school at different grade levels?

00:10:36 --> 00:10:37: There were a lot of challenges that we had to

00:10:37 --> 00:10:42: deal with.

00:10:42 --> 00:10:43: Our staff strength nearly halved during the course of the

00:10:43 --> 00:10:49: pandemic,

00:10:49 --> 00:10:50: and it was really. It really didn't really turn around

00:10:50 --> 00:10:53: until June or so.

00:10:53 --> 00:10:56: One of the big strategies that we had,

00:10:56 --> 00:10:57: 'cause I promised my folks that I would get everybody

00:10:57 --> 00:10:59: back to work didn't know how to do it.

00:10:59 --> 00:11:04: When I made that promise,

00:11:04 --> 00:11:09: but we were able to pivot toward more real estate

00:11:04 --> 00:11:06: development.

00:11:06 --> 00:11:11: And to pivot our geography toward the DC region that

00:11:11 --> 00:11:15: was more busier than Philadelphia at the time.

00:11:15 --> 00:11:19: Through that we acquired another African American woman owned business,

00:11:19 --> 00:11:23: inspire Green, and since then we've called everyone back to

00:11:24 --> 00:11:27: work and we've doubled our staff strength.

00:11:27 --> 00:11:31: Thanks in large part to the resiliency of our team

00:11:31 --> 00:11:35: and to just being able to innovate and pivot.

00:11:35 --> 00:11:38: So that's our story. I look forward to sharing more

00:11:38 --> 00:11:41: and hearing from hearing from our other panelists.

00:11:41 --> 00:11:45: But first I'd like to introduce Felicia Middleton.

00:11:45 --> 00:11:50: Felicia is an architectural designer and owner of urban aesthetics,

00:11:50 --> 00:11:53: design and consulting firm located in Pennsylvania,

00:11:53 --> 00:11:56: New Jersey and Delaware. Felicia has worked in the field

00:11:56 --> 00:11:57: of.

00:11:57 --> 00:12:01: Architecture and design for over 25 years.

00:12:01 --> 00:12:03: 13 as a business owner.

00:12:03 --> 00:12:08: While in business, Felicia has authored and published several books

00:12:08 --> 00:12:10: surrounding her areas of expertise,

00:12:10 --> 00:12:17: she enjoys writing, mentoring youth and its aspiring professionals.

00:12:17 --> 00:12:22: She volunteers and promotes building safety and environmental awareness.

00:12:22 --> 00:12:24: Thank you Felicia for joining us.

00:12:29 --> 00:12:30: Thank

00:12:30 --> 00:12:33: you, Sharon L. I'm I'm excited to hear more about

00:12:33 --> 00:12:36: you as well because I love what you do and

00:12:36 --> 00:12:40: just hearing about your your business and working with working

00:12:40 --> 00:12:41: to help people with disabilities.

00:12:41 --> 00:12:45: I love it. This is exciting,

00:12:45 --> 00:12:48: so I'm here to talk a little bit about the

00:12:49 --> 00:12:53: challenges and pivots that took place during the pandemic.

00:12:53 --> 00:12:57: UM, it started off right at my birthday and I

00:12:57 --> 00:13:01: always tell people I spent my birthday staring at the

00:13:01 --> 00:13:02: TV set.

00:13:02 --> 00:13:04: Not working, I stopped working and I was just staring

00:13:04 --> 00:13:06: at the news and I was very upset and I

00:13:07 --> 00:13:09: just had lost a couple of people that I worked

00:13:09 --> 00:13:13: close to not COVID related but they were just sudden

00:13:13 --> 00:13:16: losses so dealing with that and then it just seemed  
00:13:16 --> 00:13:19: like it just kept mounting every week.  
00:13:19 --> 00:13:21: There was something different it was a loss.  
00:13:21 --> 00:13:24: Then there was a shutdown then the city had changed  
00:13:24 --> 00:13:25: over their process.  
00:13:25 --> 00:13:28: When it came to submitting permits.  
00:13:28 --> 00:13:31: So there was a lot of UM changes that took  
00:13:31 --> 00:13:32: place.  
00:13:32 --> 00:13:35: Right at the very beginning of the pandemic,  
00:13:35 --> 00:13:38: but work continued and work had to go on and  
00:13:38 --> 00:13:41: some of the ways that I was able to handle  
00:13:41 --> 00:13:45: that was to connect with other women business owners.  
00:13:45 --> 00:13:50: I joined a professional women's organization a few months  
00:13:50 --> 00:13:54: ahead  
00:13:54 --> 00:13:57: of time and their networking went to online networking  
00:13:57 --> 00:13:58: through  
00:13:58 --> 00:14:01: zoom and and we talked every week we had a  
00:14:01 --> 00:14:03: a coffee talk and we would just talk about the  
00:14:03 --> 00:14:05: challenges that were taking place.  
00:14:05 --> 00:14:08: As well as finding out a little bit about one  
00:14:08 --> 00:14:10: another's businesses and what we were doing currently,  
00:14:10 --> 00:14:13: some people were not working at all.  
00:14:13 --> 00:14:16: I actually had to continue working and had to find  
00:14:16 --> 00:14:19: ways when when one of the unique words that came  
00:14:19 --> 00:14:24: out of a lot of discussions during that time was  
00:14:24 --> 00:14:28: pivot. And pivot was very important because although I still  
00:14:28 --> 00:14:32: did a lot of things using technology in my business,  
00:14:32 --> 00:14:34: I had to completely change not only the way that  
00:14:34 --> 00:14:37: I did business with technology,  
00:14:37 --> 00:14:39: but helping to have my clients understand this is a  
00:14:39 --> 00:14:41: this is a change.  
00:14:41 --> 00:14:43: Things are changing. We have to do we have to  
00:14:43 --> 00:14:46: sign contracts a different way.  
00:14:46 --> 00:14:48: One of the benefits was that the city had just  
00:14:48 --> 00:14:51: turned over to electronic submissions.  
00:14:51 --> 00:14:54: So my expediter was able to submit.  
00:14:54 --> 00:14:57: Everything I no longer had to find him to meet  
00:14:57 --> 00:14:59: him and we were able to get a lot of  
00:14:59 --> 00:15:01: things done through technology.  
00:15:01 --> 00:15:03: Of course, sometimes technology failed us,  
00:15:03 --> 00:15:08: but for the most part,  
00:15:08 --> 00:15:13: one of the most beneficial things that I had during  
00:15:13 --> 00:15:13: the pandemic was the utilization of technology.



00:15:13 --> 00:15:16: I persevered. I continued working.

00:15:16 --> 00:15:19: There were sometimes where I had to take a few

00:15:19 --> 00:15:20: weeks off just to just to.

00:15:21 --> 00:15:25: Think about what was going on because it seemed like

00:15:25 --> 00:15:28: people were dying every week.

00:15:28 --> 00:15:31: I had there was one week where I remember just

00:15:31 --> 00:15:31: praying,

00:15:31 --> 00:15:34: Lord, please don't let anybody die this week.

00:15:34 --> 00:15:37: That I knew and it was just it that was

00:15:37 --> 00:15:39: hard to try to focus on work.

00:15:39 --> 00:15:42: When you have people that you know people that you

00:15:42 --> 00:15:44: were close to that just were dying and it was

00:15:44 --> 00:15:46: just it was a a very strange situation.

00:15:46 --> 00:15:49: I was just talking with a colleague about how we

00:15:49 --> 00:15:52: had experienced something we had never saw before,

00:15:52 --> 00:15:55: but one of the best things we did was we

00:15:55 --> 00:15:56: reached out to one another.

00:15:56 --> 00:15:59: We reached out to fellow designers on zoom.

00:15:59 --> 00:16:01: We talked to each other and we just wanted to

00:16:01 --> 00:16:04: know what one another we're going through the A  
professional

00:16:04 --> 00:16:05: organization.

00:16:05 --> 00:16:08: That I'm in called the National Organization of Minority  
Architects.

00:16:08 --> 00:16:11: We got together on zooms and we talked about because

00:16:11 --> 00:16:14: of the social unrest that had taken place.

00:16:14 --> 00:16:16: What can we do to help businesses?

00:16:16 --> 00:16:19: Where can we? How can we offer services to these

00:16:19 --> 00:16:23: businesses that have been affected from the unrest and help

00:16:23 --> 00:16:25: them get back up and running?

