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VERIZON

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>> KRISTA BOURNE: So we have with us Jessica who has an incredible personality as you can see and she has an incredible story to share so I want to make sure we take the most time and really hear her story and learn about her journey and we'll try to leave some time at the end if there are any questions that you might have. So why don't we just start by introduce to the audience exactly what your company does.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: First I want to say thank you for having me. And thank you for like making it clear that Black History Month doesn't just go out with a dwindle it goes out with a bang and I think that's really meaningful and just great leadership.

I also want to say that my first cell phone plan was Verizon.

It still is Verizon.

[Applause].

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: I'm here -- anything you guys want to do, like with that, too, I'm open.

I'm open.

I'm flexible.

I'm interested.

And I'm engaged.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: And all of that went into how she was so courageous.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Yeah however ya'll want to spin it let's do it.

No so I'm the founder and CEO of a company called Uncharted Power.

Today Uncharted Power is a full service -- wow -- power infrastructure technology company so we actually take our full suite of patented solutions we have 11 patents and patents pending covering everything from energy generation technologies like kinetic, et cetera, energy of motion, that's kinetic to energy transmission and storage and we use all of that to build, own and operate renewable infrastructure for people all around the world.

That's of course not where I started.

That's where I am today.

I started my career I guess you could say when I was 19.

So about 12 years ago.

And --

>> KRISTA BOURNE: So let's pause on that.

Let's make sure we hear that.

She was 19.

She followed this passion.

When she was 19.

We've got to put a pin in that.

Because I think what we're always talking about as a community and then as a collective organization is finding your best path.

Moving yourself forward.

Taking the steps that really drive your passion.

19.

Is when she started.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Yeah I don't want to give myself -- like hindsight I can be like oh I had this magical vision for myself but it was more I believe in strategies for happiness versus strategies for success.

I think that's a goal -- [Applause].

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Oh, okay.

I think that the goal of success is that it should somehow in life feed your happiness so if you become less focused on the plan and more focused on your strategy and let your plan be fluid as long as it matches your strategy, you'll find that your path will find you.

And I also just believe that every minute that we have isn't promised.

It's something to be grateful for.

So if you think about that, wanting to get kind of the best ROI out of your time, again, I think things start to work out.

So for me, I'm a dual citizen of Nigeria and the U.S. I know there are some Nigerians in the audience.

Yeah, we like hugged in the bathroom already.

We always find each other.

We always find each other.

My guy is like what happened I hugged several Nigerians walking from the restroom here.

(Chuckles).

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Nigeria is an amazing place but it's a place like many countries in the global south that still to this day to have access to renewable, reliable power is -- it's just not something that people can expect.

So for me, I would -- most of my family lives in Nigeria still I go there several times a year and it was something so interesting because whether we were in the village with my grandparents or in the bustling City of Lagos at the end of the day when the sun went down that usually would be the end of the day.

You couldn't hope or rely that you would have something to even charge your cell phone.

Like can you imagine the anxiety and the psychological distress that you might have if when you wake up your phone is on 10% battery and that's what you just have to chill with all day.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: Right.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: It's --

>> KRISTA BOURNE: It's not going to be a good day.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: It's a day where you think about bare minimums.

It's a day where you're not really trying to dream, where you're not pushing for something that's impossible for your life.

You know, you kind of just are trying to coast through.

And that's what I saw.

We would use diesel generators.

Sometimes use kerosene lamps again it's not even about -- it's an infrastructural issue masquerading as a socioeconomic issue it wasn't that people couldn't afford something more it's that you need to have infrastructure built around you otherwise you just use what I can.

And I remember very specifically a couple of years before that I think I was 17 and I was at my aunt's wedding.

We lost power, as expected.

And they brought into diesel generator just to keep the festivities going and the fumes from that generator because they had to keep the windows closed to keep the noise out so the pastor could do his prayer warrior Nigerian -- anyway it's a whole thing you'll have to see it, it's like an intense concert but to do that uninterrupted we had to close the windows the fumes were so bad I started to complain and my cousins just a few years older than me at the time said, don't worry you'll get used to it.

And that was the thing.

Because I was merely like get used to what exactly you're telling a 17 year old girl at the time in my opinion getting used to dying because we know these fumes are killing us we know that living in a room with a kerosene lamp is like smoking two packs of cigarettes a day we know this we know this is horrible for the environment.

And I think what I also then realized with that statement is that they had -- if you're telling me essentially to get used to dying that means you've gotten used to dying.

So your idea of how to get through life as a young black man, you know, just a man when you're in Nigeria just a young man in Nigeria in your 20s instead of looking at the whole world as your opportunity, you're saying, when you see a problem, pretend it's not there.

And that's how you solve it.

And so that felt wrong.

Like call it naive.

When you're young and then there's Google there's nothing like Google plus ambition

like naivete.

