



Join our free membership site, The Duke Humfrey's, and get access to full transcripts, past episodes, exclusive downloads and more.

You'll find it all at [www.MBS.works/podcast](http://www.MBS.works/podcast)

MBS ([00:00](#)):

A question for you. Who do you trust with your work? Who do you trust with your work? Whatever it is that you are working on, it can't be down just to you to bring it out into the world. You're going to need help. You're going to need to trust others. You have to find the right champions, people who will play their necessary parts in creating and refining and sharing whatever it is that you're building. As a writer and an author myself, it took me a while to find the right partners for my books. I mean, I started trying to self-publish by myself, and that was hard and success was limited.

([00:39](#)):

I had a so-so experience with a fancy New York Publishing House. They turned out not to be the best partners for me after all. But eventually, I found my way to Page Two, a company based in Vancouver, and their model is hybrid publishing where I have access and rely on the expertise of a publisher, but I



maintain control and have the final say on key things like the title, the cover, and in fact, the words inside. I'm like the executive editor. Page Two has been behind my last three books and they're already deeply involved in my next two. These are the people I trust. These are people who understand what I'm trying to achieve, and these are people who have my back. So, who has your back? Who do you trust with your work?

[\(01:32\)](#):

Welcome to Two Pages with MBS. This is the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Now, Page Two, who I was just talking about, has only one other real rival in the hybrid publishing market. JeVon McCormick, my guest today is the CEO of Scribe, their rival, as well as being on the Board of Conscious Capitalism. He also works with the STARTedUp Foundation where students pitch their entrepreneurial ideas for a chance at 25,000 bucks, and the opportunity to collaborate with the best in class people who can help them turn their ideas into a business.

[\(02:12\)](#):

In other words, it's shark tank without the sharks. So, this is JeVon. You're getting a sense of the man, but his first exposure to entrepreneurship isn't what you might expect.

JeVon [\(02:23\)](#):

My dad was a black pimp in 1971, and when I say pimp, he was a real pimp. He put women on a street corner, they sold their bodies. My dad took every dollar.

MBS [\(02:34\)](#):

JeVon's mom, who happens to be white, was abandoned as a baby and then raised in an orphanage.



JeVon ([02:40](#)):

When she turned 17 years old, they gave her a small suitcase, \$20 and said, "Good luck to you. There's the world." And she had never been outside of those four walls. She didn't even know what a stoplight was. So, unfortunately, for her, one of the first people she met was my quite a bit older, well-dressed, fast talking father. And so, my dad was a pimp. My mom was a prostitute.

MBS ([03:02](#)):

Separated from his mom and one of 23 kids that his dad had fathered, here was JeVon's experience of growing up.

JeVon ([03:10](#)):

I was raised in extreme poverty, US poverty, because poverty outside this country is a little bit different, but poverty nonetheless. I was in and out of juvenile prison three different times, sexually abused by one of my dad's prostitutes. I was abandoned in a house for almost a month with three of my half brothers and sisters.

MBS ([03:31](#)):

When he was 15, he was assessed at school.

JeVon ([03:34](#)):

I was testing on a fifth and sixth grade level. And so, needless to say, fast forward, I never graduated high school. I got a GED, never went to college. So that's a bit of the origin story. But I went on to teach myself how to invest in the stock market and did pretty well. That's where the majority of my money was made, worked in payday loans, mortgages. I had the absolute honor to be the president of a software company that we sold off to Accenture. And here I am now, CEO of a publishing company. And as I like to wrap it up and joke, I was the president of a software company, I can't write code. And now I'm the CEO of a



publishing company. And I can't tell you an adverb from an adjective and I damn sure can't spell. So, God bless America.

MBS ([04:21](#)):

That is quite the story JeVon. Well, what's the gift from your childhood?

JeVon ([04:31](#)):

Man, I really appreciate that question. No one has ever asked that. They don't put it that way. People always ask, "Oh, you had every reason to fail. You had every reason not to succeed. And people would totally understood." And I go, "No, that's bullshit." I had every reason to succeed because if you could make it through all that, the rest of this is pretty easy. So, the gift was my childhood itself in the sheer chaos and being able to know there's a completely different side to this country that most people will never even know exist. And just navigating that chaos, the environment, the stress, that was the gift.

MBS ([05:14](#)):

Who was your first role model, JeVon? Who stood for something different than the chaos?

JeVon ([05:24](#)):

It's interesting, Michael. When we say role model, I believe most people when they hear role model, they think of a positive influence, someone they aspire to, maybe that they look up to or maybe they want some of their attributes. And for me, it took me years to say this, but coming straightforward, my first role model had to have been my dad. The things that I learned from him, not necessarily all positives, but you can learn through negatives. You can learn, "Okay, I don't want to be that. I want to do this different." But some of the things that he exposed me to, my dad was the first person who really showed me what entrepreneurship it was. I didn't even know what that word meant until I was 29, 30 years old.