00:16:25 --> 00:16:27: Because a lot of people,

00:16:27 --> 00:16:30: their storefronts were damaged. The interiors were damaged  
so we

00:16:30 --> 00:16:32: got together and talked with a few people on how

00:16:32 --> 00:16:35: we can offer discounted services or even free services.

00:16:35 --> 00:16:39: If necessary to help those people during that time and

00:16:39 --> 00:16:42: and a lot of people were were out of work

00:16:42 --> 00:16:44: and during that time,

00:16:44 --> 00:16:46: although they were out of work.

00:16:46 --> 00:16:49: They still, you know, we still had to work.

00:16:49 --> 00:16:52: Designers still worked. Everybody knows the real estate  
market moved

00:16:52 --> 00:16:52: on,

00:16:52 --> 00:16:55: but I was able to publish a couple of books.

00:16:55 --> 00:16:58: Believe it or not. Continue my podcast work on the

00:16:58 --> 00:17:02: books that I had lined up and thankfully I got

00:17:02 --> 00:17:05: a lot of work done during the pandemic,

00:17:05 --> 00:17:05: so I was blessed.

00:17:11 --> 00:17:14: Thank you, Felicia. Thank you really,

00:17:14 --> 00:17:18: really great story. I'm not going to go on and

00:17:18 --> 00:17:22: introduce our next speaker Rafael Lena Merlino.

00:17:24 --> 00:17:26: Thank you Sir now and let me get,

00:17:26 --> 00:17:27: let me let me talk

00:17:27 --> 00:17:28: about you a little bit,

00:17:28 --> 00:17:28: OK?

00:17:30 --> 00:17:31: Not that quick.

00:17:33 --> 00:17:36: With over 10 years of residential development,

00:17:36 --> 00:17:40: property design and land acquisition experience,

00:17:40 --> 00:17:45: Rafaelin's journey into real estate began alongside her

00:17:45 --> 00:17:49: business partner

00:17:49 --> 00:17:49: and husband as Co founders of the City Space Development

00:17:49 --> 00:17:53: group,

00:17:53 --> 00:17:55: Rafael Lena is a top real estate sales leader,

00:17:55 --> 00:18:00: serving as a liaison between millennial,

00:18:00 --> 00:18:03: the Millennial homebuyer and Dream Home Builder in the

00:18:03 --> 00:18:06: Philadelphia

00:18:06 --> 00:18:07: and South South New Jersey region.

00:18:07 --> 00:18:13: Selling over 50 units in her first two years in

00:18:13 --> 00:18:15: business,

00:18:15 --> 00:18:20: Rafael Rafael Lena came into the industry after having left

00:18:20 --> 00:18:24: the corporate life.

00:18:25 --> 00:18:29: In a high luxury fashion brand.

00:18:29 --> 00:18:31: Her recent venture to mixed use commercial development

00:18:31 --> 00:18:33: has sparked

00:18:33 --> 00:18:33: a new passion for community development and small

00:18:33 --> 00:18:37: business and

00:18:37 --> 00:18:41: her own small business.

00:18:41 --> 00:18:43: Thank you for joining us today.

00:18:43 --> 00:18:45: Thank

00:18:45 --> 00:18:49: you so much. I'm so inspired by everyone here and

00:18:49 --> 00:18:52: just hearing you know how you made it through and.

00:18:52 --> 00:18:55: It was an interesting time and and Felicia I can

00:18:55 --> 00:18:55: relate about the birthday.

00:18:55 --> 00:18:55: It was March 15th was my birthday in the world

00:18:55 --> 00:18:55: closed March 16th so it was one of those,

00:18:55 --> 00:18:55: you know, like a a birthday moment.

00:18:55 --> 00:18:57: My my husband said don't blow out the candles too  
00:18:57 --> 00:19:00: fast because this party is gonna last today.  
00:19:00 --> 00:19:03: Tomorrow it's it's closing down.  
00:19:03 --> 00:19:06: It was an interest. It was a reflective time for  
00:19:06 --> 00:19:06: me.  
00:19:06 --> 00:19:09: I'm one of those individuals that have spent most of  
00:19:10 --> 00:19:11: my life running.  
00:19:11 --> 00:19:13: Right just constantly what's next,  
00:19:13 --> 00:19:16: what's next, and I think as entrepreneurial women and and  
00:19:16 --> 00:19:18: we kind of tend to do that,  
00:19:18 --> 00:19:19: what more can we do?  
00:19:19 --> 00:19:20: What more can we give to our community,  
00:19:20 --> 00:19:24: our families, and we get into this trend of doing  
00:19:24 --> 00:19:26: and we forget to reflect.  
00:19:26 --> 00:19:28: And so when the world you know,  
00:19:28 --> 00:19:30: being that real estate sales,  
00:19:30 --> 00:19:32: it was considered non essential,  
00:19:32 --> 00:19:35: right? So I literally I had no choice and being  
00:19:35 --> 00:19:36: left,  
00:19:36 --> 00:19:38: no choice. It was interesting for someone who,  
00:19:38 --> 00:19:40: when I hear no I,  
00:19:40 --> 00:19:41: I actually think I hear yes.  
00:19:41 --> 00:19:43: In the background. So as,  
00:19:43 --> 00:19:46: uh, you know, it's so I.  
00:19:46 --> 00:19:49: I really had a tough time with hearing now and  
00:19:49 --> 00:19:51: I had a 7 month old at home,  
00:19:51 --> 00:19:53: so I was a new mom which was,  
00:19:53 --> 00:19:57: you know, really interesting because I had thought that I  
00:19:57 --> 00:19:58: had balanced.  
00:19:58 --> 00:20:01: I thought I knew this thing of balance and to  
00:20:01 --> 00:20:04: lose anyone that could help you,  
00:20:04 --> 00:20:06: right? 'cause you were so afraid to gather you didn't  
00:20:06 --> 00:20:06: know.  
00:20:06 --> 00:20:09: Am I gonna get my family sick if we get  
00:20:09 --> 00:20:12: together and no one could really help so?  
00:20:12 --> 00:20:15: Really, it was a moment in time where I had  
00:20:15 --> 00:20:17: to make a decision of priorities.  
00:20:17 --> 00:20:21: And as I started reflecting at that time of what  
00:20:21 --> 00:20:23: my priorities were,  
00:20:23 --> 00:20:27: I really had to realize that I couldn't prioritize my  
00:20:27 --> 00:20:27: family,  
00:20:27 --> 00:20:29: my business, and you know,

00:20:29 --> 00:20:32: my philanthropic effort to make all the things that were  
 00:20:32 --> 00:20:33: important in the same bucket,  
 00:20:33 --> 00:20:35: I had to make a decision.  
 00:20:35 --> 00:20:38: So I started deciding that maybe this was the time  
 00:20:39 --> 00:20:41: to step back in business and and really,  
 00:20:41 --> 00:20:43: you know, shut down something.  
 00:20:43 --> 00:20:45: I love doing so much as the sales side of  
 00:20:45 --> 00:20:49: the business and really focus my efforts on the development  
 00:20:49 --> 00:20:49: side.  
 00:20:49 --> 00:20:52: Maybe it was. And the more I decided that I  
 00:20:52 --> 00:20:54: said it's just not the right way.  
 00:20:54 --> 00:20:58: I really enjoy touching all aspects of real estate in  
 00:20:58 --> 00:21:02: that way and I decided to call on a partner,  
 00:21:02 --> 00:21:04: a business partner who you see there.  
 00:21:04 --> 00:21:05: Becky, my new SIS who.  
 00:21:05 --> 00:21:08: Is now my business partner and we had grown our  
 00:21:08 --> 00:21:10: businesses together for quite some time.  
 00:21:10 --> 00:21:14: She was actually a mentor of mine before she became  
 00:21:14 --> 00:21:17: my business partner and I called her one day and  
 00:21:17 --> 00:21:17: I said,  
 00:21:17 --> 00:21:19: you know, I, I just had a funny thought.  
 00:21:19 --> 00:21:22: You know, imagine if we just brought our businesses  
 00:21:22 --> 00:21:24: together  
 00:21:24 --> 00:21:27: and she said I would love that.  
 00:21:27 --> 00:21:29: And so we really started strategizing on this.  
 00:21:29 --> 00:21:30: Would look like and you know,  
 00:21:30 --> 00:21:30: I I was a bit.  
 00:21:30 --> 00:21:34: I didn't realize my ego prior to that and not  
 00:21:34 --> 00:21:36: understanding the need for partnership.  
 00:21:36 --> 00:21:40: And just taking on this one partner made me want  
 00:21:40 --> 00:21:43: to take on more how how many more women can  
 00:21:43 --> 00:21:47: I partner with and support and it sparked this interest  
 00:21:47 --> 00:21:51: of wanting to continue to grow alongside other women and  
 00:21:51 --> 00:21:56: it really proved to me the importance of that that  
 00:21:56 --> 00:21:58: it's not even just an option.  
 00:21:58 --> 00:22:02: It's something we have to do together.  
 00:22:02 --> 00:22:04: It also made me realize how men climbed so quickly,  
 00:22:04 --> 00:22:06: right? Is that they you know,  
 00:22:06 --> 00:22:09: that constant partnership and and and being able to do  
 00:22:09 --> 00:22:10: that so so effortlessly.  
 00:22:10 --> 00:22:15: So we went into business and and actually the day  
 00:22:15 --> 00:22:18: we decided to start the business,