There's nothing like it because I just said that seems wrong the world will be all of these different things and I'll make it that and it felt like to live in the world I wanted to live in there needs to be more people who believe that they can play a role in making it the world it needs to be and my own cousins who I believe are brilliant men need to also believe that.

So the first invention was it was designed to be more of a psychological invention. It was designed to be something that would pull people out of that belief that they couldn't have agency.

That they couldn't change the current situation even if it's as crazy and scary as power. And then also just be that first step.

And so when I was 19 I invented something called the socket.

And it's an energy generating soccer ball so soccer is the most popular sport played around the world.

I played basketball but you got to give the people what they want so it's fine.

I've been this tall for so long I had to play basketball what else was I going to do my cousins was funny it came from the fact that the only time I saw my cousins show this hope and passion for life and when it could be is when they were playing soccer that was the only time they would say really outlandish things like that goal my Beckham made I can do that too no you can't you're very intelligent you're kind of underwhelming in sports it's not what you're going to do but he would still say it with this pride and belief.

And nine out of ten times it was a disaster.

But sometimes he actually did it.

And that's what was so dope.

Because you really have to at least get into the game of literally and figuratively so the socket ball was something that would allow you to live your life.

Get that amplified behavior.

Play.

Play.

All of the good things that come from play.

But then as you're playing, you're harnessing the energy of motion from that, storing that power inside of the ball so it can be used as an offgrid power source the

one-for-one replacement with the kerosene lamp you can power lights and things like that.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: I just heard the audience kind of get that oh . . . I get it. What I love about that invention is that it takes the idea of traditional play, being active, being outside, engaging with your peers.

But also infusing technology.

So that we solve solutions.

And what I hear you saying is how you defined and scoped the problem so you achieved an outcome.

Not just a stair step of, you know, some small symptom but a bigger opportunity.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Yes I do believe that the -- the first thing I recognized is that I don't believe that people in their lives want to be bad or I don't know anyone who is like I hate renewable energy.

They just think about all of the consequences that go around the cost and et cetera.

And so a big thing for me and it's been a throughline for the company is how do we think about really embedding things, embedding power systems, into the things we already have into our lives so it's very convenient to have this power.

So it started first with the soccer ball because again it's play it's a win-win there's nothing better than the win-win and people need a few win-wins to feel like they are floating on air and can do anything so it started with a soccer ball yes because it made -- it was so accessible it made something as scary as power feel like play then we built an energy generating jump rope you can jump I should have brought it I can jump rope in heels, guys, yeah, I should have brought it and you jump like a normal person DoubleDutch for 15 minutes of jumping you can get an hour of light.

Little things like that.

But again with the idea instead of saying buy this generator we're saying live your life, play, be alive.

And then get the power from that.

Be empowered from your own agency.

And the idea of course is that narrative is only possible if it's at the foundation you have strong technology and you really are willing to rethink the way people have thought about generation -- like energy generation, storage and all of that, that's what I was

willing to do because I was trying to help my family.

I was trying to get them to see that there was more.

That was a very fun experience.

Because it also ended up changing my life.

I started just wanting to have a class project.

I had to do well against Nigerian parents, the whole thing.

But when I saw that it was kind of resonating with people, I continued that throughline so went from play products that could harness power to generally all consumer products.

Working with Fortune 100 companies to help them with their embedded energy generation design.

How do we turn things like strollers and chairs into things that can generate power.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: Anything that's moving.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Anything that's moving.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: When you're chartering a new space like that and trying to introduce a new concept that seems pretty intuitive and obvious for a lot of reasons but clearly a different path than others have taken what were some of the obstacles and some of the nuances that you had to overcome to achieve that?

Here you come a young woman of color in this environment of technology where we don't have enough diversity at times.

How did you get people to listen?

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: I mean, um, how did I get people to listen?

>> KRISTA BOURNE: Uh-huh.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: I think part of me, I was just so hyped about it. Like sometimes you just have to be your own cheerleader I was like I don't care if you're not listening I'm talking to myself I'm hyped I'm hyped this is so cool and people would start to be -- I don't want to make a joke like I'll have what she's having kind of joke but people were like what is she having I'm hyped on energy people get excited. Like I like to tell people that I aim to be the perfect love child of Beyonce and Bill Nye the Science Guy in everything I do. So let me just explain.

[Applause].

>> KRISTA BOURNE: Okay.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: And so I think for me one thing I love about Bill Nye the Science Guy I idolized him growing up is he had a way of making things that were very important and very urgent seem very exciting for a lot of young kids and Beyonce looks good everything puts in the work everybody wants to be her are you putting in the work I'm trying to put in the work we're not there we're trying so I think when people see that you are excited it's almost an unshakable excitement this is for my family this is for my people.