(06:20):

But then, I looked back when I was nine years old and I was out with my dad collecting money from prostitutes. Michael, we went to the first prostitute and she stuck through a massive stack of money. And I remember her asking, "Hey, can I come in now?" I made my count and my dad in the most loving way said, "No, girl, get back out there. You're on a roll. Keep going. I'll come back around to get you." And he even finished it off with, "Hey, when I come back, you can pick where we go to dinner." That was a bonus or something.

(06:54):

And then we went to the next lady and she slid through the window what looked like \$3 and my dad lost it. He called her every foul derogatory word you could possibly think of. And as we drove off, I remember thinking to myself, I'm nine, I'm in the front seat. We just finished collecting money from prostitutes. And I remember thinking, I wonder if I was nicer to the prostitutes and they got to keep part of the money. Should I have more prostitutes in volume?

Therefore, I'd make more money because I'm nicer. They get to keep part of the money, they'd want to work with me. And then I thought, "Ooh, well competition," because a lot of pimps are going to be mad because their women are going to want to come work with me. But I was nine, and that was my first real view into how do I scale this? How do I do it better? And more importantly, how do I put people first?

MBS (07:48):

Right. Culture and strategy. You're playing with the twin DNA of what a business is.

JeVon (07:55):

Totally.



MBS ([07:55](#)):

You're seeing how these things can work together.

JeVon ([07:58](#)):

You know what's funny, Michael, really quick there. When I say my dad was a pimp and he put women on a street corner, blah, blah, blah. Many people look at my dad as this the disgusting human. And okay, that's fair. But if you look up the definition of a pimp, the definition is a man who exploits a woman for financial gain. And so, I explained to people, if that's the definition of pimp, a man who exploits women for financial gain, then the greatest pimp of all time was Hugh Hefner.

([08:32](#)):

And so, many people, when I say that, they're ready to push, "Oh no, that was different. It was a company." No, no, no, no. He exploited women for financial gain. And especially, when you look at a lot of those young girls that went out to California aspiring to be an actress, whatever, and they got crumbs for putting their naked bodies in a magazine. He exploited women for financial gain.

MBS ([08:56](#)):

Yeah, there's also more subtle ways of exploiting women than sex or naked performance. There are all sorts of, we could just articulate through that all to all sorts of companies within capitalism full stop around who's exploiting whom here.

JeVon ([09:13](#)):

Right. Right.

MBS ([09:15](#)):

Okay JeVon, tell me what your name means to you. When I first met you as JT. And now, am calling you JeVon. So, what is a name to you?



JeVon ([09:28](#)):

I appreciate that, man. Michael, you're coming with the questions, man. I've done hundreds of podcasts and no one has asked. So, this is going to be interesting and I say this with the utmost respect. I don't want people to throw stone me after I say this, but my name takes on a very interesting dynamic. Because when I was a kid, my name's JeVon, but when I was a kid, so my mom named me. So, people always think they say, "Oh, you have a black name." Well, my white mom named me. And what was funny is she found the name in a French book. She was taking a college course, and the name is actually French, and she found it in a French book from her taking a college course.

[NEW\_PARAGRAPH] But what's interesting is my dad would never call me JeVon. He said it sounded like a faggot's name, and he refused to call me Jevon. He would only call me Jevin. So, my dad in his side of the family all know me as Jevin. My mom would call me JeVon. And then, when I hit the business world, I was trying to further my career, I didn't want to be a mail boy forever and push a cart. And I remember trying to get on people's calendars and I could not get a call back. I couldn't get an appointment. Michael, this is back in the early '90s, man, when you had to do work to get work. Not like now you upload a resume and you hope for the best.

MBS ([09:28](#)):

Yeah, that's right.

JeVon ([10:57](#)):

You actually had to follow up, cold call, go knock on doors. And so, you had to do work to get work. And I remember I couldn't get a call back. And then one day, a white gentleman picked up the phone and he said, "Hey, how did you get a black first name JeVon and an Irish last name McCormick? And Michael, I didn't know my last name was Irish. So, I focused on that. I was like, "Oh man, this is amazing. I just found out my last name's Irish." But when I hung up the phone, it



hit me. I was like, "Oh, that's why I'm not getting a callback. So, my full name is JeVon Thomas McCormick. That day, I started going by JT.