00:22:18 --> 00:22:21: the city was was shutting down due to some looting  
00:22:21 --> 00:22:24: and things that sort and I said I don't care.  
00:22:24 --> 00:22:27: We're meeting and it doesn't matter helicopters flying over what  
00:22:28 --> 00:22:28: we're doing.  
00:22:28 --> 00:22:30: We have to do this is it?  
00:22:30 --> 00:22:31: And so we did it we we said,  
00:22:31 --> 00:22:34: OK, we're uhm, you know we're doing it,  
00:22:34 --> 00:22:36: and lo and behold, she happened.  
00:22:36 --> 00:22:38: I focused my business in Center City.  
00:22:38 --> 00:22:41: She focuses her business in the suburbs and 90%  
00:22:41 --> 00:22:43: of our business at the time was in the suburbs.  
00:22:43 --> 00:22:45: So it worked out wonderfully.  
00:22:45 --> 00:22:48: It allowed us to sort of do this dance where  
00:22:48 --> 00:22:49: we're like,  
00:22:49 --> 00:22:52: OK, let's build this team outside,  
00:22:52 --> 00:22:55: you know, outside the city and then also in the  
00:22:55 --> 00:22:57: city and expansion grew really,  
00:22:57 --> 00:23:00: really quickly and you'll see in the next few slides  
00:23:00 --> 00:23:02: we went from the two of us too.  
00:23:02 --> 00:23:07: Quite a few other team members come and go round  
00:23:07 --> 00:23:09: to the next slide there.  
00:23:09 --> 00:23:11: You know, and we grew.  
00:23:11 --> 00:23:12: We expanded. We had about you,  
00:23:12 --> 00:23:16: know, six other agents that had joined during that time,  
00:23:16 --> 00:23:19: individuals who were laid off and just lost their jobs  
00:23:19 --> 00:23:20: and had always had.  
00:23:20 --> 00:23:26: So it was incredible to experience providing opportunity.  
00:23:26 --> 00:23:28: I would say the one thing that was most challenging,  
00:23:28 --> 00:23:30: so when I had first started in the industry,  
00:23:30 --> 00:23:34: I came from a luxury fashion background.  
00:23:34 --> 00:23:37: Sort of the business side of fashion and I had  
00:23:37 --> 00:23:40: met my husband and he would talk about real estate  
00:23:40 --> 00:23:42: and and I just was like I don't really know  
00:23:42 --> 00:23:44: what you're talking about and and I'm I'm.  
00:23:44 --> 00:23:47: I'm from North Jersey originally and it wasn't until I  
00:23:47 --> 00:23:48: came to Philadelphia and really,  
00:23:48 --> 00:23:51: really saw was happening and the markets that were sort  
00:23:51 --> 00:23:54: of you know what was emerging and how things were  
00:23:54 --> 00:23:55: changing.  
00:23:55 --> 00:23:57: I I really was excited too.  
00:23:57 --> 00:24:00: Start to really experience and see how I could make

00:24:00 --> 00:24:01: an impact.

00:24:01 --> 00:24:06: So I started developing alongside him and you know,

00:24:06 --> 00:24:09: sort of took my design background and brought it into

00:24:09 --> 00:24:12: real estate and only got a real estate license for

00:24:12 --> 00:24:15: to purchase properties and be able to access the M

00:24:15 --> 00:24:19: LS. And and then I started consulting some of our

00:24:19 --> 00:24:22: developer friends on on just you know what buyers were

00:24:22 --> 00:24:24: looking for and thought.

00:24:24 --> 00:24:26: Wait a second I'm. I'm leaving a lot of Commission

00:24:26 --> 00:24:27: on the table here.

00:24:27 --> 00:24:31: This might be a business and so then formulated a

00:24:31 --> 00:24:32: realist.

00:24:32 --> 00:24:35: You know small real estate team and I think the

00:24:35 --> 00:24:39: greatest challenge that I had seen was I had always

00:24:39 --> 00:24:42: just run my business the same way right had always

00:24:42 --> 00:24:45: just worked with a certain type of client and did

00:24:45 --> 00:24:47: certain types of marketing and.

00:24:47 --> 00:24:51: It worked for for years and then overnight everything that

00:24:51 --> 00:24:54: worked just did not work like it was like the

00:24:54 --> 00:24:55: light switches.

00:24:55 --> 00:24:59: None of it was working and so I had to

00:24:59 --> 00:25:05: reinvent the business and and in reinventing it I realized

00:25:05 --> 00:25:06: that you know,

00:25:06 --> 00:25:11: as you're going through these things that it's really all

00:25:11 --> 00:25:14: in your mindset of are you going to,

00:25:14 --> 00:25:18: you know, make a decision to move forward and to.

00:25:18 --> 00:25:21: You know, overcome the challenge or is the challenge going

00:25:21 --> 00:25:22: to become you?

00:25:22 --> 00:25:24: I mean I, I sat alongside a lot of team

00:25:24 --> 00:25:25: members and we would,

00:25:25 --> 00:25:28: like Felicia said we would call each other to pull.

00:25:28 --> 00:25:30: You know, there were days you needed to be pulled

00:25:30 --> 00:25:30: out of the mud,

00:25:30 --> 00:25:34: right where your mindset. Losing family members and and

00:25:34 --> 00:25:36: seeing

00:25:36 --> 00:25:38: sickness and illness and watching the news.

00:25:38 --> 00:25:40: I mean, I never watch the news in my life

00:25:40 --> 00:25:42: and then all of a sudden I'm watching it for

00:25:42 --> 00:25:44: like hours a day 'cause you just could not get

00:25:44 --> 00:25:46: away from what would they were saying.

00:25:46 --> 00:25:46: So I realized that it.

00:25:46 --> 00:25:49: It really was about community.

00:25:49 --> 00:25:51: And and I would say you know,  
00:25:51 --> 00:25:54: in doing so, you know one of my greatest passions  
00:25:54 --> 00:25:57: is in real estate is the impact you can have  
00:25:57 --> 00:25:59: on a community you know.  
00:25:59 --> 00:26:02: So that is that is my COVID story.  
00:26:02 --> 00:26:03: So thank you so much.  
00:26:03 --> 00:26:03: Arnelle.  
00:26:04 --> 00:26:07: Thank you Rafael Lena. I'm wonderful.  
00:26:07 --> 00:26:13: Wonderful story. Great how you were able to transition like  
00:26:13 --> 00:26:13: that.  
00:26:13 --> 00:26:16: So now I'm going to go ahead and introduce our  
00:26:16 --> 00:26:17: next speaker,  
00:26:17 --> 00:26:21: Shayla Griffith. Shayla knew she wanted to be an interior  
00:26:21 --> 00:26:22: designer.  
00:26:22 --> 00:26:25: Back when she was just 13 years old.  
00:26:25 --> 00:26:30: She was educated and trained.  
00:26:30 --> 00:26:36: She is CEIDQ certified and LEED accredited interior  
00:26:36 --> 00:26:40: designer.  
00:26:40 --> 00:26:43: She completed her bachelors degree in Interior design.  
00:26:43 --> 00:26:46: And a Masters degree in sustainable design.  
00:26:46 --> 00:26:48: Both of her degrees are from Jespersen University.  
00:26:48 --> 00:26:52: After working in corporate design,  
00:26:52 --> 00:26:56: hospitality and high end residential interior architecture,  
00:26:56 --> 00:27:01: she started SG23 design in 2013.  
00:27:01 --> 00:27:04: The firm works both on residential and commercial projects  
00:27:04 --> 00:27:10: and  
00:27:10 --> 00:27:14: really thrives on creating functional,  
00:27:14 --> 00:27:17: thoughtful design designs followed by.  
00:27:17 --> 00:27:19: Good preparation and efficient project management.  
00:27:19 --> 00:27:23: Thanks for space travel. Thank  
00:27:23 --> 00:27:26: you so much for the introduction.  
00:27:26 --> 00:27:29: Uhm so my story come.  
00:27:29 --> 00:27:32: Is the pandemic is very closely tide to our place  
00:27:32 --> 00:27:35: of work,  
00:27:35 --> 00:27:38: which is pretty interesting, so let me give you a  
00:27:38 --> 00:27:40: bit of context.  
00:27:40 --> 00:27:44: Uhm, I moved into the studio space in March of  
00:27:44 --> 00:27:46: 2019 because I knew I wanted to grow a business  
00:27:46 --> 00:27:48: and that I needed to build a team I had  
00:27:48 --> 00:27:51: worked from home for years and I knew it was  
00:27:51 --> 00:27:54: time to transition into a dedicated space for work and  
00:27:54 --> 00:27:57: and just a little bit of informational.  
00:27:57 --> 00:28:00: They'll come full circle in a minute.

