

FT: Anthony Saleh, thank you so much for joining me. I am so excited to talk to you.

AS: Yeah, me too. I'm excited to speak to you, as well.

FT: Now, you are based in Los Angeles, and if there's ever a town where you're encouraged to hustle, I think it's LA, especially if you work in entertainment. And I remember meeting a writer back then, one time, telling me he was a hustling hyphenate. He was an actor/writer/waiter/dog walker, and you, Anthony, are also a mega hyphenate, but of course at a much higher level. You're an artist, manager, angel investor, startup founder, producer... But interestingly enough, you have your degree in Math and Electrical Engineering. So how did this all materialize for you? Like where did you get your start into the world that you're in now?

AS: That's a great question. Well, essentially for me, I wanted a change when I was in New York City. I mean, excuse me, when I was in Los Angeles. And I decided to move to New York to take on an opportunity to work at an independent agency. And from there it just... I kinda just looked into the business, even though I had total opposite skill sets from what I probably would've needed. But it doesn't matter, because being good at numbers, or whatever the case may be, it's not about, I think, like studying in the field that you study in. It's more about how you think versus what you know, and learning how to think really helped me deal with any situation that came in front of me. So, essentially, they were life skills in there. Like I'm not doing 12 page proofs in a music marketing meeting...

[chuckle]

FT: Right.

AS: But at the same time, it's just the way you process information became very helpful. So in a lot of ways I think I was properly prepared for what I was doing, it just doesn't sound like the norm on paper.

FT: Okay. Yeah that makes sense. I think you're right. I mean, we go to college for four years, maybe five, six these days. It does not define the rest of your life, and it's really encouraging to see people like you really have a reinvention, of sorts, after college. There is life after college and a really exciting one. Okay, let's talk money. You're an angel investor. You're frequently starting businesses. You're not foreign to the value of money and money, by in large. So my first question for you, Anthony, is what is your personal financial philosophy that you live by, that guides you as you make financial decisions every day?

AS: Man, you know, I'm... Because I'm so on the run, I may not always be the best person to ask this question to, but I'm going to give you my God honest opinion on it. I always tell... People always ask me about money and whatnot, and I tell them the exact same thing, all the time. I say, "I do my best to take care of myself. I do my best to look as presentable as possible. I do my best to be as comfortable as possible, in my life, within reason and mean. And ultimately, I just work my ass off and hope that the bills are... Get paid every month."

[chuckle]

AS: That's kinda how I've always thought. Like I don't have a specific philosophy around what to save, what to spend and what not. I just bust my ass and pray to God that my lights stay on. And so far I've been pretty successful at it.

FT: But truthfully, it does sound like you have a philosophy. You may not have defined it, but I'll tell you what I think it is, it's don't bother saving, make more. Make as much money as you can and then the rest of the chips kind of fall into place, right?

AS: Yeah. Well, yes, in that sense, yes, that's true. I'm younger, right? I'm under 30 and I don't have kids, not married. I don't really see the case of having a whole... A ton of... And I don't live this insane lifestyle. So, I don't see a case for holding onto a ton of dry powder for any reasons. And I've felt like it's worth it for me to have my money working for me. Even if it may be less risk averse than other things, but it's worth it to me, because I'm building towards the future. That's how I look at it.

FT: Now, you seem to have your head on straight and in the world of entertainment, when you're talking about singers, artists, actors, even athletes to an extent, sometimes when you make a lot of money quickly, you lose it quickly. And we've seen this happen time and time again. And you're in this world and you're witnessing a lot of this firsthand sometimes. You see where money can take people to great places, but also money can really destroy people. Why do you think that is? Why do you think... I'm kind of going off topic here a little bit, but I'm curious, you're so embedded in this world of entertainment and you've probably seen it where people lose millions over night. Why? What is it that we can't get a grip?

AS: Financial literacy. If you think about a lot of people in entertainment, specifically in the music space, a lot of people were homeless, a lot of people were poor. Their story is what gravitated fans to them, but they had no concept of money, they knew nothing about it. People saw dollar signs, took advantage of them early. Same thing with athletes. Athletes have been propped up and always put on this pedestal to where they didn't have to do too much thinking for themselves. The moment they have to make some real life decisions, they start bringing in folks who sell them dreams and they get taken advantage of. A lot of times, in entertainment, it's not so much the athletes in sports or entertainment... It's not so much that athletes or entertainers are irresponsible with money, they're irresponsible with who they choose to put around them. So a lot of them end up going with yes men versus people who give them more realistic snapshots of what their life looks like. And they start digging a deep hole for themselves. And I pride myself on not being a yes man, in a lot of ways I'm a no man.

