

97. The Power of Story with Fawn Weaver – Episode Transcript

Leah: Welcome to Her Story of Success, a podcast featuring stories of influential women trailblazers and business leaders who have defined and pursued their own versions of success and fulfillment. We hope these stories, lessons learned and celebrations inspire you to believe in yourself and your own journey a little bit more. I'm Leah Glover Hayes, CEO and podcast host of Her Story of Success women's business and media collective.

In today's episode, I have the honor of interviewing Fawn Weaver. Fawn is the Founder and CEO of Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey, which is the fastest growing independent American whiskey brand in U.S. history. She started Uncle Nearest after discovering that a former slave named Uncle Nearest Green taught Jack Daniel to distill whiskey, and she'll share more of that incredible story in our conversation today.

Fawn has been a serial entrepreneur for almost 25 years. She's also the founder and CEO of Grant Sidney and the bestselling author of *The Happy Wives Club* and co-author of *The Argument-Free Marriage*. Fawn has had so much success in her career, and she's used that as a platform to give back, creating the Nearest Green Foundation and working with Jack Daniel's to create the Nearest and Jack Advancement Initiative.

There's so much more I could say about Fawn and all of her amazing accomplishments, but I want to dive into our conversation so you can hear directly from her. Be sure to check out the show notes to read more about Fawn and find links to all of the resources we mention in our conversation!

Welcome, Fawn Weaver!

So I'm excited to dive into all of this. So for anyone that, I'm sure this is not true, but anyone that doesn't already know you, share just a little bit about who Fawn is and Uncle Nearest.

Fawn: Yeah. So I'll start with Uncle Nearest, and then I'll go back. So Uncle Nearest is the name that people in the Lynchburg area, which is where I am, called the first known African American master distiller, Nearest Green, his legal name was Nathan, but no one called him that, including his children and his grandchildren, even their

legal documents, had him as Nearest. So for whatever reason, they chose to call them Nearest. It's good enough for me. So I call him Nearest, and it really truly is a term of endearment to have "uncle" in front of the name. So Jack Daniel, who he taught and who he mentored was known in the area as Uncle Jack, and Nearest was known as Uncle Nearest. So he was the first known African American master distiller. The process that he helped to perfect is really the only distinction between Kentucky bourbon and Tennessee whiskey. It is taking a traditional bourbon and mellowing it through sugar, maple, charcoal. That filtration process, it doesn't change it from being a straight bourbon whiskey, that's what it is. But that extra step, what it does is it pulls out the congeners and fusel oils, those things that give you a headache. It's why people can sip on Uncle Nearest quite a bit and wake up the next morning fully refreshed, is because we have removed most of the congeners that would cause those hangovers and all the rest of that stuff. But that's a process that really began in West Africa. So if you're there now, the number one reason for chopping down trees is wood fuel and charcoal for the purpose of filtering their water and fermented fruits and things of that nature. So wines, things like that. And then also for purifying food. So it's not odd that that process would have made its way here with the enslaved people, because they're tasting what would have tasted not so awesome and going, "Ooh, that's strong. That's harsh going down. We got something to help mellow that out a little bit." And so then you have the addition of charcoal mellowing through sugar, maple, charcoal.

And that is something that the only person that we can actually pinpoint is Nearest Green. I'm sure there were many others because the process was being used in Kentucky a hundred years before Nearest was ever born. But because enslaved people were property, not people, most of the time, their names are unknown. The majority of them, their names have gone unknown. The reason why we know the name Nearest Green is because Jack Daniel and his descendants made sure to very clearly give him credit, and then to give his boys credit, who continued to work at the distillery, and then his grandchildren credit that also worked at the distillery. And so that's the only reason we know who Nearest Green.