00:27:48 --> 00:27:51: My first job ever was in a cute little storefront  
00:27:51 --> 00:27:52: in Riverton,  
00:27:52 --> 00:27:56: NJ. And it's just 20 minutes outside of Philadelphia,  
00:27:56 --> 00:28:00: so uhm. In January of 2019,  
00:28:00 --> 00:28:04: UM, the current tenant at the time was a branding  
00:28:04 --> 00:28:05: client.  
00:28:05 --> 00:28:07: So SG 23 has two divisions.  
00:28:07 --> 00:28:09: We have a branding and website division,  
00:28:09 --> 00:28:11: but our bed and butter is interior design,  
00:28:11 --> 00:28:14: but it had a branding client in the space and  
00:28:14 --> 00:28:17: they mentioned in passing that we're thinking of closing the  
00:28:17 --> 00:28:20: store front in working from home and I already knew  
00:28:20 --> 00:28:22: I loved the space so I jumped at that opportunity  
00:28:23 --> 00:28:25: and that's how we ended up working back in that  
00:28:25 --> 00:28:27: space where I had my first job ever and.  
00:28:27 --> 00:28:29: And I've always loved the space.  
00:28:29 --> 00:28:30: It's a charming old building,  
00:28:30 --> 00:28:34: was trying natural light so.  
00:28:34 --> 00:28:37: That's when I really thought things came full circle,  
00:28:37 --> 00:28:39: then less than a year later,  
00:28:39 --> 00:28:40: the owner of the property,  
00:28:40 --> 00:28:42: so they wanted to sell and asked if I was  
00:28:43 --> 00:28:43: interested.  
00:28:43 --> 00:28:47: So I don't have that opportunity that was in November  
00:28:48 --> 00:28:48: of 2019,  
00:28:48 --> 00:28:50: so we're getting closer to COVID now,  
00:28:50 --> 00:28:54: and so it being commercial real estate,  
00:28:54 --> 00:28:56: things move a little bit slower sometimes.  
00:28:56 --> 00:28:59: So things didn't really start moving until March 2020,  
00:28:59 --> 00:29:04: so that's when things really started to shut down because  
00:29:04 --> 00:29:05: of kovid so.  
00:29:05 --> 00:29:08: Although he felt I still feel the space is perfect,  
00:29:08 --> 00:29:12: I got nervous because this is a good idea and  
00:29:12 --> 00:29:13: you know,  
00:29:13 --> 00:29:15: I'm I am. I just too in love with the  
00:29:15 --> 00:29:15: space.  
00:29:15 --> 00:29:18: Should I back out and I went for it and  
00:29:18 --> 00:29:22: I went ahead and bought the property in June of  
00:29:22 --> 00:29:22: 2020,  
00:29:22 --> 00:29:27: so luckily the pandemic hasn't slowed business down and I.  
00:29:27 --> 00:29:30: I think really part of that is because we do  
00:29:30 --> 00:29:31: residential and commercial design.



00:29:31 --> 00:29:35: UM, so you know when the commercial stuff is,  
 00:29:35 --> 00:29:39: so the residential usually, at least in my experience.  
 00:29:39 --> 00:29:43: So dumb. We already were pretty good about working  
 remotely,  
 00:29:43 --> 00:29:45: so that wasn't too much of an issue.  
 00:29:45 --> 00:29:48: And then we utilizes resources like zoom and such so  
 00:29:48 --> 00:29:51: we could do most of our meetings virtually.  
 00:29:51 --> 00:29:53: Unless we had a survey or something like that where  
 00:29:53 --> 00:29:54: we had to be on site.  
 00:29:56 --> 00:29:59: One interesting thing I realized since having this cuz I  
 00:29:59 --> 00:30:01: actually hate working from home.  
 00:30:01 --> 00:30:05: I don't like it anymore at all and.  
 00:30:05 --> 00:30:08: Although in the beginning of Code my team was working  
 00:30:08 --> 00:30:08: from home,  
 00:30:08 --> 00:30:10: I still came in on my own,  
 00:30:10 --> 00:30:13: 'cause luckily I'm only 5 minutes away so.  
 00:30:13 --> 00:30:18: That was interesting, but my team is fully vaccinated,  
 00:30:18 --> 00:30:22: so we were back working in the office.  
 00:30:22 --> 00:30:25: We have been back working in office for quite some  
 00:30:25 --> 00:30:25: time.  
 00:30:25 --> 00:30:29: If anything, we've been a lot busier and and I  
 00:30:29 --> 00:30:32: think the thing we're combating right now,  
 00:30:32 --> 00:30:34: especially as a business owner is is burnout.  
 00:30:34 --> 00:30:37: I try to do a lot to protect my team,  
 00:30:37 --> 00:30:42: so that often means being careful about what projects we  
 00:30:42 --> 00:30:43: take on and how many,  
 00:30:43 --> 00:30:46: and also managing client expectations.  
 00:30:46 --> 00:30:50: I've even had to adjust contracts accordingly because I.  
 00:30:50 --> 00:30:52: I feel it's tough for people outside the industry to  
 00:30:52 --> 00:30:54: understand why there are delays,  
 00:30:54 --> 00:30:56: why there are supply chain issues,  
 00:30:56 --> 00:30:59: why that so they have 20 week lead time and  
 00:30:59 --> 00:31:02: so it's a constant like educating  
 00:31:01 --> 00:31:02: Just letting them know. Listen,  
 00:31:02 --> 00:31:02: of  
 00:31:02 --> 00:31:02: we're  
 00:31:02 --> 00:31:03: the  
 00:31:02 --> 00:31:03: doing all  
 00:31:03 --> 00:31:03: client.  
 00:31:03 --> 00:31:03: that we can,  
 00:31:03 --> 00:31:05: but there's a lot of things that are out of  
 00:31:05 --> 00:31:07: our control and that stuff for our clients.

00:31:07 --> 00:31:08: And it's also tough for me.

00:31:08 --> 00:31:11: I think most business owners like a sense of control,

00:31:11 --> 00:31:15: so that's been challenging. But the one thing I always

00:31:15 --> 00:31:19: say is the goal is to not lose your marbles.

00:31:19 --> 00:31:23: So one thing that I started doing at the height

00:31:24 --> 00:31:24: of COVID,

00:31:24 --> 00:31:27: I started my friend and I went to undergrad with

00:31:27 --> 00:31:27: her.

00:31:27 --> 00:31:30: We started having what we call Marble meeting Mondays so

00:31:30 --> 00:31:33: every Monday before work we'd call each other and just

00:31:33 --> 00:31:34: then about work life.

00:31:34 --> 00:31:38: Just anything because one of the things that has been

00:31:38 --> 00:31:41: reinforced during this time is.

00:31:41 --> 00:31:43: Mostly we just need to check up on each other

00:31:43 --> 00:31:46: and make sure everyone is OK because there's a lot

00:31:46 --> 00:31:49: of things that have been going on at the same

00:31:49 --> 00:31:52: time and sometimes we just keep going and just pretend

00:31:52 --> 00:31:55: like nothing's happening just to keep it moving.