(11:34):

Michael, the next week, man, appointments, callbacks, invites. And I'm like, "Wow." And it was bittersweet because sweet, great. I cracked the code. I got in. Bitter, I had to edit myself to do it. And then, I'll fast forward here right after the George Floyd murder. For me, the disgusting virtue signaling that you saw going on, we were arguing blackout Tuesday on social media, whatever. And then, we were arguing over a syrup bottle. A syrup bottle. What change does that bring?

(12:10):

But what really jumped out to me is I read a piece that there were only three Fortune 500 black CEOs at the time. And I say, "Oh, interesting." So, I went and looked up their names, Kenneth Frazier, Marvin Ellison, Roger Ferguson, and it's a bonus, the wealthiest black man in America is named Robert Smith. And I thought to myself, "Well, those are four very ethnic free names, if you will."

MBS (12:36):

Exactly.

JeVon (12:37):

And so, it was in that moment I realized, whatever we as people, whatever we're not changing, we're choosing. And I was choosing to be part of the problem because I edited myself to fix this broken playbook of corporate America. And I made the decision there. I said, "That's it. I'm going to reclaim my name and I'm going to go by JeVon." And I didn't do it for me. I built my career as JT. But I did it for every kid that's got that different last name, that ethnic name, Martinez, McConda, Rosalia, Juan, Jesus, Rebonte. And my goal was maybe one day, maybe when you hit the working world, corporate America, you can work next to a JeVon and not just a JT.





MBS ([13:26](#)):

I love it. What other labels have you had to put down or take up?

JeVon ([13:39](#)):

Man, here in the states growing up mixed race. Half white, half black in the '70s. Whoa, Michael, not a good look, man. Black people didn't like me because I was half white. White people didn't like me because I was half black. And I always try to explain to people this way, just think of this dynamic for a second. I've had, because I'm lighter skinned, if you will, I've had black people call me white boy. I've never had a white person call me white boy. So, when you think about labels and dynamics growing up mixed race and not having a community to even fit in, because both sides don't like you. Being called half breed, Oreo cookies, zebra, color confused, man, it sucked.

[NEW\_PARAGRAPH]And so, yeah, there were times where I hated being a mixed race. There were times I hated being half white. There were times I hated being half black and you felt lonely at times you were on this island. But yeah, the labels that I would take on when I did hit my working career, I never wanted anyone to know my dad was a pimp or that I don't know where my last name comes from or my dad had 23 kids. It's like, "Who's going to want to hire that guy and top it off? I got a GED. Man, I got it. Yeah, it was tough. But for me, I just always believed, okay, keep going, keep going, just keep going.

MBS ([15:21](#)):

Well then, if you don't mind me continuing to be nosy about this, because it's such a powerful story, what aspect of who you are has been most important to reclaim?

JeVon ([15:40](#)):

Oh boy. I'd say there really isn't a part, I'd have to go with the whole. And what I mean by that, when I did my first book, I was only doing that book as a legacy



piece for my children. I literally, I only wanted five copies. I never wanted that book to be public.

MBS ([16:00](#)):

Not 23 copies.

JeVon ([16:04](#)):

No, five. That was it. And so, my great grandchildren would have an origin. Okay, look. I don't know right before me, but I can at least give you this of how I got here.

MBS ([16:17](#)):

This is my side of the family tree.

JeVon ([16:19](#)):

And so, that's what it was done for. And then through a lot of conversation, a lot of encouragement, support, people are like, "Man, you got to make your book public." And so, we made it public. And really, one of the most freeing pages in that book is where it says, "My name is JeVon Thomas McCormick, half white, half black. I got a GED. I never went to college. My dad was a pimp." And because there it is, this is...

MBS ([16:48](#)):

Naming the story.

JeVon ([16:49](#)):

This is where I come from. It's where who I am. And even with that, this is who I am now. And it really, it was freeing because I no longer had to try to hide or worry if you were going to find out my background of where I'm from.



MBS ([17:09](#)):

You've picked a classic book to read from. What book have you chosen?

JeVon ([17:14](#)):

Man, I picked Think and Grow Rich. I got introduced to this book, 19, 20 years old, life changing. And Michael, I'm going to show my age here a bit. I remember first I got introduced to the book and as, and I talked early on and I said earlier, I still to this day, I read on, maybe I've got up to a seventh-grade level now, but my reading is not the best. Thank God for the man or woman who created Audible. But yeah, I knew I wasn't going to get through that book. So, this is where my age is going to show. I got the book on cassettes.

MBS ([17:57](#)):

The 48-cassette type set.

JeVon ([17:59](#)):

Yes, yes. And oh man, I wore those cassettes out. I listened to that book so many times. But yeah, very, very influential for me. It arguably gave me a roadmap, a guide on success.

MBS ([18:15](#)):

Do you remember how you came across it or who mentioned it to you? I mean, how you came across this?

