

EPISODE 972

“NF: I am a black girl and I’m also a black, dark-skinned girl, right? I was on-air for most of my career. I was talking to an agent, and he’s like the – He’s actually the second agent to make this kind of a comment. This is why it sticks out. He said, “You’re good on camera. I like your stuff, but your skin is so dark.” He didn’t say it like – I think he even said, “You’re attractive but your skin –” You know what I mean? Like there was a qualifier. It was the second time someone had said something like that to me, an agent or a hiring manager. I was just like they’re not saying it’s bad but they may as well be saying it’s bad.”

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:01:14]

FT: Welcome to So Money, everybody. Our guest today is Nneka Faison, who has an impressive history of career achievements in the world of journalism. She’s an Ivy League graduate, anchor and reporter, and named 40 Under 40 by Boston Business Journal, and most recently named executive producer of Boston’s Chronicle local news magazine.

Nneka and I have some parallel experiences, both having gone to the Columbia School of Journalism and having worked for Time Warner Cable News. As she describes, she’s had some interesting experiences growing up in the news industry, to say the least. It’s nice to reconnect and learning now that she is a mother of two and also hosting her own podcast.

Here's the lovely Nneka Faison.

[EPISODE]

[00:01:58]

FT: Nneka Faison. Welcome to So Money, my friend.

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NF: Oh! Thanks, girl.

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FT: This is long time coming. We connected, gosh, 10, 12 years ago. I came to –

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NF: First of all, I don't want to admit that I'm that old, but yes.

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FT: I'm older than you.

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NF: Yeah. But we're in the same range but –

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FT: Yeah. We're both elder millennials we've decided.

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NF: Yes, elder. I love that term, elder millennials. So, yes, I'm an elder. We met in the fall. I believe it was the fall of 2005 and I was in my first semester. Are they semesters? Right. Semester at Columbia Journalism School where Farnoosh also went. She came back as a successful alumna, speaking to us, students, about what could be.

I remember our professor was so impressed with Farnoosh, and she kept saying, "Look at Farnoosh. She shoots her own video. She does this. She does that. You all need to do what she

is doing. If you're like her, you'll be good in this business." So I was like, "Okay. Got to be like Farnoosh."

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FT: You took notes. You took notes. That's very kind to say. But to throw this back at you, I mean, you really are such a rising star. From that opportunity, you really leveraged so much. I mean, you went to Columbia and then you – I think you came to NY1, where I was at and probably learned about all of the various ways to produce. I mean, the one thing I will say about working for a place like NY1, you get to do all of it. You get to shoot. You get to edit. You get to produce. You get to host, if you want eventually. It's really – For me, it was like grad school 2.0.

From there, you went to Harvard, and this was later in your career. But now, you're the executive producer of WCVB Boston's Chronicle, which is the local news magazine. P.S., I'm from Massachusetts. I watched Chronicle, growing up. This is a nice little homecoming I have to say.

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NF: First of all, yes. Big ups to Massachusetts. I am not a native but I live here now. I bought a house. I'm stuck here. So, yeah. No, this is – First of all, I'm so excited to find out that you're from Massachusetts. I had no idea.

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FT: Partly, yeah. I was born in Worcester.

[00:04:19]

NF: Worcester?

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FT: Yeah. I feel like it was such a great childhood. The State of Massachusetts is really – I mean, it's unique in its way. I mean, I was definitely like the only Farnoosh, growing up.

[00:04:33]

NF: Girl, I was the only Nneka in the Philadelphia suburbs, so I feel your pain.

[00:04:38]

FT: But I think that's what makes us want to become journalists. We're raised with so many of our own interesting stories. I think as an outsider, sometimes you have to just be really observant and you pick up on things. I think I just have this curiosity for the world and I think that is why partly what drove me to journalism. What drives you?

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NF: That's good.

[00:05:01]

FT: What drives you? Because you have a really – I mean, you're now 40 Under 40 in the Boston area, which is phenomenal. I mean, obviously. You're Emmy-nominated. You're top in the media. I have to ask you. What has kept you going? A lot of people phase out. They like have a few of those local TV jobs like you did and they're like, "I got to get a PR job or something. This is not paying the bills."