00:31:55 --> 00:31:58: But I have found it's it's great to be able

00:31:58 --> 00:32:00: to check up on people.

00:32:00 --> 00:32:03: Make sure they're OK and it's great to have a

00:32:03 --> 00:32:05: support system that and make sure that you're OK as

00:32:06 --> 00:32:06: well.

00:32:06 --> 00:32:09: Yeah, so the pandemic Ross has been.

00:32:11 --> 00:32:13: It's been interesting, so the business has been good,

00:32:13 --> 00:32:15: but other things you kind of have to keep a

00:32:15 --> 00:32:18: balance or not not get burnt out of the situation

00:32:18 --> 00:32:18: that we're in.

00:32:23 --> 00:32:25: Thank you Charlotte for sharing.

00:32:25 --> 00:32:29: UM. So now we're going to go ahead and move

00:32:29 --> 00:32:32: into the Q&A with Charlotte.

00:32:32 --> 00:32:36: You you talk about SG swimming three and some of

00:32:36 --> 00:32:38: your experience.

00:32:38 --> 00:32:44: It just kind of balancing work and life and and

00:32:44 --> 00:32:45: marbles.

00:32:45 --> 00:32:49: Rafael Ina I'd like you to tell us a little

00:32:49 --> 00:32:52: bit about your process for balancing work,

00:32:52 --> 00:32:56: work, life management. When you know,

00:32:56 --> 00:33:00: while going through all these changes and the hardships that

00:33:00 --> 00:33:01: COVID brought us,

00:33:02 --> 00:33:03: yeah, thank you so much.

00:33:03 --> 00:33:06: I yeah I love. I love that Marvel might actually

00:33:06 --> 00:33:07: just wrote it down.  
 00:33:07 --> 00:33:10: I'm totally gonna steal that Marvel.  
 00:33:10 --> 00:33:15: Mondays I would say the one thing I realized with  
 00:33:15 --> 00:33:19: being home is that I'd find myself like in my  
 00:33:19 --> 00:33:20: pajamas.  
 00:33:20 --> 00:33:23: And like Shayla said like I really don't like working  
 00:33:23 --> 00:33:25: from home because I don't get to see.  
 00:33:25 --> 00:33:28: New faces, and as you know,  
 00:33:28 --> 00:33:31: an extrovert and extravert introvert where I know when I  
 00:33:31 --> 00:33:33: need my own sort of time.  
 00:33:33 --> 00:33:37: But I love sharing my energy with others and meeting  
 00:33:37 --> 00:33:40: new people and being home with with you know a  
 00:33:41 --> 00:33:44: you know a baby all day and and and my  
 00:33:44 --> 00:33:47: husband was still working out of the house right?  
 00:33:47 --> 00:33:48: I'd be in my pajamas and like some days I  
 00:33:48 --> 00:33:50: swear I'd be like 7:00 o'clock at night and I'm  
 00:33:50 --> 00:33:51: like Oh my God I didn't even brush my teeth  
 00:33:51 --> 00:33:53: yet like this is terrible.  
 00:33:53 --> 00:33:55: You know it's like and.  
 00:33:55 --> 00:33:59: I just realized that I started to feel as if  
 00:33:59 --> 00:34:01: I just everything was the same.  
 00:34:01 --> 00:34:03: You're waking up and you were just,  
 00:34:03 --> 00:34:05: you know this this where it wasn't consistency and it  
 00:34:05 --> 00:34:08: was just the day was was and you started to  
 00:34:08 --> 00:34:11: everything became a blur like the weeks would turn into  
 00:34:11 --> 00:34:14: days and you're just like OK I have to create  
 00:34:14 --> 00:34:17: a routine where I wake up and I'm spending 20  
 00:34:17 --> 00:34:21: minutes for me with God like where I can just  
 00:34:21 --> 00:34:24: put it out there and allow God to take what's  
 00:34:24 --> 00:34:25: happening.  
 00:34:25 --> 00:34:26: Pray for those that I started to.  
 00:34:26 --> 00:34:30: Really have this fear of something happening to the people  
 00:34:30 --> 00:34:32: I love and fear has a way of just getting  
 00:34:32 --> 00:34:35: bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger.  
 00:34:35 --> 00:34:36: And if you don't control it,  
 00:34:36 --> 00:34:41: it can control you. So I started experiencing anxiety and  
 00:34:41 --> 00:34:44: all of these things and I'm like what is happening,  
 00:34:44 --> 00:34:46: you know so I only.  
 00:34:46 --> 00:34:48: Not only did I look crazy but I was like  
 00:34:48 --> 00:34:51: I think I'm really losing my marbles like for real.  
 00:34:51 --> 00:34:54: So I would say was that consistently in a routine  
 00:34:54 --> 00:34:57: and I actually stuck with it and I've done it

00:34:57 --> 00:34:58: for a year straight.  
 00:34:58 --> 00:35:01: On where I I would just wake up earlier to  
 00:35:01 --> 00:35:06: have silence with myself where it was 20 minutes with  
 00:35:06 --> 00:35:06: God,  
 00:35:06 --> 00:35:09: 20 minutes of moving my body and then just a  
 00:35:10 --> 00:35:13: little bit of time to prepare at the day because  
 00:35:13 --> 00:35:15: if COVID taught me anything,  
 00:35:15 --> 00:35:18: it was how little control we have over so many  
 00:35:18 --> 00:35:22: things that you think your work when you're allowed out  
 00:35:22 --> 00:35:23: of your home.  
 00:35:23 --> 00:35:26: I mean, these things were torn from you within a  
 00:35:26 --> 00:35:28: moments time like it's just.  
 00:35:28 --> 00:35:31: It's just insane, so it's like I needed to have  
 00:35:31 --> 00:35:35: that little bit of control over the things that I  
 00:35:35 --> 00:35:35: could,  
 00:35:35 --> 00:35:38: and I needed to let go of what I couldn't  
 00:35:38 --> 00:35:39: and and and I,  
 00:35:39 --> 00:35:43: and then brushing my teeth happened right after.  
 00:35:43 --> 00:35:45: Right after that, and actually getting out of,  
 00:35:45 --> 00:35:48: you know, and and and putting on the uniform for  
 00:35:48 --> 00:35:49: the day,  
 00:35:49 --> 00:35:54: whatever that was to change the mindset definitely definitely  
 00:35:54 --> 00:35:54: helped  
 00:35:54 --> 00:35:54: and.  
 00:35:54 --> 00:35:57: So yeah, that was my little my little self care  
 00:35:57 --> 00:35:58: during COVID.  
 00:35:58 --> 00:35:58: Yeah  
 00:35:58 --> 00:35:59: I had I had  
 00:35:59 --> 00:36:02: something similar where before 9:00 o'clock.  
 00:36:02 --> 00:36:05: I would not. First of all I would have my  
 00:36:05 --> 00:36:07: phone would sleep on the first  
 00:36:07 --> 00:36:09: floor right  
 00:36:10 --> 00:36:13: with all the sounds off and then I would not  
 00:36:13 --> 00:36:16: touch it until after I had my breakfast.  
 00:36:16 --> 00:36:20: Walked my dog and had at least half an hour  
 00:36:20 --> 00:36:22: of watching some sort of.  
 00:36:22 --> 00:36:24: Stupid this on TV or news,  
 00:36:25 --> 00:36:27: stupidity or news? I got to pick but it was  
 00:36:27 --> 00:36:30: only it was only then that I started my day  
 00:36:30 --> 00:36:33: policia I like to hear your answer that question how  
 00:36:33 --> 00:36:38: did you balance work life and and your mental health  
 00:36:38 --> 00:36:39: during during COVID.