[chuckle]

AS: I say... I would rather be that way than help my clients or friends or whoever the case may be, dig themselves in a hole they can't dig themselves out of.

FT: I wanna learn how you became savvy. So take us back, what's your earliest money memory? Maybe it was as a child, and what was it that you learned from that?

AS: Oh man, I'm gonna tell you, so. I had to have been like seven, maybe six or seven, and I was obsessed with movies, and... So my mom literally bought me every Disney, this and that, every movie on videotape. And I lived... My mom and dad provided an incredible childhood for me, but

we didn't live in the safest area in the world, and we lived in a pretty decent sized apartment complex. And I used to rent the movies out to my friends in the neighborhood for 25 cents. And I used to literally... I'd... Would make a couple, two or three dollars a month but to me I was rich.

FT: You were a Netflix.

AS: Yeah. I was the hand-to-hand Netflix.

FT: And so what did you use that money for?

AS: Candy, happy meals from McDonalds, like kid's stuff. Nothing. Nothing.

[laughter]

FT: But you had an appetite for making money even back then. I think that's significant.

AS: I just wanted what I wanted.

FT: Yeah. And you were gonna go out there and get it for yourself. I love that. Okay well along the way we all make mistakes. That's how we learn, we pick ourselves up and we learn from failure. What was a financial failure that you don't mind sharing, that really taught you an enormous amount?

AS: Oh, I'll tell you. So, I had a decent amount of money saved up from doing little things here and there, like promoting parties and whatnot, high school, and for my freshman year of college. And I tried to promote shows, concerts. And I did a string of dates with the rapper Mike Jones when he was on fire, and literally I lost every penny, to the point... It was really bad. And it was because I had no idea what I was doing. And from there on, I realized that I needed to approach life, especially in my younger years, as a student versus thinking that I could just accomplish things by just winging it. And I think humbling myself and understanding and accepting that I know what I know and I don't know what I don't know, has helped me excel tremendously, 'cause that was a major learning lesson, that taught me that.

FT: Wow! And how old were you? In high school?

AS: I was like 18.

FT: Wow! Okay, let's flip it. A money moment that you're proud of, something that you consider a financial win. And I know you're involved right now in investing, you're behind some of the companies that we... Household names. But you have to have a certain savvy to know what's going to be successful, what's not. Talk about something you're proud of. Maybe it's an investment, maybe it's something you started, maybe... I don't know. Maybe it's a deal you got on something last week. Tell me.

AS: Tell you about what? Say that again. I'm sorry.

FT: Now let's talk about a, "So money moment," in your life. A time where you had a financial win, whether it was you invested in something really brilliant, you... I don't know. Were able to

negotiate a deal in your favor. Take us back to that time in your life. Tell us that story.

AS: Man! So, let's see. What's like my first... I'm trying to think of one that I'm really proud of.

FT: There's so many!

[chuckle]

AS: I'm thinking, I'm thinking, I'm thinking, I'm thinking. Oh! The first tour deal that I ever negotiated for Nas was in 2007, and I was... Was I even 21 yet? I may not have... No, I wasn't even 21 yet. And I did a year... I struck a European touring deal for Nas, and it was the first real check I ever got, and I literally thought to myself, "Oh my..." 'Cause normally, when I was making money before, it was a little at a time and I would save it, but this was like a big...

FT: Big payday.

AS: [redacted] event.

[chuckle]

AS: I mean, now it wouldn't be, but back then, it was like I became a millionaire, in my mind, and it was an incredible moment. And I just... But I told myself that I'm gonna just... This is just the beginning and I'm gonna keep going. And it's been great since.

FT: So you were 21, you're negotiating a European deal for Nas. How did you find yourself in this situation? I mean, how does a 21-year-old hook up with an artist like Nas and then you're on the phone, you're making calls, and you're doing deals that are global. How does that happen? Teach me.

AS: That's a great question. I have to be honest with you, a lot of it is... I caught Nas at a great time. He was very fed up with the business and the people in it and he took a gamble on a young kid that he liked personally and thought I was smart enough to figure this out. I think I exceeded his expectations, though. I think he knew I was smart enough to get to a point where we can be functional, but I don't think he expected it to get to go get to this point, which is fair, because I mean, I didn't even think I was fit to even get to the point where he thought I could get to. But, I think he saw it. He's the one. His confidence really gave me the confidence. He was like a safety net, because he was like... He taught me, it's okay to make mistakes. You know what I'm saying? No big deal, let's just talk through it.