[00:05:27]

NF: Right. Well, that's I think one of the reasons why I was just preparing to talk to you. I was talking to one of my colleagues about this, because she's in her 20s, starting out and asking a lot of questions. I try to be so open with her about the business, because people don't know reporters start off making no money. I think she was so surprised. My parents too when I told them – I'm just going to – I'm not shy about saying this. I made 225 my first job as a reporter in

Syracuse, actually a sister station of NY1's. So thank God for that internship, because then I – NY1 is owned by or was owned by Time Warner Cable at the time. Then I went to the Time Warner Cable station in Syracuse, which is good. So be good during your internships. Then –

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FT: Because then you too will make a job that pays nothing.

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NF: You too can get a job that's pays \$22,000 a year. But my parents were like, "We just spent 60 grand sending you to Columbia, and you're going to make \$22,000?" I kept saying, "It'll be worth it. Don't worry. Don't worry." Farnoosh is right. People phase out, because you go from 22, then you're making 35 at the next job, and you're working a lot.

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FT: It's a hard job. Yeah, you work Christmas.

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NF: Yes. You work – I think the first year, I worked Thanksgiving. I started October 10th, 2006 in Syracuse. I worked Thanksgiving. I worked – I've just got there, so I worked Thanksgiving. I worked Christmas. I worked New Years. So, yeah, you work a lot. I was shooting my own video, driving all over the place. I didn't know how to drive in snow. I had to learn how to drive in snow. Snow is a lot up there.

So how did I not phase out? I think it, what you said about this national curiosity. My husband always makes fun of me. He says people are on an interview every time they meet me. So it's like, "Want to tell me about your life and where were you born and why did you become a –"

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FT: Who, what , where , when , why, huh? Yeah.

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NF: I know. He's like, "Okay. They're like – They're not on TV."

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FT: Yeah. Relax.

[00:07:28]

NF: I think it's just that, and you're probably the same way. It's just a natural curiosity about people. I'm just – I love to talk. I am fascinated by people. I just grew up also in a household of news junkies. So my parents, they're not in television but they always watch the local news and then the national news. It was just habit in my family, so yeah.

[00:07:52]

FT: Yeah. We were big 60 minutes fans and local news. Although in the '80s, local news was pretty scary. It still is.

[00:08:02]

NF: Yeah. It was very scary. I remembered even telling my parents at some point, "Why is the news always scary?" It looks pretty scary when you're a kid.

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FT: It shaped my upbringing, because my mother didn't quite speak English, and she was new to the country. She's watching local five o'clock news with – Child abduction was a big theme from like 1980 to 1991. So as a result, I was never left out of the house. I was never allowed out of the house.

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NF: It sounds like me. [inaudible 00:08:32] first generation American thing, but my parents were – They didn't understand sleepovers like why would –

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FT: No. Yeah.

[00:08:39]

NF: Why would you go somewhere else? You can sleep here.

[00:08:42]

FT: Yeah. You're going to get kidnapped in the middle of the night, because that's what happened to the America's most wanted host's daughter. Remember?

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NF: Why? Remember the milk cartons in the '80s and stuff with all the kids? That was – Yeah, it was a scary time, especially if you're new to the country. So, yeah.

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FT: So I guess all this to say that the media influences lives. Now, you are in a position, in a role, Nneka, where you are shaping the news. Most recently, I think it was just –

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NF: Last night.

[00:09:12]

FT: Last night.

[00:09:13]

NF: Right?

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FT: Yeah. Your program did a whole series on money and millennials, which was great timing, because here we are now talking about money. So tell me about why you wanted to address this issue. I mean, it's nothing new, right, that millennials are saddled with debt.

They are called the first generation that is going to not accumulate as much of a net worth as their parents, which is pretty depressing. What kind of – Well, what was the angle that you wanted to present in this series? Do you think that there are some maybe lesser known facts about this generation as it involves their money?

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NF: Yeah. So I'll say other than just being a fan of yours, I'm just naturally – I've always been interested in money. I don't know if it's because I never had it. But I just believe in –

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FT: Probably.

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NF: I think that's it because one of my colleagues said, because I was nervous about this interview, and they're like, "Well, you're always talking about money." It's kind of true. So the story – Actually, the show idea and part of my role is helping to generate story ideas. As an elder

millennial like yourself, I thought that we hear the stories that you talked about. The student loans, we've done that. We're soft than our parents. We've talked about that, and that came up in the show.