00:36:41 --> 00:36:43: Unfortunately, I kind of did what I normally do.  
00:36:43 --> 00:36:47: I just went on Autopilot and worked like I had  
00:36:47 --> 00:36:49: no sense and I crashed,  
00:36:49 --> 00:36:53: sometimes with depression and heartache.  
00:36:53 --> 00:36:56: One of my good friends died and I actually had  
00:36:56 --> 00:37:00: to watch him go through the sickness the whole time  
00:37:00 --> 00:37:02: and then helped plan his funeral.  
00:37:02 --> 00:37:04: So it was so I did.  
00:37:04 --> 00:37:07: I was just me. I didn't create any routines.  
00:37:07 --> 00:37:10: I kept working like a nut and and dumb.  
00:37:10 --> 00:37:14: What I did learn was the importance of self care.  
00:37:14 --> 00:37:16: I had to learn that,  
00:37:16 --> 00:37:18: but I had and I had to teach myself that  
00:37:18 --> 00:37:21: and it was only the beginning of this year that  
00:37:21 --> 00:37:23: I had to actually let that sink in.  
00:37:23 --> 00:37:27: That you can't just keep functioning like you're on autopilot.  
00:37:27 --> 00:37:30: With all this other stuff going on and then try  
00:37:30 --> 00:37:32: to balance that on the side,  
00:37:32 --> 00:37:35: you still in the in the midst of doing all  
00:37:35 --> 00:37:35: this work.  
00:37:35 --> 00:37:40: I'm still trying to handle the pain from my close  
00:37:40 --> 00:37:41: friends.  
00:37:41 --> 00:37:45: Losing their mother and their arts and and just so  
00:37:45 --> 00:37:46: much of that,  
00:37:46 --> 00:37:48: I was trying to push that aside and still keep  
00:37:48 --> 00:37:51: working and then go back to that and then still  
00:37:51 --> 00:37:55: like I was trying to compartmentalise everything and what I  
00:37:55 --> 00:37:58: found was that I would break down so early this  
00:37:58 --> 00:38:01: year I took almost three weeks off where I just  
00:38:01 --> 00:38:04: just tried to focus on me and focus on getting  
00:38:05 --> 00:38:08: my head together that was in January and I was  
00:38:08 --> 00:38:12: able to clear my head out because I couldn't see.  
00:38:12 --> 00:38:17: Getting out of the the situation of COVID,  
00:38:17 --> 00:38:19: but I just all I could see was I had  
00:38:19 --> 00:38:20: work,  
00:38:20 --> 00:38:22: but I couldn't see beyond COVID existing.  
00:38:22 --> 00:38:25: And then once I finally got a chance to mentally  
00:38:25 --> 00:38:27: see that there was something there was a future.  
00:38:27 --> 00:38:32: You know, we started seeing the possibilities with the  
vaccine.  
00:38:32 --> 00:38:36: I started getting exciting planning trips again and the the.  
00:38:37 --> 00:38:39: I hate working from home as well.

00:38:39 --> 00:38:43: I moved out of my old office in the first  
 00:38:43 --> 00:38:46: week in March of last year 2020.  
 00:38:46 --> 00:38:50: COVID broke out the next week so I worked from  
 00:38:51 --> 00:38:55: home for a year and four months and finally got  
 00:38:55 --> 00:38:58: back in the office this July.  
 00:38:58 --> 00:39:02: So I I really had a hard time.  
 00:39:02 --> 00:39:04: I had to I I didn't do the stay in  
 00:39:04 --> 00:39:07: your pajamas all day long 'cause I just don't feel  
 00:39:07 --> 00:39:08: comfortable.  
 00:39:08 --> 00:39:10: So I would get up and get dressed and you  
 00:39:10 --> 00:39:10: know,  
 00:39:10 --> 00:39:12: do everything that you normally do when you work.  
 00:39:12 --> 00:39:13: But I was working like a nut.  
 00:39:13 --> 00:39:17: I found myself working 11:12 o'clock in the morning overnight  
 00:39:17 --> 00:39:19: because I was working,  
 00:39:19 --> 00:39:20: I had nothing else to do.  
 00:39:20 --> 00:39:20: I was sitting at home.  
 00:39:20 --> 00:39:24: Besides, you know all I had was work and I  
 00:39:24 --> 00:39:28: got tired of watching TV and watching the news.  
 00:39:28 --> 00:39:31: So I just kept. That was where I found solace  
 00:39:31 --> 00:39:35: was in working and but the self care is very  
 00:39:35 --> 00:39:38: important and the trying to do other things.  
 00:39:38 --> 00:39:40: Outside of work was important,  
 00:39:40 --> 00:39:44: so grateful. Thankfully this year in March I rented a  
 00:39:44 --> 00:39:47: hotel and hotel room in Philadelphia.  
 00:39:47 --> 00:39:49: Had one of my favorite hotels that used to be  
 00:39:49 --> 00:39:53: the architects building downtown and I stayed there for a  
 00:39:53 --> 00:39:56: week and my friends came to visit me and brought  
 00:39:56 --> 00:39:59: me gifts and we had a little little little gatherings  
 00:39:59 --> 00:40:00: and went out to dinner.  
 00:40:00 --> 00:40:02: I had a good time and that was where I  
 00:40:02 --> 00:40:03: was able to refresh,  
 00:40:03 --> 00:40:07: refocus and go back on Autopilot again,  
 00:40:07 --> 00:40:08: but in a better  
 00:40:08 --> 00:40:08: way.  
 00:40:09 --> 00:40:12: That sounds great. So Felicia,  
 00:40:12 --> 00:40:17: you talked a little bit about your your networking group.  
 00:40:17 --> 00:40:21: Shyla, you talked about your marble Mondays.  
 00:40:21 --> 00:40:25: Rafael Lena did you have?  
 00:40:25 --> 00:40:28: Did you have like a cohort or or group of  
 00:40:28 --> 00:40:32: folks that you convened from time to time drink  
 00:40:33 --> 00:40:36: it? Will it actually? It's interesting it it still is

00:40:36 --> 00:40:37: still today.

00:40:37 --> 00:40:40: So we I hired my first ever.

00:40:40 --> 00:40:44: In employee, which is our operations manager for many years.

00:40:45 --> 00:40:48: I did this with virtual assistance or you know kind

00:40:48 --> 00:40:48: of.

00:40:48 --> 00:40:51: Just like you know, hired showing agents but was kind

00:40:51 --> 00:40:55: of like the one woman show and hiring our operations

00:40:55 --> 00:40:58: manager and then my business partner.

00:40:58 --> 00:41:01: The three of us would call each other every single

00:41:01 --> 00:41:03: day at 8:00 AM and we would spend we would

00:41:03 --> 00:41:06: stay on the phone from 8:00 to 8:30 and we

00:41:06 --> 00:41:09: would spend 15 minutes just talking about what we were

00:41:09 --> 00:41:11: feeling and then.

00:41:11 --> 00:41:13: The other 15 minutes on an action plan and just

00:41:13 --> 00:41:17: checking in with others who are aligned in your vision,

00:41:17 --> 00:41:19: you know, because for some for many people they were

00:41:19 --> 00:41:20: home and they weren't working.

00:41:20 --> 00:41:23: And like Felicia said, you know work is a gift.

00:41:23 --> 00:41:25: That was my gift at that time.

00:41:25 --> 00:41:28: It allowed me to continue to do what I'm passionate

00:41:28 --> 00:41:29: about,

00:41:29 --> 00:41:32: but at the same time it also became cursed because

00:41:32 --> 00:41:36: sometimes you tried to just over compensate the work for

00:41:36 --> 00:41:39: the pain and and that's when you know it's sort

00:41:39 --> 00:41:41: of kind of off. That's right,

00:41:41 --> 00:41:45: and it doesn't work, and so really reaching into that

00:41:45 --> 00:41:48: and not deepened our relationship so much.

00:41:48 --> 00:41:50: That now is an organization.

00:41:50 --> 00:41:53: We just are so rooted in.

00:41:53 --> 00:41:54: You know, all three of us are very rooted in

00:41:55 --> 00:41:55: our faith,

00:41:55 --> 00:41:57: and we're rooted in our philanthropy.

00:41:57 --> 00:42:00: And so this brought it just allowed us to pave

00:42:00 --> 00:42:04: a really strong structure to our business and and then

00:42:04 --> 00:42:06: to build on top of that.

00:42:06 --> 00:42:09: And so we always look back and are so grateful

00:42:09 --> 00:42:12: for those times as hard as they were.

00:42:12 --> 00:42:16: We grew together and until this day will call each

00:42:16 --> 00:42:19: other on really tough and call each other out.

00:42:19 --> 00:42:21: On top of things and accountability.