And I'm seeing incremental progress like I don't know where this is going but each day I'm moving forward and when I look to think about again what is my strategy for my life and my -- am I happy, am I engaged I am so I'm going to keep doing it and when they see what's behind that passion and excitement is real hard work, I think people are excited by that.

And people want to support people who have ideas that they believe in and that they are willing to put in the work for.

So I didn't find that people didn't want to listen, even though I'm not kind of stereotypically what you would expect in the space.

When I would go into the tech that's when they would be like well -- they would be looking behind me.

I would be like, you know what I mean.

But who is the tech lead on this?

Because you're probably just the X.

I'm like just the what.

I'm sorry, like I still believe doing like a gel manicure is harder than soldering a PVC I'll stand by it.

So why -- you know what I mean.

What are you trying -- why would I not be able to figure this out.

You Google things.

You figure out -- it's not -- it's -- it's not rocket science.

In fact I went to a rocket scientist first to try to get ideas for the socket and he didn't figure it out I was like never mind.

So there is this thing where people -- you know sometimes at first they want to limit you like first it was like she's an inventor they didn't want to acknowledge me as a business woman I remember the first time when I made the Forbes 3 under 30 list that was one of my favorite achievements she didn't say she has great ideas they started to acknowledge the way I was thinking about the business because it's truly technology and business integrated together that allows for impact there are amazing things being made in labs but because those engineers don't know how to bring them to real people they are not having the impact.

So yeah, I would say sometimes it's an obstacle.

People have this kind of juxtaposition where they expect the leader the innovator the visionary to look one way.

But well, I don't know.

I don't worry about them.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: That's right.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: I don't know what else to say.

I almost feel bad I'm like no --

>> KRISTA BOURNE: That's perfect that means you're very passionate you're very clear you have confidence you went forward and you pursued your interests and I think that that shows up in the work that you've done so far in your company.

So when you think about inclusion in your space, is there a way in which you and your company reach out and help others kind of come along and follow the path or influence for others to do what you have done?

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Yes.

We have had for over five years a program it's called Uplift.

And basically it's a STEAM program that we do in our community where we work in Harlem we have -- our HQ is in Harlem it's like Shuri's lab it's dope it's super dope. Everywhere we work everywhere we deploy infrastructure everywhere we deliver services it's based off of a curriculum that we have had I think it's in it's fourth edition we have worked with the Department of Education on this as well called Think Out Of Bounds and the idea is how do you show -- how do you teach people to become social innovators.

So once they have been engaged and come through the door and realize it's scary but

not that scary to be thinking on the hard problems, how do you make they feel comfortable in their space.

How do they look at the world around them not as a recalled who full of obstacles but a world full of opportunities and competitive advantages.

How do they learn how to prototype with whatever they can find around them?

And so we have done that program now with -- the course of the program a few thousand kids.

Just within the last year we have done 1,000 kids in New York and other places around the world.

Honestly we work everywhere from Florida to Swaziland.

It's great.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: Excellent.

[Applause].

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: For me it's important to give back but we don't even see it so much as inclusiveness it's more like I don't understand how any organization can remain competitive if you're not looking -- if you're not looking at the untapped talent.

Like there's -- we all know what's happening in Silicon Valley.

That's -- that soil has been towed and tilled we know what's going on there.

There's a whole world of people that haven't had a chance to speak up that have a very unique perspective.

The majority of the world actually looks like me so why am I not in the room.

You're going to try to sell me a product without me in the room.

That seems inefficient.

That's not effective at all.

[Applause].

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Doesn't make any sense.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: Then you won't be a business around for a long time.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: I would never sit down and be like I have an idea for a beard trimmer and call a bunch of men let's make a beard trimmer should we call any men nah we'll eyeball their faces and figure it out I can't even imagine a group of

women sitting there being like we know beards better than them.

I don't get it.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: That's a good point.

I think that's about making sure that we don't just have a seat at the table but there's a voice.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Yes.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: At the table.

And we work really hard at that at Verizon but it's for the reasons you just said. When you think about some of the stereotypes that you have to deal with in the industry, what are some that you would wish would go away and never show back up ever again in life?

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Um, I -- it does make me sad that I think even just because of how we have been conditioned, especially in this country, when you close your eyes and you think of a visionary, you very rarely think of a woman even if it's the woman thinking about it.

And I think we as women are very uncomfortable using those words but Elon and whoever it just gets thrown around they are not angry they are eccentric and oh they are artists.

I think that's really sad because if you ask me for example who is my favorite inventor it still remains to this day my mom she doesn't have any patents but she's a MacGyver like --

>> KRISTA BOURNE: I got you.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Like she -- she is the one -- my dad is an engineer he has a PhD and does these things he has a business and we can relate but the person growing up that always made me feel like whatever was given to me isn't what -- you don't have to -- you never have to take it at face value with my mom.

Like to create something, to make something just to build it, to make it what you want. And it could be something from a strategy perspective.