But one thing I also wanted to highlight are the millennials like my brother who is committed to retiring early. He's part of the FIRE movement, Financial Independence, Retire Early. Then – I think you had someone else. I heard someone on your podcast a few episodes ago, talking about that too.

Then the other thing I – So there is this movement of frugality, one, right? Another thing I don't think we talk about enough is childcare, and I am not shy about talking about how much childcare costs. I have my own theories about why it seems we're just now starting to care about the cost of childcare, but that's something –

Millennials are in their 30s, right? So that's – A good portion of them are in their 30s. That's something I thought was important to address. Then also, there are millennials who are especially first generation like myself who are helping their parents or – And it's expected, right? So there's this image of the millennial siphoning money off of their parents who are about to retire, right? I mean, that's the typical narrative, but we forget that there are so many millennials. I don't know what the percentages are, but there are some who are – Who have to help their parents.

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FT: I think it's more than 50%. We've had episodes dedicated to this.

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NF: Oh, wow!

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FT: Yeah, it's pretty shocking, because you're right. Well, the caricature of the millennial is this deadbeat 25-year-old that's like eating potato chips in the basement, playing video games. I mean, I'm not saying that's not some of them. But to your point, every generation grows up. For a while, it was all about Gen X. Now, Gen X is like, "Hey! We're still here. Can we please get some advice because we're struggling with sending our kids to college and retiring?" We're so focused on the millennials, because it's sort of the generation dujour, and it's funded to rip apart like – I guess, it's – I mean, it's not fun for me but it's click-worthy to read articles about these sorts of trends.

But I think that we need to start talking more about more of the sophisticated things that are happening and some of the bright spots. It's great that they want to retire early, and it's humbling that they are in a position to have to support their parents and how do they navigate all of that.

So childcare, let's talk about that, because that's a lot of my listeners, a lot of moms, dads.

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NF: Yes. Let's talk.

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FT: Let's talk. So what's your philosophy on childcare? What's your theory?

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NF: I agree with you. I think you've said on several – See. I listen to you a lot, so I can't remember which episode it was. But I've heard you say before that you don't – It's an area you can't skimp on, right? It's just kind of like, "I have to accept that this –"

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FT: It's non-negotiable, unfortunately.

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NF: Exactly and right. As a working parent, two working parents with two demanding jobs, we – At first, we both said, “Oh, my god! Childcare is so expensive. How can we do this as cheaply as possible and still work full-time?” Luckily, my mother-in-law was able to watch. We had a nanny to start actually for the first – When I went back to work for the first four months I think. Then my mother-in-law would come one day a week. Then we switched to daycare. My mother-in-law would still come.

I would say for the last two years and since having two kids, they’ve both been in daycare full-time. In addition to that, we also – Boston, I think it’s one of the most expensive cities. Obviously, not New York. But it’s New York, San Francisco, Boston for childcare. In Massachusetts, it costs more to send an infant to daycare than a freshman to the University of Massachusetts. So that – Yes. This is something that we did a story on it on our news, and people are – I tell people that all the time, and people are shocked and – Yeah.

I am not shy to say this. It costs \$2,000 just for my son to go to daycare, and that’s cheap for here. Not cheap but it’s more in the middle, because I’ve called daycares that were 2,500 a month. I’ve called someone with \$3,000 a month for one kid. So this is one of my soapbox issues, because my theory that my –

The reason I think people don’t talk about this and this is probably just an amalgamation of things I’ve heard on your podcast and others. But I think people still believe that when a woman works, it’s a selfish act. Do you know what I mean? Like we don’t need to work, that we’re doing this for our own self-fulfillment. Yeah, some of us are. I like my job. You like your job. You like working.

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FT: Thank God, you like your job.

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NF: I know. I mean, I hope I do.

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FT: I should hope that anyone who works enjoys going to their job. Yeah.

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NF: Right. But I think people think it's purely selfish. But look, my husband and I both have student loans. My husband is the first in his – One of two people in this family to buy a house. So he's not coming – Do you know what I mean? We're both – I'm first generation American. So we're not coming with this – With the family that we can fall back on, if that makes sense. I mean, if our – If we needed help, of course.