00:42:21 --> 00:42:23: But we do it in a way with grace that

00:42:23 --> 00:42:26: allows us to say we've been in tough situations.  
 00:42:26 --> 00:42:28: We're going to make it through this,  
 00:42:28 --> 00:42:30: you know here and tell us what you need and  
 00:42:30 --> 00:42:34: sometimes just telling somebody that you need help as a  
 00:42:34 --> 00:42:34: woman,  
 00:42:34 --> 00:42:37: at least for me, it's hard to ask for help.  
 00:42:37 --> 00:42:40: Not sure why, because my husband has no problem telling  
 00:42:40 --> 00:42:42: me he needs help with something.  
 00:42:42 --> 00:42:43: Right? Like can you send this email?  
 00:42:43 --> 00:42:47: Can you know so I don't know what my problem  
 00:42:47 --> 00:42:47: is.  
 00:42:47 --> 00:42:49: I guess you know I just am wired differently,  
 00:42:49 --> 00:42:52: but it allowed me to ask them for help on  
 00:42:52 --> 00:42:54: the days that I was just like guys,  
 00:42:54 --> 00:42:57: I mentally just need you to tell me that this  
 00:42:57 --> 00:42:58: is OK.  
 00:42:58 --> 00:43:00: Or you know that we're going to make it through  
 00:43:01 --> 00:43:03: or that everything is going to be OK and and  
 00:43:03 --> 00:43:05: having someone that you trust.  
 00:43:05 --> 00:43:08: Tell you that it is and not someone that you  
 00:43:08 --> 00:43:08: know.  
 00:43:08 --> 00:43:13: You're just starting off a relationship with and so that  
 00:43:13 --> 00:43:16: they are my the people I reach to every single  
 00:43:16 --> 00:43:17: day now,  
 00:43:17 --> 00:43:19: and 'cause we're still going through it,  
 00:43:19 --> 00:43:20: right? This isn't over yet.  
 00:43:20 --> 00:43:22: We're still. It's still here,  
 00:43:22 --> 00:43:26: you know. So those that that's been my my packed  
 00:43:26 --> 00:43:27: right there.  
 00:43:28 --> 00:43:32: That sounds great, so you talked about sort of the  
 00:43:32 --> 00:43:38: support and kind of getting centered and and having folks  
 00:43:38 --> 00:43:43: to to talk with about the business and about accountability.  
 00:43:43 --> 00:43:45: In addition to the pandemic,  
 00:43:45 --> 00:43:49: we also experienced quite a bit of social unrest in  
 00:43:49 --> 00:43:51: the Philadelphia region,  
 00:43:51 --> 00:43:53: as well as in other parts of the country,  
 00:43:53 --> 00:44:00: and which kind of. For some you know it.  
 00:44:00 --> 00:44:04: It led to discussions of social equity.  
 00:44:04 --> 00:44:11: In larger circles. Felicia. Is this something that?  
 00:44:11 --> 00:44:16: You addressed in your in your business.  
 00:44:16 --> 00:44:21: Either directly or indirectly with your with your clients or  
 00:44:21 --> 00:44:22: your.



00:44:22 --> 00:44:22: Uhm,

00:44:22 --> 00:44:27: I've always been a proponent of equity among everybody,

00:44:27 --> 00:44:32: especially particularly. I have a soft spot for people with

00:44:32 --> 00:44:33: disabilities.

00:44:33 --> 00:44:37: Well also I'm a part of a group of minority

00:44:37 --> 00:44:38: architects,

00:44:38 --> 00:44:40: so we had several discussions.

00:44:40 --> 00:44:43: Sometimes they were a little extra,

00:44:43 --> 00:44:47: but we did have several discussions with one another about

00:44:47 --> 00:44:49: what was going on.

00:44:49 --> 00:44:52: I did not. I don't like to engage with clients

00:44:52 --> 00:44:55: about political or anything that's not business related.

00:44:55 --> 00:44:57: I like to keep everything professional,

00:44:57 --> 00:45:01: so unless you're someone that I've developed a relationship

00:45:01 --> 00:45:02: with

00:45:01 --> 00:45:02: as a client,

00:45:02 --> 00:45:04: we didn't get into those discussions,

00:45:04 --> 00:45:07: but uhm, it did shape some of the decisions that

00:45:07 --> 00:45:09: I had to make during that time.

00:45:09 --> 00:45:12: I had to cancel some appointments and come,

00:45:12 --> 00:45:16: and, you know, just shift around what was going on.

00:45:16 --> 00:45:19: I tried not to let that affect my.

00:45:19 --> 00:45:24: State because I was already affected so much emotionally

00:45:24 --> 00:45:27: with

00:45:24 --> 00:45:27: what was going on with the pandemic and and just

00:45:28 --> 00:45:28: people.

00:45:28 --> 00:45:29: Just I kid you not.

00:45:29 --> 00:45:32: It seemed like people were just walking out of here.

00:45:32 --> 00:45:36: They were just leaving this earth last year and it

00:45:36 --> 00:45:41: was hard enough dealing with that personally that I could

00:45:42 --> 00:45:45: not take a lot more of of things that were

00:45:45 --> 00:45:48: going on so I had to kind of come.

00:45:48 --> 00:45:53: Again, I'm always a proponent of social equity and always

00:45:53 --> 00:45:54: have been,

00:45:54 --> 00:45:58: but I could not take in anything that was going

00:45:58 --> 00:46:00: to set me off right right there,

00:46:00 --> 00:46:02: if that makes sense. I don't wanna.

00:46:02 --> 00:46:06: It does trivialize it, but you know it it.

00:46:06 --> 00:46:08: I did put out a statement on on on on

00:46:08 --> 00:46:12: LinkedIn and just letting everybody know that we are

00:46:12 --> 00:46:15: business

00:46:12 --> 00:46:15: that they were looking to help is whatever way we

00:46:15 --> 00:46:18: can. I didn't want to get into a lot of

00:46:18 --> 00:46:18: the.

00:46:18 --> 00:46:21: Discussions that were going on at that time,

00:46:21 --> 00:46:22: if that makes sense,

00:46:22 --> 00:46:25: it does. I know in my business I was approached

00:46:25 --> 00:46:26: by everybody.

00:46:26 --> 00:46:30: It seemed like everybody I had ever met was like

00:46:30 --> 00:46:32: let's talk about,

00:46:32 --> 00:46:35: you know, and there was a point where I'm like.

00:46:35 --> 00:46:40: If it. I'm talking about my whole life,

00:46:40 --> 00:46:45: right? Exactly exactly up in my business.

00:46:45 --> 00:46:50: UM, it's we've always. It's always been something that we've

00:46:50 --> 00:46:52: considered and everything we we do.

00:46:52 --> 00:46:55: I think you know as a woman.

00:46:55 --> 00:47:00: As African American, it's just something that I always think

00:47:00 --> 00:47:02: about how who's not here,

00:47:02 --> 00:47:07: who's being left out, we were able to come with

00:47:07 --> 00:47:12: with growth we are able to do a little more

00:47:12 --> 00:47:14: than I've ever done.

00:47:14 --> 00:47:18: Prior, largely because our clients were a little bit more

00:47:18 --> 00:47:20: open to a little bit more diverse.

00:47:20 --> 00:47:24: Uhm, you know to having more diverse consultants,

00:47:24 --> 00:47:28: so we're firm now of 22 people.

00:47:28 --> 00:47:32: And we speak seven languages.

00:47:32 --> 00:47:37: Yeah yeah, so uhm. So something I'm really proud of.

00:47:37 --> 00:47:41: Uhm Shayla is this is.

00:47:41 --> 00:47:45: Was the civil unrest? Was that something that affected your

00:47:45 --> 00:47:48: business or affected the business of your clients?

00:47:48 --> 00:47:50: Uhm? Not

00:47:50 --> 00:47:55: so much, but I've also noticed that as far as

00:47:55 --> 00:47:57: social unrest,

00:47:57 --> 00:48:01: political stuff, my clients said be on the same page.

00:48:01 --> 00:48:03: So like I'll go through their home and I'll see

00:48:03 --> 00:48:04: things like OK,

00:48:04 --> 00:48:06: they're on the same page,

00:48:06 --> 00:48:09: so that's that's interesting, UM.

00:48:11 --> 00:48:15: I mean, again, I think.

00:48:15 --> 00:48:17: I use. I think we use work sometimes to kind

00:48:17 --> 00:48:21: of escape those things which is healthy and unhealthy at

00:48:21 --> 00:48:22: the same time,

00:48:22 --> 00:48:24: right? And I had I had to go back to

00:48:24 --> 00:48:25: therapy.

00:48:25 --> 00:48:26: I'm a huge proponent of therapy.