JeVon ([18:20](#)):

I've thought about that numerous times. I have no clue how I got exposed to this book. Yeah, I couldn't tell you.

MBS ([18:29](#)):

It's cool. It's cool. The seed falls on the fertile ground and something magical happens.



JeVon ([18:37](#)):

Oh, amazing.

MBS ([18:38](#)):

So, what pages have you chosen? I mean, how did you decide what to read for us?

JeVon ([18:43](#)):

I picked what I would for me was the most influential because it's pages 220 through 222. And the reason why this was very important to me, again, growing up on welfare, I've pulled food out of the trash can because I didn't have anything to eat. I've stood in line for hours to wait for our monthly government assistance. I know what it's like to not have electricity in water. And so, for me, there was one specific part here, and it's called the fear of poverty. And that's the part because I grew up in poverty that really changed so much for me from the book.

MBS ([19:35](#)):

Well, I'm excited to hear you read. And I just do want to acknowledge [inaudible 00:19:38], and before we hit record, I'm a little nervous about reading because as you said, you don't have strong reading skills as you might have. And I'm just appreciating you for saying yes to the podcast because we're all richer for hearing your story and hearing what you're about to read. So, thank you for that.

JeVon ([19:54](#)):

I appreciate it. I'll own it. Yeah. I've got a nine-year-old and to this day when we're reading a book or she's reading to me and she'll ask me, "Dad, what's this word?" I mean, there are times we have to turn to my wife, "Babe, what's this word? I don't know." And to really take that over to business and to leadership, that's the beauty of leadership is I don't have to have all the answers. I just have to surround myself with people that know all the answers.



MBS ([20:26](#)):

Right. Well also, I mean since there's an aside there, there's a disproportionate number of people with dyslexia at that lead organizations. Because if you frame dyslexia, not as a disability but as a different type of intelligence, it turns out they have a more visual way of reading the world. And a more visual way is one way of thinking about what strategy is. I see a landscape and I can see passages through the landscape, and there's a real way where that strength is. These labeled disabilities are actually just strengths and skills waiting to find their place.

JeVon ([21:00](#)):

I 100% agree with you. There's a different way of seeing the world, the landscape, opportunities, avenues, choices, decisions. So yeah, 100% agree with you.

MBS ([21:15](#)):

Well, JeVon excited to hear. Think and Grow Rich. Over to you.

JeVon ([21:22](#)):

"There can be no compromise between poverty and riches. The two roads that lead to poverty and riches travel in opposite directions. If you want riches, you must refuse to accept any circumstance that leads towards poverty. The word riches here is used in its broadest sense, meaning financial, spiritual, mental, and material estates. The starting point of the path that leads to riches is desire. In chapter one, you received full instructions for the proper use of the word desire. In this chapter on fear, you have complete instructions for preparing your mind to make practical use of desire. Here then is the place to give yourself a challenge, which will definitely determine how much of this philosophy you have absorbed. Here's the point at which you can turn profit and foretell accurately what the future holds in store for you.

[\(22:23\)](#):

If after reading this chapter, you are willing to accept poverty, you may as well make up your mind to receive poverty. This is one decision you cannot avoid. If you demand riches, determine what form and how much you will be required to satisfy you. You know the road that leads to riches. You have been given a roadmap, which if followed, will keep you on the road. If you neglect to make the start or stop before you arrive, no one will be to blame. But this responsibility is yours. No alibi will save you from accepting the responsibility if you now fail or refuse to demand riches of life because the acceptance calls for, but one thing, incidentally, the only thing you can control, and that is a state of mind.

[\(23:22\)](#):

A state of mind is something that one assumes. It cannot be purchased, it must be created. Fear of poverty is a state of mind, nothing else, but it is sufficient to destroy one's chances of achievement in any undertaking, a truth which became painfully evident during the depression. This fear paralyzes the faculty of a person, it destroys the faculty of imagination, kills off self-reliance, undermines enthusiasm, discourages initiative, leads to uncertainty of purpose, encourages procrastination, wipes out enthusiasm, and makes self-control and impossibility. It takes the charm from one's personality, destroys the possibility of accurate thinking, diverts concentration of effort.

[\(24:11\)](#):

It musters persistence, turns the willpower into nothingness, destroys ambition, beclouds the memory and invites failure in every conceivable form. It kills love and assassinates the finer emotion, emotions of the heart, discourages friendship and invites disaster in a hundred forms and leads to sleeplessness, misery and unhappiness. And all this, despite the obvious truth that we live in a world of overabundance, of everything the heart could desire with nothing standing between us and our desires, accepting lack of definite purpose.