But we both need to work is what I'm getting at. It's not a choice of mine. It's a necessity. I looked into working part-time when I was going to have my son, and it just – It didn't work, and I would've lost benefits. All these things that I was literally for a while working, like many other women, to keep my foot in the professional world. So [inaudible 00:16:25].

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FT: It's – I feel like, for me, it's very simple. Even though it's very complex, I feel like you have to simplify it, right, because otherwise you would just be running yourself in circles the whole time, and you'll never going to be happy with your decision. I mean, at the end of the day, you have to figure out what is – What do you value, right? You have to make hard choices, and I value my children being taken care of by the best people possible. That's me, my husband, my family, or a really dedicated full-time care person. In this case, we have a nanny.

I also value my career and my husband's career. I also value my financial security, my husband's financial security, and our family's financial security. Notice those are three very different things.

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NF: Amen.

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FT: Those are three different things. So that all basically trickles down to the net effect, which is I have to keep working and not really because I have to. But fortunately, I also love my job. That's the goal, right, is that you don't feel like you're being forced into the workforce every day.

My mother, on the other hand, when she had my brother, had to send him to daycare. She would do it in tears every morning, because it wasn't quality daycare, and she didn't love her job. Well, that's like – It's a risk for disaster. There the solution is not you should quit your job and raise your son. It's you need to find a better path where you can continue to make money on your terms in a happy way and that you feel like your child is getting the right kind of care.

Maybe that does mean part-timing for a while while you transition. But I feel we're so quick to say, "Oh! Well, you know what? I'm quitting. This is not worth it. My child is more important than my career," which, of course, he or she is, but you're not thinking long-term. Your point for every minute out of the workforce is not just the salary you're forfeiting. It's the benefits. It's the ability to invest in your retirement plan, get Social Security. We're living longer than men. A lot of us end up divorced or widowed. I mean, we have to be realistic about being financially secure. Sure, take time off. Take a year off. Take two years off. But have a plan for how you're going to get back in the workforce and make money, because you need it.

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NF: First of all, I'm like snapping right now, because that's –

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FT: I know I'm going to get a lot of hate mail. I'm going to get some really upset parents saying like, "Farnoosh thinks that stay-at-home parents are terrible people." No, I don't. I just think that I just want you to be secure. That's all I'm saying.

[00:19:09]

NF: No, Farnoosh. I'm with you. I've seen you right on social. A man is not a plan. Look. Maybe I'll get hate mail too but I'm with you. My mom was married for more than 30 years and found herself divorced. My dad was the breadwinner by far. Look. She worked though but not when I was super young.

But I would say maybe like elementary school. She was very good about saving. She was the first person to tell me to start a 401(k) when I was making \$22,000 a year. She's always been very smart about her money. Also, she takes care of her family abroad. So I do think that everybody's choice is a choice. Just because you work outside the home, yes, the work at home is work, stay-at-home moms and stay-at-home dads too, because I met a stay-at-home dad recently. So, yeah, it's all work.

The other thing I was going to tell you is I was starting to be cheap about childcare, and it took me maybe about a year or so. Maybe it's when I had my second child when I realized that I can't skimp on that expense. It's a lot, and I know I complain about it a lot. But I think that's a policy thing that needs to happen. But we're looking into getting an au pair. Actually, I'm talking – I've talked to several online.

But now that my duties are increasing and my husband's duties are increasing, our kids need to be picked up at a certain time. We often get charged. So we're looking into an au pair and we – Actually, we'll probably get one before the end of the year with a few people that we're interviewing.

It's not ideal. Do we want someone to live in our house? Not really. But it's usually beneficial. They get a cultural exchange experience, the experience of living in America, and we get reliable childcare. So it's kind of you have to think outside the box.

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FT: That's much more affordable, right, than getting –

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NF: Right. It is.

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FT: Yeah. It is. People will often think that an au pair sounds super fancy. It's actually a lot more affordable than full-time daycare, to where getting a part-time or even a full-time nanny. I think because you come from the background of having invested in yourself. You went to graduate school, you went to college, and you went to graduate school. Then you had these jobs that didn't pay much in the beginning but you saw how this could pay off. You believe in the payoff and –

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NF: I do.