00:48:26 --> 00:48:29: I did 'cause it was just the pandemic and just  
 00:48:29 --> 00:48:30: everything else  
 00:48:30 --> 00:48:31: to mom like  
 00:48:31 --> 00:48:32: Australia was on fire.  
 00:48:32 --> 00:48:38: Like just everything at the same time and and I,  
 00:48:38 --> 00:48:40: you know, like police will say I would just like  
 00:48:40 --> 00:48:40: work work,  
 00:48:40 --> 00:48:42: work just like not think about it.  
 00:48:42 --> 00:48:44: But then when you have like a little bit of  
 00:48:44 --> 00:48:46: down time to think about it like I would just  
 00:48:46 --> 00:48:47: have a meltdown.  
 00:48:47 --> 00:48:50: Uhm, so that's something I had to like.  
 00:48:50 --> 00:48:51: Take care of and talk through it,  
 00:48:51 --> 00:48:57: uhm? But at work it it doesn't so much come  
 00:48:57 --> 00:48:57: up,  
 00:48:57 --> 00:48:59: but you know it's there.  
 00:48:59 --> 00:49:02: I guess you know it exists and it's the emotional  
 00:49:02 --> 00:49:05: exhaustion that people are experiencing is very  
 00:49:05 --> 00:49:06: clear as well.  
 00:49:07 --> 00:49:10: Yeah, Rafael. Lena was the civil unrest in the region  
 00:49:10 --> 00:49:14: was did it affect effect you or affect your business  
 00:49:14 --> 00:49:17: at all or how you approach your work.  
 00:49:17 --> 00:49:17: So  
 00:49:17 --> 00:49:20: it's interesting because I was raised my Gran Father came  
 00:49:20 --> 00:49:22: here from Italy with my dad,  
 00:49:22 --> 00:49:24: my parents. So we grew up in a very humble  
 00:49:24 --> 00:49:25: environment.  
 00:49:25 --> 00:49:29: We, you know as immigrant an immigrant family and my  
 00:49:29 --> 00:49:30: Gran father.  
 00:49:30 --> 00:49:32: Tell me stories about when he lived in Brooklyn and  
 00:49:32 --> 00:49:34: how the Italians were.  
 00:49:34 --> 00:49:37: You know, things. We were just always taught at a  
 00:49:37 --> 00:49:39: young age to respect everyone,  
 00:49:39 --> 00:49:41: regardless of what someone looks like,  
 00:49:41 --> 00:49:43: regardless of where they come from.  
 00:49:43 --> 00:49:47: Because we my Gran Father experienced first hand what it  
 00:49:47 --> 00:49:47: was like,  
 00:49:47 --> 00:49:49: where there were signs on the door.  
 00:49:49 --> 00:49:53: That said, no Italians welcome and this was acceptable  
 00:49:53 --> 00:49:56: behavior,  
 00:49:53 --> 00:49:56: and so I he always said to me,  
 00:49:56 --> 00:49:58: you know, we live in America.

00:49:58 --> 00:50:01: You do and respect. Everybody and he told us every  
 00:50:02 --> 00:50:05: morning when he dropped us off at school like it  
 00:50:05 --> 00:50:08: was no question and it was it hit me that  
 00:50:08 --> 00:50:13: there were other individuals that actually ran their life thinking  
 00:50:13 --> 00:50:15: about how they could,  
 00:50:15 --> 00:50:18: you know, affect someone else's life or or not.  
 00:50:18 --> 00:50:21: You know, just this how they looked at others and  
 00:50:21 --> 00:50:24: how people raise their children and my awareness wasn't so  
 00:50:24 --> 00:50:26: much in my work but in my home that my  
 00:50:27 --> 00:50:29: daughter will never see anyone.  
 00:50:29 --> 00:50:30: That's why I love raising her.  
 00:50:30 --> 00:50:33: In such a beautifully diverse city is because of the  
 00:50:34 --> 00:50:36: in the awareness that this is around us,  
 00:50:36 --> 00:50:40: so it was more of an awareness of having conversations  
 00:50:40 --> 00:50:43: personally with those that I felt needed to hear the  
 00:50:43 --> 00:50:47: things that I heard growing up and and really with  
 00:50:47 --> 00:50:50: many of my clients who had me support organizations that  
 00:50:50 --> 00:50:52: they felt strongly about.  
 00:50:52 --> 00:50:55: We donate 10% of every home that we sell.  
 00:50:55 --> 00:50:57: We donate 10% of it,  
 00:50:57 --> 00:51:00: and for some of these individuals they ask this,  
 00:51:00 --> 00:51:04: hey, can you support? Organization that is helping with you  
 00:51:04 --> 00:51:08: know the civil unrest and things that are happening and  
 00:51:08 --> 00:51:11: we did and you know it it showing your face  
 00:51:11 --> 00:51:15: and doing the right thing everyday and and you know  
 00:51:15 --> 00:51:19: being genuine about it is something that for me is  
 00:51:19 --> 00:51:23: always been so it didn't shift anything in my heart,  
 00:51:23 --> 00:51:26: it just made me more aware of what was out  
 00:51:26 --> 00:51:30: there and I think sometimes we even with very COVID.  
 00:51:30 --> 00:51:33: What an awareness. Everything was and I think Charlie.  
 00:51:33 --> 00:51:36: You said it that it almost made you just feel  
 00:51:36 --> 00:51:39: how where you were and how small this big world  
 00:51:39 --> 00:51:39: is like.  
 00:51:39 --> 00:51:43: We're all connected right? And for me it just made  
 00:51:43 --> 00:51:47: me realize the importance of reflecting God in everything I  
 00:51:47 --> 00:51:50: do to be a light and to just no matter  
 00:51:50 --> 00:51:53: who I'm talking to. Just sharing that and I think  
 00:51:53 --> 00:51:57: it just made me feel even more important to share  
 00:51:57 --> 00:52:00: love it made more important to you know just be  
 00:52:00 --> 00:52:03: who I've always been. But I had to magnify it  
 00:52:03 --> 00:52:04: right?  
 00:52:04 --> 00:52:06: And so not that I had to.

00:52:06 --> 00:52:09: I wanted to in in time I wanted.  
00:52:09 --> 00:52:12: I wanted to let anyone know who was feeling that  
00:52:12 --> 00:52:16: they were unfairly treated that I love them and that  
00:52:16 --> 00:52:19: I was there for them and that I may not  
00:52:19 --> 00:52:22: understand exactly what you're feeling but that I can be  
00:52:23 --> 00:52:25: empathetic and not sympathetic and say,  
00:52:25 --> 00:52:27: oh, I'm sorry but empathy.  
00:52:27 --> 00:52:31: I wanna know what you're feeling and so.  
00:52:31 --> 00:52:32: I think that that's really,  
00:52:32 --> 00:52:33: really important.  
00:52:34 --> 00:52:37: So thank you, all of you for for sharing your  
00:52:38 --> 00:52:38: story.  
00:52:38 --> 00:52:42: Sharing your insights. I'd like to go ahead and transition  
00:52:42 --> 00:52:42: back,  
00:52:42 --> 00:52:43: to, ruminate  
00:52:43 --> 00:52:45: to, to  
00:52:46 --> 00:52:47: wrap up for the evening.  
00:52:48 --> 00:52:49: Great, thank you so much,  
00:52:49 --> 00:52:54: Arnell and Schuyler, Evelina, Felicia and thank you all so  
00:52:54 --> 00:52:58: much for taking the time today and having these very  
00:52:58 --> 00:52:58: open,  
00:52:58 --> 00:53:01: meaningful conversations. I really appreciate it.  
00:53:01 --> 00:53:04: And thank you all to our viewers for taking this  
00:53:04 --> 00:53:08: time to view this important conversation of four impressive  
leaders.  
00:53:08 --> 00:53:11: Thank you to our speakers for sharing their time,  
00:53:11 --> 00:53:12: our sponsors for their support,  
00:53:12 --> 00:53:16: our Member volunteers and my Co Chair Kim for helping  
00:53:16 --> 00:53:18: put this program together today.  
00:53:18 --> 00:53:21: We hope you enjoyed. Stories of resiliency and grit.  
00:53:21 --> 00:53:23: The rebound of development, design,  
00:53:23 --> 00:53:26: and construction through COVID. With that I will close out  
00:53:26 --> 00:53:28: the panel and thank you.  
00:53:28 --> 00:53:29: Everyone take care.

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