[\(24:52\)](#):

The fear of poverty is without a doubt the most destructive of the six basic fears. It has been placed at the head of the list because it is the most difficult to master. Considerable courage is required to state the truth about the origin of this fear and still greater courage to accept the truth after it has been stated. The fear of poverty grew out of man's inherited tendency to prey upon his fellow man economically. Nearly, all animals lower than man are motivated by instinct, but their capacity to think is limited. Therefore, they prey upon one another physically. Man, with his superior sense of intuition, with the capacity to think and to reason does not eat his fellow man bodily. He gets more satisfaction out of eating him financially.

[\(25:47\)](#):

Man is so vicarious that every conceivable law has been passed to safeguard him from his fellow man. Of all the ages of the world, of which we know nothing, the age in which we live seems to be one that is outstanding because of man's money madness. A man is considered less than the dust of the earth unless he can display a fat bank account. But if he has money, never mind how he acquired it. He is a king or a big shot. He is above the law. He rules in politics. He dominates in business and the whole world about him vows and respect when he passes, nothing brings man so much suffering and humility as poverty. Only those who have experienced poverty understand the full meaning of this.

[\(26:40\)](#):

It is no wonder that man fears poverty through a long line of inherited experiences. Man has learned for sure that some men cannot be trusted where matters of money and earthly possessions are concerned. This is a rather stinging indictment, the worst part of it being that it is true. The majority of marriages are motivated by the wealth possessed by one or both of the contracting parties. It is no wonder therefore that the divorce courts are so busy. So eager is man to possess wealth, that he will acquire it in whatever manner he



can through legal methods, if possible, through other methods if necessary, or exponent.

[\(27:25\)](#):

Self-analysis may disclose weakness which one does not like to acknowledge. This form of examination is essential to all who demand of life more than mediocrity and poverty. Remember, as you check yourself point by point that you are both the court and the jury, prosecuting attorney, and attorney for defense, and that you are the plaintiff and the defendant, also that you are on trial. Face the facts squarely. Ask yourself definite questions and demand replies. When the examination is over, you will know more about yourself. If you do not feel that you can be an impartial judge in this self-examination, call upon someone who knows you well to serve as a judge while you cross-examine yourself. You are after the truth. Get it no matter what the cost, even if it may temporarily embarrass you.

[\(28:20\)](#):

The majority of people, if asked what they fear, most would reply, "I fear nothing." The reply would be inaccurate because few people realize that they are bound, handicapped, whipped, spiritually and physically through some form of fear. So subtle and deeply seated is the emotion of fear that one may go through life burdened with it, never recognizing its presence. Only a courageous analysis will disclose the presence of this universal enemy. When you begin such analysis, search deeply into your character. There you have it, Sir.

MBS [\(29:01\)](#):

Beautifully read, JeVon. Thank you.

JeVon [\(29:03\)](#):

Thank you. I broke a small sweat there.





MBS ([29:08](#)):

We're calling the makeup people to powder you down and you'll be okay.

JeVon ([29:11](#)):

I appreciate.

MBS ([29:13](#)):

There is a lot there in what you read to us. And I'm curious to know what was the court of truth in that for you?

JeVon ([29:22](#)):

There's great fear in poverty, you realize early on. Sometimes as a kid, you didn't always know you were poor. You knew you couldn't do certain things and you knew when you had money, there were other things you could do. And so, for us, on those small occasions where my mom had maybe a little extra, if that was really such a thing back then, maybe she took me to get a hamburger and it was little things like that or maybe I got a certain box of cereal. But it all came by way of financially. So, what's interesting is as well, I had the incredible dynamic of my mom and I growing up in poverty and electricity being cut off. But then when I was with my dad, my dad had the brand-new Cadillac. He was always dressed impeccably. I'd see stacks of money.

([30:22](#)):

So, I got to see some of the things of, even with money, so much of that was true regardless of how my dad got the money. So many people "respected" him and looked at him because he had money. So yeah, I really came to see money brings power, it brings influence, it brings change. And my last piece on this, even to this day growing up, my mom and I always had to wait on the monthly welfare check. We had to wait on the bus because my mom didn't know how to drive. And even if she did, we didn't have a car.



([30:57](#)):

And when we would go to the laundromat, we had to put our things in black bags and go sit on the bus stop. And then when you got to the laundromat, you had to wait for a washer dryer to open up. And so, so much of my childhood was spent waiting. As I got older and got money and I realized if you had money, you don't have to wait. Michael, man, I'll valet park at Walgreens if they have it.

MBS ([31:20](#)):

Hey, how did you, I'm making a presumption here, but how did you find your peace with money?