[00:21:29]

FT: I want people to trust the payoff. We're so quick to pay for college and grad school and all these other things, but why not invest in childcare? Think of it as an investment in your child's safety and security and nurturing and also your ability and your family's ability to build career momentum and financial momentum.

[00:21:51]

NF: Yes. And it will also for your marriage, even if you have a husband who is very helpful. My husband is very helpful. I know a lot of friends who's – Maybe it's not 50-50 but it's 60-40. He and I – We can't say his job is more important than my job or vice versa. We're both trying our best to build something for our family.

Having an au pair, we believe, hopefully, will help with some of the additional stress. It's like you said. If we're already spending more than \$3,000 a month on childcare and we were thinking about hiring a nanny for the 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM time, it's like, "This is too much. We have to find a better way." So that's why we're thinking outside the box.

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FT: Well, good for you guys. I think that it sounds like you're very thoughtful or you're trying to be strategic. You're realistic. Look, your careers are blossoming. Congratulations, Nneka. High-five.

[00:22:53]

NF: Thanks, girl. Virtual high-five.

[00:22:54]

FT: I'm so proud of you. I mean that in the most respectful way. I hate sometimes when people say like, "I'm proud of you," because it sounds like, "Oh! I'm patting you on your head." But I really feel like you're –

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NF: Girl, no. I was a kid when we met.

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FT: You're a force.

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NF: I was literally a child when we met. I had braces that year of grad school.

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FT: You had braces?

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NF: As an adult, yes.

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FT: Adult's braces.

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NF: I wanted – Adult braces, so even worse, right? So I feel like I was somewhat ... I'm a woman now. I feel like I was a child.

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FT: Think about your children. You're such a role model for them. They're seeing you happy, and that's the bottom line, right? Just do what makes you happy.

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NF: Yes. I think that's important. You know what my daughter said? I think it was last night or a couple days ago. She said, "I want to work like you," or, "I want to go to work like you." Then she said she wanted to be a doctor. I'm like – But I get what she was – First of all, thank God she wants to be a doctor. I'm just teasing. But this industry can be rough. But I liked that she said she wants to go to work and in her mind, mommy's work. It doesn't matter – Yes, there are mommies who don't work outside the home, and that's fine. But at home, this is the example I'm setting for her. So —

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FT: I love it. I love it. Well, let' talk about some of the other financial interests that you have and maybe some of the lessons learned along the way because you – Going back, I can't stop thinking about how you made not just one job that paid you 20 something thousand dollars but like multiple jobs as a local or a TV reporter. P.S., I know friends who worked in Syracuse or maybe it was Binghamton or New York where they had to also bartend to be also working at the news station. It's not unusual to be a TV reporter and also go be a waitress at like the Olive Garden.

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NF: It's so true. They technically tell you – They tell you not to get a second job, but everyone kind of does. Especially now that there are so many boutique fitness classes, I know a lot of reporters who are fitness instructors on the side, who do real estate on the side. I actually – For a brief time in Syracuse, I was working at Ann Taylor LOFT and I had – I worked weekends and I had Mondays and Tuesdays off. I would work one week – One of my “weekend days.” I would work for like 12 hours. You might think, “Oh! Why would she –” Maybe I got like \$100 for all of that. But when you're making no money, that's a lot of money. So, yeah, I would do that. I have always been a hustler. That wasn't even just to have fun. That was just like – I think I had to start paying my student loans or something.

[00:25:43]

FT: What's any advice you can give for someone who wants to come up to the ranks in journalism? Because I feel like when we were in school and I know we're just a few years apart, the advice was just like, “Go to the local stations. Go to the local paper and work your way up to the big cities. That's the only way you're going to be able to make more money.” There's not really a lot of conversations around how to make your own money as a freelancer, as an entrepreneur to really take the reins in the world of media. So I'm just curious. Any advice you'd have for bright-eyed journalism rising star now.

[00:26:22]

NF: Yeah. I think, Farnoosh, it's so right when we were coming up. It's funny because I graduated in '06. I feel like everything changed as soon as I entered the industry. The iPhone came out. Twitter started. The industry has changed in such a short amount of time. But the advice that I gave to some of my employees who are younger and say, "I want to be a reporter. I want to do this," I don't want to tell them to go to small markets. I'm like, "Start a YouTube channel. Start a podcast. Live – Record a video on your podcast or do some sort of –"

If you have a niche, right, if you're into politics, do something related to politics on YouTube or on a podcast or something. Share it on social media. Get it out there. Now, you no longer need an entity like the small station in Binghamton or Syracuse to be how you get out there. So if I were coming up today, I wouldn't even go to a small market. I'd have some job to pay the bills and then I would work on my hustle.