I'm Fawn Weaver. I've been an entrepreneur for now 26 years. I began my first company at the age of 18 and it was a public relations and special events firms. So one of the reasons if you Google me, you'll see a thousand articles, is because PR is

my background. It's not a coincidence. It is everything. When you're telling a story, I'm always looking at, what is the most interesting way to tell a story in such a way where even if you hear the same topic multiple times, it's very interesting every single time, because you're getting a different element out of it. So I love the art of storytelling. I love the gift of being able to draw people in with words, and I love having the ability to speak and for people to actually care what I am saying. You mentioned I was a Ted speaker, my Ted Talk, ironically, it's very popular Ted Talk called "The Argument Free Marriage." And one of the things my husband and I have been very clear about, from very, very early on in our marriage, is we were going to be who we are. We're both incredibly strong-willed, neither one of us was going to be dependent on the other, but we also are not independent. And I think a lot of people, when they're looking at someone like me and they will assign, "That's an independent woman." Well, yeah, I walk into the boardroom. I'm going to kick ass, but at home, I'm interdependent, and he and I have a beautiful partnership, and we have such an enormous amount of respect and love for one another that even when we don't agree, we disagree in such a way that it remains respectful to one another. And so really that whole Ted Talk was about how to communicate in such a way that you get what you need to say across. You're not sweeping anything under the rug. We don't do that. We don't believe in walking over molehills. And you say it, but you say it with such an amount of respect and honor that even when it is not in perfect alignment or an agreement, it doesn't matter because your respect for one another rises above whatever that distinction is, between what he believes in what I believe. And it's been beautiful because we're a partner in all things life. We just celebrated our 17th year of marriage, and he's my favorite person in the world, hands down, nobody even comes close.

Leah: I say that about my husband. I love it. There's so many things to touch on. So do both of you see or find how the process of you communicating in that way to each other in your marriage? Do you extend that outside of your marriage? Does that help you in your relationship with your team and other people that you come in contact with? How does that look for you as a business owner? What elements of that do you carry into your position as a CEO?

Fawn: Well, it is, it's the same thing. Speaking to one another with respect, but being very direct and very clear. So what I don't do is tie things up in a ribbon or sugarcoat

anything. That's not with my team. That's not with me in my own marriage. My husband, when he's telling people, when he's coaching people on how to, to speak to me, because he gets a lot of people that reach into him and they want me to mentor them or whatever it is. And he's always very clear with them, he says "Fawn is going to give it to you straight up, no chaser. So if you're not okay with that, she is not the one to reach into."

Leah: I love that, but it's being honest. It reminds me of the book *Radical Candor*.

Fawn: Our whole company is radical candor. By the way, that is one of our principles is radical candor.

Leah: Yes. Okay. So for people that, yes I want to get there, but I find how I still try to wrap it up. What's maybe one thing that you suggest or a practice to say, "Here's one step to take towards being more radically candor in your communications with your team." I'm asking this as a mentor because I'm working on that myself.

Fawn: Yeah. I think to be honest with yourself, and I know that that sounds odd, but most people aren't honest with themselves. They're not honest with themselves about their own flaws. They're not honest with themselves about their own shortcomings. And so if you start covering up any aspect of who you are, it's really, really difficult for you to be authentic in those conversations with other people. So it starts by being very honest and transparent with yourself. But then also, I give myself a lot of grace. I do not feel as though every word I say has to be perfect, every way I do things has to be perfect. I'm not going to beat myself up if it's not. The moment it happens, I recognize it, I give myself grace, but what that does, is it allows me to give other people the same amount of grace. And so it's always reciprocal, and this idea of radical candor, there has to be a lot of grace that comes with that because when you're speaking to each other in a manner that is clear and transparent and honest, it's not always going to feel good to the other person. And so that grace is really, really important, that presuming of innocence, that's something my husband and I do in our marriage is, even when we don't say it right, presume innocence that that person is on your side and they want to understand what you're trying to say. But I think in our company, I can only speak for our company, the way that radical candor manifests itself in our company is I want my team to challenge me, call me on my bullshit. I literally, we use a thing called Slack. And there's literally Slack channel with