AS: And he taught me about being honest and not... 'Cause a lot of times, when you're in the entertainment business and you're dealing with celebrities, you don't ever want to be the bearer of bad news.

FT: Right.

AS: And you string along the bad news trying to hope and pray for a miracle solution and it never comes, and then the bad news turns into worse news and then the worse news turns into catastrophic news, and it could've all been avoided if you just jumped in front of it and had conversations earlier

about it. You know?

FT: Mm-hmm.

AS: And that's something he taught. So, I just think that... I really attribute a lot of my success to him, his confidence in me, and him just rolling the dice on me. He had no business doing it. A lot of people thought he was an idiot for it. For years in the business, people referred to me as Nas' young kid manager who's running around like a chicken with his head cut off. And now, I consider myself one of the guys. And...

FT: And you're paying it forward. Your paying it forward.

AS: Yeah and I never... I'm not... I never got upset about that and never... Because I understood it. I was running around like a chicken with my head cut off. They're right, 100%.

[chuckle]

AS: I didn't know what the fuck I was doing, but I learned it and I attribute my success back to Nas and some to a lot of other people in the business, who just saw that I just cared about it. And took that and really guided me through it.

FT: And it sounds like you're willing to admit when you were wrong, earlier rather than later, right? Because if the train's coming you just wanna get the warning out as soon as possible.

AS: Yeah.

FT: Smart. Okay, your so money ritual. This is the part of the call, the interview where I wanna learn, we wanna learn about maybe one or two financial habits that you have, a behavior, a ritual. 'Cause really at the end of the day what makes us financially savvy so money is sticking to some habits that help us stay on top of our money and values. So what's an example? I mean for some people this could be something as simple as following a stock, budgeting every month, talking to a financial planner. What is it that you do that keeps you ahead?

AS: Say that again.

FT: Okay, let's talk about your so money ritual. Now, we know that nurturing a healthy relationship with money comes down to good habits, right? So when it comes to your money, what is one financial habit or behavior that keeps you ahead of the game?

AS: Oh man, that's easy. Miles and reward points.

[chuckle]

AS: I very... I mean, literally... I pick that system, so well, that very rarely pay out of pocket for personal travel. And I'm able...

FT: What's your go to airline?

AS: Any airline I got miles on. I'll fly...

[laughter]

AS: Like I said, I'm not like that kind of person. I'll fly Southwest, I'll Airtran, I'll fly whatever I don't really care as long as I get there. But yeah I utilize that very well and also the other thing to is I have so many resources for clothing and accessories and stuff I very rarely buy clothes and shoes. A lot of my friends have brands, right? And they actually encourage you to wear their stuff, 'cause it's good for them.

FT: Right, it's marketing.

AS: Yeah, exactly. And I'm not famous, but I know people and people will be like, "Hey where'd you get that? What yeah do..." And I'll gladly tell them where to buy and how much it costs and all that. So a lot those little things in my life I take advantage of it, so I don't have to spend a ton of money on clothes and shoes and traveling and things like that.

FT: Well not a lot of us have friends in high places, but I really like your tip about maximizing your miles. What credit card do you use? Is it all on one particular card that you're racking up all these points?

AS: Yeah.

FT: Which one?

AS: American Express.

FT: Okay. So this... So how many times a year do you travel, you would say?

[chuckle]

AS: Man, I'm on a plane I would say... I would say I am on a plane between 50 and 75 days year.

FT: Oh my gosh, and so, there you go.

AS: It maybe more. I mean this year it probably was more.

FT: Okay, lightening round, ready? We're gonna do what I call So Money Mad Libs, and how this works is you're gonna finish the sentence and just say whatever comes to your head in the moment. So first one, "If I win the lottery tomorrow, let's say \$100 million dollars, the first thing I'll do is..." "

AS: If I win \$100 million dollars tomorrow... First thing I'll do is pay my taxes on that \$100 million dollars.

[chuckle]

AS: Now the second thing I'll do is go around to all my closest friends and family and just see if there are any hanging debts that are just hampering the way they live their life. Try to help them out

with that. I actually think about this a lot. But not so much the lottery hook. If I had an insane liquidity event and I just... Certain amount of money just touched my hand what would I do with it? And I kind told myself I would put... After I paid my taxes and that stuff I would put like 25% away for a rainy. I would allocate like half to investing in different things and the other 25% into personal things like rewarding some of my close friends and workers who have helped me out in my career and life, my family, things like that. Whether it be buying one of my aunts a new house or helping one of my cousins get through college... You know, stuff like that, have a little bit set aside for that. And then for me personally, I wouldn't have a necessary use for it; there's no thing that I want, like a shiny object. There's no new car I want. I love my car. Maybe I would move to a new place but I like the place I'm at now. So, it would be more so about helping out folks around me and just reinvesting in myself.