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FT: What were those – What were some of the craziest stories that you worked on in your early days?

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NF: [inaudible 00:27:28].

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FT: We all have a few. I have the one where I was going to do a story about the employees of Duane Reade, which is one of New York City's biggest pharmacy chains at the time. Duane Reade had the most civil lawsuits from ex-workers against it. So I was going to do a whole like series of interviews with the former Duane Reade employees. A lot of them lived in projects in very, very dangerous neighborhoods, and I didn't know left from right when I got here.

So I would just say, "Okay. I'm going to go to Bedford-Stuyvesant department three. They'll be like, "Alone with all these gear? Where are you going?" So I'd have to get escorted, this was back in 2003, to go do a story in some parts of New York. That was crazy but anyway.

[00:28:23]

NF: Yeah. Now, neither of us could even afford Bed-Stuy right now, right? It's crazy the real estate there. Or no. What was the neighborhood? I did a story in grad school in Crown Heights and I went back to that neighborhood recently, and everything was like crazy expensive. Yeah. Anyway, crazy stories. I lived in upstate New York in Syracuse, so I was covering a story. I guess a guy. You do a lot of in that local news, car crashes, fires, drugs, that kind of thing.

So this guy was growing marijuana in this house or something and some really very rural town. So they sent me, this black girl with my camera and tripod, to go to this guy's house. I'm like, "All right. Whatever." They said, "This is – Just get some video of the house. You can try to see if he'll talk or neighbors or something. Neighbors to talk." I said okay. I park there, get to his house.

The first you get to a scene, you have to shoot the scenes. So I get out and I'm shooting the house. He comes out and he's yelling at me. I said, "Well, sir." People are like, "You can't be here." I'm like, "I'm in public property, sir. I can stay on here, blah, blah, blah." I said, "I'll be gone in a few minutes." Then he was so mad. He sent his pit bull out after me and I don't know. Yes. I don't know how quickly I just threw the camera and the tripod in the car and jumped in. I called my assignment desk and I was like, "Okay. He sent his dog out for me. So I got video. I'm leaving." So, I'm like, "Okay." So I think I've had a few stories like that actually. But that's probably the craziest.

[00:30:04]

FT: Yeah. That's pretty crazy. That is really startle – I mean, sorry that happened to you.

[00:30:13]

NF: Yeah. That's pretty scary.

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FT: In your climb in the world of media as a female, has it really been an issue? Do you have anything interesting to say about that? I don't want to assume that you've had any problems but

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[00:30:25]

NF: No. But you're – I mean, because you work in the industry, so you know. I am a black girl and I'm also a black, dark-skinned girl. So I was on-air for most of my career. Actually, it was probably about 50-50 right now. No, most of my career. I remember – So I was in Syracuse. Then I was in Providence as a reporter and anchor, and I went to New Haven, Connecticut. So I saw myself in New York or Philly where I'm from. Then I was told New Haven would be a good place. I think I was trying to jump from New Haven somewhere.

I was talking to an agent, and he's like the – He's actually second agent to say – To make this kind of a comment. This is why it sticks out. He said, "You're good on camera. I like your stuff, but your skin is so dark." He didn't say it like – I think he even said, "You're attractive but your skin –" You know what I mean? Like there was a qualifier. It was the second time someone had said something like that to me, an agent or a hiring manager. I was just like – They're not saying it's bad but they may as well be saying it's bad. You know what I mean? I had someone once say I didn't have a commercial work.

[00:31:43]

FT: There are so many discriminatory things people said that they try to mask by making it sound like it's not about some person.

[00:31:51]

NF: Like it's personal?

[00:31:52]

FT: Yeah. Or that it's not you. It's the industry. How did you navigate that?