my execs in it that says “call Fawn on her bullshit.” That's literally the Slack channel. But it's important. It's really, really important, because you cannot dish it out if you can't receive it. And so what happens is, is by them being welcomed to challenge me on my views, my opinions, my thoughts are going to come out strong every single time. So if you're weak, you're gonna buckle. But I surround myself with incredibly strong and confident people who will push back and who will challenge my thoughts, who will challenge my vision, who will challenge how I am viewing something. And that's what I want. Don't surround yourself with weak people if you're going to try to bring in a culture of radical candor, it will not work.

Leah: That, and I would love to see or understand the ripple effects, because if you're doing that and you're inviting that type of candor and people get comfortable giving that to you and they see the grace you extend yourself and they see how you're able to receive it and then give it, I just would love to see how much they develop a capacity to give themselves grace and to take feedback and not shame themselves and think, “Oh, I'm not good because she's saying I'm doing something wrong,” but like, it just opens up this place for them to really take it and grow from it and not have that shame even come into the picture.

Fawn: Yes. So in my company, one of the things I am absolutely determined and adamant to do is to continue building this culture of confidence. It's really, really important because when people feel confident, whether that be speaking to you or giving their ideas, some of the best ideas don't come from the leaders, right? Frankly, the best ideas shouldn't come from the leaders. That's why you've brought together this incredible team, this talent, and you surrounded yourself with talent. I am very weary and leery of CEOs that surround themselves with yes people. I surround myself with no people. Yes. That say, I say no a lot in my company, we have embraced that two letter word and we utilize it a lot with great confidence. So building this sort of culture of confidence, it doesn't just manifest itself in our business. What we have found is it also extends to people's homes and their friendships, and they really take a lot less crap out there in the world. I mean, if you think about it, how much of our day is spent at work or working? Right? So if you have this culture of confidence at your workplace, then it's going to naturally begin to manifest itself in your life.

So for me, I just went through this process of hiring a new executive assistant. And one of the things I told the search firm is if that person is married, it is very important that that spouse understands that they are going to become more confident just being around us. And if they're used to someone who's like, kind of behind them versus side-by-side partners, they're going to wake up next year and probably have an issue. So let's just nip it in the bud and say, that's not the person.

Leah: I love that. But gosh, how beautiful. I mean, I just think about. You're amazing in so many ways, like I'm literally like a fan girl of yours. One of the things that I wrote down that I was like, I want to be able to talk about, is you said your greatest asset in building this company is your ability to say no. And I had no idea that it was going to like develop into this piece that has confidence. And that's really where I want to go is I want to talk about your journey of confidence, because one mistake that I have done myself and that I've seen is that it's easy to look at you and say, "Oh my gosh, I can't be like you because I don't have the confidence you do," but really to learn that confidence is developed. And just what you said, like the person that you hire is going to have more confidence. You're not expecting everyone to walk into your door just the most confident person ever, because I mean, it is always a journey. I'm still developing confidence. I'm insecure in so many ways, but my job as a leader is to gain confidence for myself and to help my team become more confident. But I'd love for you to share a little bit about what does that look like? You've been an entrepreneur for 25 years. What are some of these things that you've done to grow your confidence over the years?

Fawn: Yeah, the irony is that people, especially women, generally do not like to say no. But the more you say no, the more confident you become.

Leah: Why is that?