FT: Awesome. Smart to pay your taxes first, then you can play with the rest, comfortably.

AS: Exactly. Get that out of the way.

FT: Good answer. Okay, next one. "The one thing that I spend my money on that makes my life easier or better is... "

AS: Hmm. I don't know. I would say a housekeeper, a cleaning lady. That's probably... That's kinda low hanging fruit.

FT: That's true, but hey, you're outsourcing your dirty work, that's not bad. I like that.

[chuckle]

AS: That's one, I'm trying to think what else... There's more.

FT: I'll take it. Well how about this one? "My biggest guilty pleasure that I spend of lot of money on, maybe too much, is... "

AS: This is a good one! What do I spend too much money on? Food! I spend way too much money on it. I'm eating... That's the one thing I spend a shit-ton of money on. Out of everything. I want to go to the nicest, fliest, shit every night. Everything else I'm cool on, food is that one thing that I spend money on.

FT: Who's usually your dining companion? Who are you eating with? By yourself?

AS: Nah, Nah. I got a crew, a crew of friends and folks that I hang out with. It depends on what city I'm in, too. Cool friends from different parts of town...

FT: If you're ever in New York, I wanna go out with you.

AS: Yeah! I'll take you to dinner, we'll go somewhere good.

FT: Awesome. Now, "One thing I wish I had known about money growing up is... "

AS: I would say... Man that's a great question... I would say the thing that I wish I knew about

money... Actually you know what? I wish I knew the concept of reinvesting in myself earlier. I started doing it pretty early, but I wish I learned it even earlier. That's one. Number two, I wish I knew how volatile the markets, especially on the real estate side would be...

FT: Don't we all?

AS: Because I missed out on some great opportunities. But that's kinda it. Even though I found cool ways to make money early, I wasn't obsessed with it. I did it just because I wanted, like, candy. I didn't do it because I had this greater goal. Yes, money's important and stuff like that, but I'm not... I never thought that hard about it, or, I don't have any regrets about it.

FT: Do you have your wallet handy?

AS: Yeah, it's in my pocket.

FT: Alright. I wanna know how much cash is in your wallet, and what you're probably going to use to buy it with.

AS: Oh, let me check. I have ten... I have \$55 in my pocket, and I'll likely use it on some Starbucks and probably a cab ride. I'm flying to Austin, Texas today.

FT: Do you usually keep cash in your wallet? Because some people are completely plastic and they don't use cash anymore.

AS: I never have... I always have somewhere between 20 and 100 bucks on me, max. It's very rare for me to have more than 100 bucks in my pocket.

FT: Alright. Now, when you donate money, Anthony, where do you like to give and why?

AS: You know it's funny, I spread it out a lot. Folks will have different charities, and just like, "Okay, yeah I'll do it, yeah I'll do it, yeah I'll do it." I don't really have one place that I focus my time on, but we do a lot in education, we do a lot in Third World countries, but we spread it out. There are different causes in different places.

FT: And finally, I'm so money, because... Really, anything you wanna say here will work.

AS: Alright, cool. I'm so money, because... Hold on... I'm so money because I have a smile you can't say not to.

[chuckle]

FT: And that is priceless.

AS: Exactly.

FT: Anthony Saleh, thank you so much. Tell us where we can find more about you and the great work that you're doing.

Anthony Saleh

AS: Don't Google me, because I'm an idiot on social media. But, you can go to QBVP.com.

FT: Q... Say that one more time.

AS: Q-B... Q as in queen, B as in boy, V as in Victor, P as in Paul.com.

FT: Okay got it. Thank you so much. I wish you continued success. And, really, thank you for joining me.

AS: Awesome, no problem.

FT: Thanks, Anthony, and we are done.

AS: Dope.

FT: That was awesome. You're fun. I like talking to you.

AS: Great. Well, honestly, I'll let you know when I'm Europe, and we'll...

FT: Please do. I would love to meet in person and go out on one of those swanky dinners with you.

[chuckle]

AS: No, we'll have a good time for sure.

FT: Alright. Take care. Take it easy. Bye-bye.

AS: Bye.