[00:31:57]

NF: How did I handle – I don't even know because I think – It's so funny because I always think, "Oh! I should suggest. I should –" But I think in the moment, you're so shocked that you're like, "Did you just say that to me?" I didn't end up working with him. I guess that's kind of what I said to him. Yeah. Or you get told, "We already have someone with your look." That kind of a comment. Stations try to [inaudible 00:32:23].

[00:32:23]

FT: One is enough.

[00:32:24]

NF: One is – Yeah. It's like, "If we already have the young black girl, so we need the young black guy now or the older white or whatever." It's like, "Why can't there be two?" If two people are good, it doesn't matter what they look like. Yeah. So I think anybody who has said that to me I never worked for or never worked with, because you don't want to go somewhere for a job unless they're enthusiastic about you, right? So if you're feeling like they're making some sort of a concession, you don't want to be there or work with that person.

[00:33:01]

FT: I mean, it's such an interesting field, right, because it's visual. It is one of the few categories of work where your appearance really does make a difference in some ways. It shouldn't. We wish it didn't, but they equate ratings to not the quality sometimes of the work but who's delivering it.

[00:33:23]

NF: Yeah. You're right.

[00:33:23]

FT: Which is really a problem. We're seeing some shift in the industry I think since the Me Too movement. We're seeing more women, for example, anchor primetime and daily and morning news, which typically has been reserved for men. Or they get the one woman. They're like, "Okay. We're done. We got the one woman who's going to read the news. But then we got the two male anchors or the cast of men that are going to primarily deliver the news."

[00:33:49]

NF: Yeah. It's so funny that television – For as much as – How do I say this? We shaped culture in television, but it's so antiquated in so many ways. But now, I look at shows like Insecure, for example, and you have a cast of mostly black and brown people. That's great, right? I was always told, "Oh! It's hard to shoot you. It's hard to light you." So it's been a constant battle throughout my career. But then I see now like, "Look there. I read about some special makeup they use to show – To shoot black people in the darker –" There are things that were –

[00:34:29]

FT: You're not the problem. The technology is the problem, or your inability to adapt is the problem.

[00:34:36]

NF: Or it takes some extra time. I am used to have photographers who would, "Oh! I don't want to bring out a light." I'd be like, "Look. I –" I'd be like, "I'm black –"

[00:34:44]

FT: Sorry. You're lazy.

[00:34:46]

NF: Yeah. No. That's what I think. I'd say – I'm not shy to talk about it. I think sometimes people are and they don't want to say, "It's okay. I'm black. Hi. I'm Nneka. I'm black. It's okay. You can bring out a light. I need it." It's like, "That's okay. Or don't shoot me in front of a white wall." Then I'd have photographers say, "No. This is better." I'd say, "No. You're not going to be able to see me." I've had – It sounds like I'm being vain. But it's also, like you say, it's a visual medium, and people have to look at me in order to listen to me.

So I will say though some of the physical appearance part of it is – I always thought I could have more influence in this industry, working behind the scenes. Not in my role as executive producer. Part of it was that I just got – They think you're tired of dealing with fighting for better lighting or trying to fit into a box or just being concerned when I didn't get a job. I felt like it was purely because they had already cast my role. I just wanted – I'm not saying I have total control over my career but I did feel as though for me and for what I wanted to do and the influence I wanted to have in this industry, being behind the scenes was better.

[00:36:18]

FT: Well, you also have a podcast, so you aren't completely behind the scenes. You are out there, shining your light through this podcast, which I'm going to let you describe because I know it's gone through a bit of a like a rebranding.

[00:36:30]

NF: Yes. So we have – We're rebranding and going back to the original, right? But I'm going to say it here first, Farnoosh. I have always wanted to interview you. So hopefully one day.

[00:36:30]

FT: For sure. Let's make that happen.

[00:36:43]

NF: Yes. That's why I'm putting it out there on your podcast, so people can say, "Farnoosh, remember that girl asked you –"

[00:36:48]

FT: Yeah. No. Keep me accountable. Let's make that happen.

[00:36:52]

NF: Yes, we will.

[00:36:55]

FT: First, the Boss Bitches Podcast started – It was two years ago. Then I was telling Farnoosh earlier. I kept getting flagged for inappropriate content or explicit content. But I didn't want people to be turned off because I didn't think it was explicit. It's just that I used the word bitch. So I changed it to The Bosscast. Then I later found out that there is a Bosscast. Actually, mine started first. But his is about the boss, Bruce Springsteen. I just think that's so hilarious. He and I – The host and I have exchanged some emails. I just think it's so funny, right? That's brilliant, The Bosscast about Bruce Springsteen.