JeVon ([31:29](#)):

When I lost it all in 2007, if we all remember those that are old, remember the mortgage crisis? And I was deep in the mortgage crisis and I lost all my money. I tell people I was negative broke because I had to borrow money from my stepdad and my best friend pay my rent. I was negative broke. But I remember the critical piece in that was when I was broke, I had to look in the mirror and I had an out loud conversation. Much like what you heard, that self examination. Yeah, I remembered some of this book. And I remember saying to myself, "Wow, okay, so you've had a million dollars." And now you don't. But when you had the money, you had the same, excuse my language, Michael, who you had the same shitty character.

([32:22](#)):

You didn't know how to treat women, you couldn't hold a relationship to save your life. You were horrible. You were a monster. You were just foul in relationships. And I remember I had to say out loud, I'm like, man, you're just like your dad. And that hurt, that stung. And where the dynamic of the money came in was it didn't matter how much money I had, I still had a horrible character. If I was broke, still horrible character. When I had money, still horrible character.



What's dangerous is people who get money and still have a horrible character, so many people are more accepting and welcoming of them just because they have money.

MBS ([33:06](#)):

Your new book is about modern leadership. I'm wondering how you see fear taint the way leadership, the way corporate cultures happen at the moment.

JeVon ([33:20](#)):

Oh, I appreciate that one. For me, it is so evident where fear has now come into this. And I'll give you a direct example of this. So, think of Warren Buffet. We all know who Warren Buffett is. So, Warren Buffett is 92 years old now. And then let's go all the way down to the 22-year-old startup founder. When it comes to leadership, when it comes to CEOs, there is not a CEO or leader walking the earth who has ever experienced all that's going on right now at the same time.

([33:58](#)):

So, you could take Warren Buffet, and yes, Warren Buffet, he was alive back in the '50s and '60s. So, he has seen racial tensions and Warren Buffet has seen Roe versus Wade come and go. And he has seen the Vietnam War interest rates inflation.com bust, the mortgage crisis. He has seen it all, but he's never seen it all at once. And right now, we're going through a time period where what I call the old playbook. You had so many, and again, excuse my language, you have so many fake broke playbook leaders running this old playbook. And guess what? It ran out of pages. There were no pages in this old playbook of oh, how pronouns and emails are like, I what? Wait a minute, racial, George Floyd what? And Chief Diversity Officers, and oh my God, what's going on?

[NEW\_PARAGRAPH]And so, they're stuck. Your MBA from Wharton didn't teach you this, did it? And so, because now you've run this playbook and think about this, so much of corporate America over the last, let's call it 30 years, was built on having this piece of paper for entry. So, all of these people went out



and got these degrees. So, that was kind of your key to entry so you fit the playbook. Well, now we're finding out there's a ton of educated idiots out there who have this piece of paper that is damn worthless. And you have these fake leaders who don't know what to do because this playbook doesn't work anymore.

[\(35:39\)](#):

So, in many ways, fear has crept up because now they're struggling. How? What? Oh my God, I am the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. I'm a white guy in my mid 40s or 50s. I'm supposed to say something about George Floyd, but I have no clue about black people, that environment, nothing. And so, this individual looks to the left, looks to the right. And oh my God, our vice president of communications is also white. Our COO is, okay, what are we supposed to do? What are we supposed to say? And so, you're seeing fear has crept in big because we are truly Lewis and Clark. This is a leadership expedition right now that you're starting to see, who are the real leaders?

MBS [\(36:32\)](#):

So, as a CEO yourself, do you feel you've moved beyond fear? Or do you just have a particular type of relationship with your fear that allows you to be a modern leader?

JeVon [\(36:50\)](#):

It's interesting. You even heard it said in the piece that I read. For me, and I do believe a lot of this has to do with my upbringing and the chaos that I grew up in. What I have found for me, in most cases, when people use the word fear, they are "fearing" something that may not even even happen. And so, for me, I always take that into account if I feel fear coming on because it may not even happen. So why am I going to fear something that may not even happen? And so, for me, I guess maybe taught myself and then by way of how I grew up, there's very little that I fear. And a lot of that, like I said, is how I was raised.



([37:48](#)):

I remember, here's one for you, Michael. I remember the first time I went to juvenile prison, and if you notice, I'm very specific. I say juvenile prison. We as a society have tried to lessen that blow of how we treat kids, juvie, juvenile detention. No. That shit is juvenile prison. The only difference is they're under 18. But the way you're treated in there, it is juvenile prison. And the first time I went in, I got put into solitary confinement and they shut the door, turned off the lights, and I was in there for 23 hours straight in the dark. And my dad was in England, my mom was in Texas. No one knew I was in there. That was fear. I feared that, "Oh my God, no one knows I'm here. What's going to happen? How am I going to get out of here? What am I going to do?"