It can be like a relationship perspectives.

It can be like even just creating something.

She would be like, I guess you're too old so I won't do it but you know what to do I would be like okay, okay, okay.

She still to this day -- I have my undergraduate degree I have my MBA, I've done fancy things if I told her I was going to law school she would be like finally.

Yeah.

It's like even for us -- even for me she's like you're not done I'm not taking you at face value I think I'm an okay kid you're fine.

(Chuckles).

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: At the end of the day she herself she wouldn't call herself an inventor or a visionary she wouldn't call herself a leader.

She calls herself a mom.

And I just -- I think we have to really break up what that means.

Like the future visionaries of this world, they are going to be the people that haven't been out there.

If you could imagine like if Beyonce, she's amazing and talented person but what if she decided she wanted to cure cancer and she put the effort that she puts into executing those dance moves and singing those 13 minute sets without a break.

Ariana Grande can't do that I just want to highlight the fact she's amazing we all saw the MTV performance she just went.

Just kept going.

No sweat.

Imagine she was like I'm going to cure cancer today.

I bet she could do it.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: I bet the beehive would believe her.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: I know.

I just think -- the thing is people would not assume that all she is that she would be in the lab.

So we have to -- it's important we do this, too.

Because whenever someone does show an interest in technology and science and enterprise on the infrastructural level they feel they have to code switch or leave part of themselves at home so they can try to work if you don't bring your full self there that means your full mind and soul isn't there you can't do anything truly ground breaking if your full self plus isn't in it that's like for me at our company everyone knows like -- we have like a Colors of Benetton team.

It is diversity.

It's -- it's insane.

And I just want everyone to bring their full selves whatever it is let's talk about it.

Let's be out there.

Be you.

Because it's a part of you that I don't know, that at the club on Saturday might be the part of you that will figure out the future of decentralized computer who knows you would be like my phone keeps dying I wish I didn't have to do so much processing on my phone so my battery wouldn't have to die, I don't know.

Who knows.

Maybe it could go there.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: That's what matters and how we use technology matters and if we're inspired by our own lives we can make a difference in the world I'm following you I'm with you.

So we get it.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: We're there.

We're here.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: So I want to make sure that we have time, if there are questions in the audience, we have some time left, if you have a question, certainly we have microphones around.

Please feel free to lift your hand and -- right up here we've got one.

>> Hello I just want to say you are a visionary to me I'm a woman of STEM. With your company you talked about the space, having your company's use with this power and you also talked about overseas they don't have access to power and the infrastructure.

Is there a way that your company can implement power and this infrastructure surpassing fossil fuels?

And you know really just leaping over the dirty aspects and incorporation renewable energy that -- incorporating renewable energy you already created.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: Thank you for that question it gives me a little bit of a chance to talk about the business model which I'm sure the VP community of growth

person wants me to touch on as well.

So I 100% believe, and it's -- to say this outloud you can only imagine the bravado in a woman or woman of color makes a statement like this it means we triple tested it we developed a solution that will change the way we will think about power forever I'm 150% certain of it we have put in a decade of sweat, blood and tears into this. And we will -- with this solution we will get to a place where 1 billion people on this planet who still don't have access to reliable, clean power, they will have it in the next 20 years.

That's my belief.

[Applause].

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: The key thing is that in designing for the extremes and designing for places in the world that don't have existing infrastructure, we did just as you said leapfrog over a lot of the things that are kind of grandfathered into our life here in the U.S.

And so kind of like how there are landlines here and then mobile technology came out, and like it was kind of hype here but overseas it really took off and then people were like we can't be the ones looking crazy here and then people start to really get into mobile cell phones like I think that's really what's happening.

Funny enough, while our projects we have some really exciting projects planned over time for overseas and in the developing world, one of our first projects we're actually in Connecticut and we are reducing this -- it's like a multi-facility resort.

It's a wellness resort showing off what our tech can do.

And we're over time deploying our infrastructure going to be decreasing the facility's energy bill by 98%.

And we will be increasing their access, their sources of power from renewable sources by over 90%.

>> KRISTA BOURNE: Wow.

>> JESSICA MATTHEWS: All with an infrastructure payback period of under three years, by the way.

I want to highlight that for -- any of you who know about infrastructure we are doing this all with a payback period on the infrastructure on the investment of less than three years.

[Applause].

>> KRISTA BOURNE: And listen that's important because that's how business is done.

So you have to have a business model and there needs to be a return and that return has to fit within the scope that makes it all worth it so you can do it again and again and again.

So it's more than just passion.

It's more than an idea.

It's more than a beautiful way of looking at yourself in this space.

It is truly a business being run by a young woman who is diverse.

And we got to hear her story right here front and center and we couldn't be more honored to have you with us today so thank you so much.

Really appreciate it.

[Applause].

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