[00:37:36]

FT: Yeah. I mean, he – I guess you could tell. He is multifaceted, so you could definitely dedicate an entire series of episodes to the boss.

[00:37:43]

NF: Oh, my god! Totally. I was like, "That is so great." So we're going back to The Bosscast, and I'm going to have a new episode next week. Yay!

[00:37:50]

FT: All right. Well, by the way, the B word, I just saw there's a proposed law in Massachusetts that would make it illegal to use the word bitch to acost, annoy, degrade, or demean another person.

[00:38:02]

NF: First of all, I love that. Yes. Yeah. I mean, I think that it's almost like women are taking back the word. If you think about Lizzo, right? I feel like Lizzo has made it okay to say bitch. She's like – She's 100% that bitch. It's like, "Yeah. That's empowering." So I feel okay saying that word but not in a derogatory way, of course.

[00:38:25]

FT: This is a question from our sponsor, Chase, as we enter December and we're going to be spending a lot of money maybe. What is one holiday shopping hack or tip that you practice that helps to alleviate some of the financial burnout around the holidays?

[00:38:41]

NF: Okay. So this is a really good question, because I love giving gifts. I'm one of six kids, and now my siblings are having kids. So it's kind of getting crazy.

[00:38:51]

FT: Oh, my god! Got to get that spreadsheet out. That's what we had to do in the early days.

[00:38:54]

NF: Yeah. We do spreadsheets. We share – I start a list for my son and my daughter of their wants. Then I send it to the family, so we kind of divide and conquer. The other thing is I have an account that's just for their Christmas gifts. Because in the past, I have been that person. You know how they say, "You've racked up credit card debt during the holidays."? I think there's always a study around that time. I used to be that person. I mean, really bad. So now that with

children, I have to be a little bit more cognizant of my spending. So I do have an account set aside.

[00:39:29]

FT: Where do you keep the account? Is it a separate account at a different bank or? How does that work?

[00:39:35]

NF: Yeah. Actually, you know what it is, and I hope this isn't too confusing. But you know the FSA? Do you guys have FSA accounts or any of your listeners might have the --

[00:39:44]

FT: A Flex Spending Account, yeah.

[00:39:45]

NF: Yes. Flex Spending Account. So you have the Dependent Care Flex Spending Account. I think I put like 2,000. I think the max for me where I work is \$2,000 a year. So I say -- I kind of bank that money. I just pretend I don't have it, but you have to use it by the end of the year. So I've already spent way more than \$2,000 a year on childcare. So I think we've spent some of it. For example, the au pair thing. I had to pay like an upfront fee and all that stuff. So it's usually related to them. Basically, you prove that you paid this amount in childcare. You get the money. So I can see it growing. I haven't touched it in a few months. So I'm going to use that for presents.

[00:40:25]

FT: Santa's going to be very generous this year.

[00:40:28]

NF: Yes. Their lists are already made. I think your son is a little older than my daughter. But she's almost four, so she gets it. She's has a birthday and a Christmas in December, so I have a lot to pay for.

[00:40:40]

FT: Good luck with that. Good luck with that. Last but not least, finish this sentence for us. I'm Nneka Faison. I'm So Money because –

[00:40:50]

NF: I am Nneka Faison. I am So Money because I don't give up. I don't believe there is anything I can't do. When i was making \$22,000 a year, I didn't think that that's where I'm going to stop. I don't think this is where I'm going to stop. I hope other people feel the same way. Yeah. I mean, I can make a dollar out of 15 cents. That's what immigrants do.

[00:41:18]

FT: Snap, snap, snap.

[00:41:20]

NF: Yeah. Snap, snap, snap. Yes.

[00:41:23]

FT: I love it. Looking forward to continuing this conversation on your podcast next.

[00:41:28]

NF: I ask everybody to remind Farnoosh. Don't forget about the little people.

[00:41:33]

FT: Oh, my gosh! No way. You are so big time, Nneka. Thank you so much for joining us, and I hope you have a great holiday.

[00:41:41]

NF: Thank you.

[END]