([38:34](#)):

And so, my level of fear, if you will, is just a bit different from, take my kids. They'll never have that fear. So even if they go to juvenile prison, they're like, "Okay, well dad's going to come get us." They're never going to have that fear that I experienced. So, in business, I don't work in that type of fear, if you will.

MBS ([39:02](#)):

How do you teach that though to the people you lead? You lead a company. I'm going to assume that not everybody's had quite the tumultuous upbringing that you've had. Not everybody's been thrown in solitary for 23 hours in the dark. So, if I was part of your organization, I have a more regular relationship to anxiety about the future and anxiety about my fear. I mean, can you train people to think differently about fear? Or do you have to actually have gone through the trauma and then somehow have processed the trauma that you've gone through to get to where you are today?

JeVon ([39:46](#)):

I personally believe, Michael, you will never, my belief, you can never really relate unless you have the lived experience. And so, let's take me out of it for a



second. I'll give you a great example of this. And my kids go to private Christian school and I remember the church saying they were going to do a mission trip. And I'm like, "I'm not interested." And they're like, why not? And I said, I don't need to go to another country to do a mission trip. There are people here in this country that are in poverty, that need help, that need assistance. But where I'm going with this is, let's say we do this mission trip and we go to this Third World country. So, we show up, you, myself, my children, okay, we're all there and we see how bad it is.

[\(40:41\):](#)

We see how these individuals are living and our heart goes out to them. We're there to assist. Well, here's the thing. Just because we see it, we're never truly going to understand it. Because guess what, in the back of our head, we know in two weeks we're going home. I'm going back to that gated community. And so, you never really relate to it. You see, it hits you in the face if you're really open to it, but you can never, unless you have the lived experience of, "Oh, shit, this is my life. This is every day." You never can. So, for me, then it comes down to choices and perspective. And what I mean by that is I learned early on life is choices.

[\(41:25\):](#)

When I wake up in the morning, I have a choice. I can be positive, I can be negative, but it's my choice. And we all have that. I don't care if you're on death row. When you wake up in the morning, you have a choice. How are you going to view the day? And so, what happens, in my opinion, especially here in this country, so many people, and this was in there as well, responsibility, accountability. Two words missing from society right now is we're quick to blame someone else for our shortcomings for not being successful. So, when you say, how do I teach coach, mentor? I teach through my mistakes, things that I made, mistakes I share with people. Because to your point, everyone wants to say to me, "Oh, well JeVon, I don't have your background." And I said, "Look, surprisingly enough when things get intense, I don't actually look at my own



childhood. I can look at what's going on in the world right now," but it's perspective.

([42:24](#)):

Here's an example. Right now, there's a single mom walking 1,100 miles from Honduras with her six-year-old or eight-year-old trying to get to the US Mexico border to try to get into this country. And what's really sad is she doesn't know how to swim. Her kids don't know how to swim, so she makes it to the river. And now she's thinking, how am I going to get across this? And because she's so desperately wants to create an opportunity for her, herself, her children, she's willing to risk going across this river just to get into this country. Now, here's the really the mind-blowing piece of this. Let's say she makes it across. She and her kids make it across. Here's what you get. Great. You got in. You don't have a job, you don't speak the language, you don't have a place to live, but you got in.

([43:13](#)):

And so, when I share with people is, look, on my worst day of being sexually molested, I've never had to face that. I was born here. I have a responsibility to be successful because there are people literally dying daily trying to get into this country to create what I have. I'm already here.

MBS ([43:36](#)):

Jevon, I'm curious to know how you balance the need for individual responsibility and accountability and Think and Grow Rich is really strong in that language. Which is like, you need to do this work. You need to figure this out. You need to understand fear. You need to make the choice. And the fact that there are people who can be making all the right choices and they still struggle and they still don't break through, and there's some degree of support or community or structure around them that's required to lift them up. I'm not sure even what my question is. It's like, to what extent can you not do this all alone?



JeVon ([44:26](#)):

Michael, for me personally, and I know there're going to be people that disagree and they're going throw out some reason or excuse. It was just last week I was out in Palm Springs, I was named Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst and Young.

MBS ([44:45](#)):

Oh, congratulations.

JeVon ([44:46](#)):

And I met a lady out there and she was from India. And she came up to me and she's like, "Oh my gosh, your backstory is amazing." And so, I asked her about her backstory and she goes to share with me. She goes, "Oh yeah, I'm from a small village in India. When I turned 19, my parents, all they could afford was a one-way ticket for me to come to the United States." And she said it was a small village, but half the village walked with her to the train station. They put her on the train, and she got to the airport and she had this one-way ticket into the United States. When she landed, she had to navigate and figure out what to do.

([45:26](#)):

She's 19 years old, and here she is in New York City. So, when I hear support system, I look at how many immigrants have come to this country with 35 cents in their pocket, \$200. And you look at the gentleman that owns the Jacksonville Jaguars, the NFL football team. That guy got here. When he got his first job, he was making a dollar in change and he had the world just opened up for him. So, those type of individuals really inspire me because there was no support system. I mean, her only support system was her parents bought her a one-way ticket to the United States. There you go.

MBS ([46:06](#)):

Yeah. JeVon, it has been such a rich conversation. I'm wondering, as a final question, what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said between us today?





JeVon ([46:19](#)):

Well, first I got to say, Michael, man, of all the podcasts I've done, man, you brought out three questions that no one has ever asked me. So, that was great. What needs to be said? It's been said, but it's a matter of do people want to listen to it? It's been said, not on this podcast. It's been said in society. I'll repeat it, accountability and responsibility. There are things that have just evaded us and that we choose not to take accountability or responsibility, and I live by this. Whatever we aren't changing, we're choosing. And what happens is we have turned into a society where we want everything right now. We have no patience. There's very little consistency, and I'll leave it at this, Michael.

([47:15](#)):

You look no further than the diet industry and the gym industry. We're coming up on December, and you and I both know what happens, and this blows me away. It'll be the first week of December and you'll start hearing people tell you, "Oh yeah, new year, I'm starting back." And I laugh. I'm like, okay, so you're going to wait three weeks to start back when you could actually make progress now." And then, here's what really sad. If we need to lose 30 pounds, we're a society that we want to show up at 2:00 and we want the 40, 30 pounds gone by 4:00, and very little consistency. And it's the stories we tell ourselves.

([48:01](#)):

Even when you see people, they start on a Monday, they've been eating clean, their habits are good. And then, Friday comes around and they lie to themselves. They say, "Well, I earned this pizza." Have you lost 30 pounds? No. Okay, then you didn't earn it. We lie to ourselves. And again, we'll turn around. "Oh, well, I come from a family of overweight people. It's my thyroid." And what's funny about this, Michael, is it is medically proven that only 2% of the world's population actually has a thyroid weight issue. But everyone says, "Oh, it's my thyroid." And then, I'll shut up after this. I promise.



(48:43):

When was the last time you'll hear someone show up to the doctor and they'll say, "Oh, I can't stop eating pizza. I can't stop drinking soda. I had sweets." When was the last time someone showed up at the doctor and said, "Oh, I just cannot stop eating salad, chicken, breast, and water." It's a choice.

MBS (49:06):

I've known JeVon for a while. I actually caught him up four, five years ago, just when Shannon was thinking about taking over being CEO at Box of Crayons. And I knew that JeVon had taken over from a founder as well when he became CEO of Scribe. So, I wanted to ask him what guidance he'd have for Shannon and me as we went through our own version of that transition. But four years ago, when I talked to him, I called him JT. That's how he introduced himself to me. And just as I mentioned in the interview, I was glad he was okay with asking me about his name and the way he changed his name.

(49:46):

His answer, though, I mean, this really struck a chord for me. "And I was choosing to be part of the problem because I edited myself to fix this broken playbook of corporate America, people of color talk, which I'm not, you haven't met me, talk about code switching, figuring out what face to put on and what game to play. So, they fit in so they don't make people uncomfortable or distrusting, so they avoid being othered."

[NEW\_PARAGRAPH]JeVon's talking truth to power when he talks about having to edit himself to manage the conscious and the unconscious bias of the system. What I wonder about, and I absolutely don't have a good answer for this, is what do I need to do more of or so perhaps to do less of to create the safe and vital and repairable relationships that will allow the people I work with to not feel that they have to edit themselves. I'm going to be thinking about that for a while, for sure.



(50:52):

If you've enjoyed this conversation with JeVon, I think you might have. I've got two others to recommend to you. One is with Shelly Ashenbaugh. She is our senior board member, senior executive, quite an influencer in Silicon Valley, and my conversation with her is called Weighing the Price of Ambition.

(51:09):

And then the other interview is with Minda Harts, author of a book called The Memo, and that interview is called A Seat at the Table. She works with people of color to help them get represented at senior levels in organizations. If you'd like to find out more about JeVon, Scribe Media is the name of his company or the company where he's CEO, and he has a personal website as well, which is jevonmccormick, J-E-V-O-N-M-C-C-O-R-M-I-C-K.com.

(51:42):

Thank you for listening. Thank you for being part of this community. Thank you for giving the podcast a review. Thank you for passing on the interviews that you love. My goal is to make this one of your favorite podcasts. I'm always open to feedback, if you've got it for us. But I will just say, you're awesome and you're doing great.