Fawn: There is something about being able to set boundaries for yourself for those around you. There's something about being able to set boundaries and being able to say no, that it builds a level of confidence. I can't tell you why, but what I will say is that I spend a lot of time paying attention to those who have succeeded greatly in whatever their different areas there are. So you've mentioned my book, *Happy Wives Club*. In that book, I traveled the world. I went to 12 countries on six continents and I interviewed couples happily married 25 years or more to determine the common

denominator. It was pretty remarkable. I was looking for one common denominator. It ended up being 12, which when you think about different backgrounds, religion, socioeconomic status, all those different things. And even an arranged marriage. And somehow still, they all had the same 12 principles and it wasn't until I came back and I was, I was dictating all the notes and then highlighting the similarities among them that I realized. "Wow, there's 12 similarities," but that for me, I literally, I wrote the book, but it's the people who I interviewed, who gave the advice. And I live by the advice that they gave. My marriage is built on that. I have spent an awful lot of time following and paying attention to Warren Buffet. And there are just a lot of leaders that I pay close attention to that I've continued to. And so I do also believe that that learning process, but not just learning, actually implementing, there are so many books, *Radical Candor* is an absolutely brilliant book on this. And I think even by implementing some of the techniques of how to say what's on your mind, that in of itself begins to build confidence, but I can truly say that where I believe I built confidence or really began building confidence in my life was when I learned the power of no.

Leah: How old were you, where were you in your life where you really even started to kind of develop that? Were you already a business owner? Was this like before you left high school, what did that look like?

Fawn: I was already a business owner. I'd been a business owner for a few years, I'd probably say. And when I was about 21, I went through this six month period of time where, when I tell you I was reading a different book every two days, I literally bought an entire bookshelf full of books and determined that I wanted to read them all in that six months. And there was something about that process. It was 100% focused on me. I wasn't dating anyone at the time. It was really just about building my own self-confidence, my own worth, knowing exactly who I was. And I spent that six months focused on me. And I think for a lot of women, we don't like to focus on us. We like to focus on everyone else, but if you're going to build confidence, you can't be focused on what other people think about you. You can't be focused on other people's opinions of you. The only way you're going to be able to build confidence is you actually take the time to get to know yourself, to set the boundaries that work for you to be really, really okay with saying no with zero regret. And there is something

about those three things coming together that that confidence just naturally begins to build.

I walk into a room, and especially if it's a room full of men, it does throw people off because I walk in with a swagger that's not normal for a woman walking into a room with, you know, a bunch of white male deca-millionaires and billionaires, but I do. And it's not a show. I truly believe I belong in that room and think nothing about it.

Leah: That reminds me. I interviewed Arlan Hamilton of Backstage Capital.

Fawn: Is that a VC?

Leah: Yes. A Backstage Capital's a VC. She's like the story of, you know, going from being homeless to now, she's invested into a hundred Black-led companies, and we talked about the imposter syndrome and she challenged me because I was like, "Oh, how do you deal with imposter syndrome?" And she says, "I don't deal with it." Because like you said, you read all those books. She's like, "I learn what I need to know. And so I walk in because I have competence, she's like competence provides confidence." So when you know what you're talking about, when you are, have educated yourself, you like, you know, eat, sleep and breathe something. And you know what you know, when you walk in that door that provides you or allows you to have that confidence because you know what you're talking about and you know you're not below anybody else. And so that's, it kind of reminds me of that. I'm like, I needed that reminder again, of like, know what room you're going into, know what you need to know, learn it before you go in the door.

Fawn: Here's the interesting thing. I look at imposter syndrome a little different, because I actually do think that I have elements of that, but for a different reason. So imposter syndrome for me in my personal life, what it comes from is I know that I am good at what I do. But I am not as good as my success, if that makes sense. I understand that I am doing my part, but I also understand that God is doing his part, and what God is doing is so much greater than what I am doing. So even at my absolute best, most perfect, it is still not as good as the level of success that I have. And so where the imposter syndrome comes in for me is that I get on these interviews and I am taking credit for something, I know I only have a part of the process. So that's where it comes in for me. So when I'm having this, because people

want to hear tangible ways that they can achieve this and they can do this and all the rest of that. And for me, if you even remotely removed God out of it, it doesn't work. And so I try to give this advice, right. And I have these interviews and I'm talking about it and yes, I have an enormous amount of confidence. There's no doubt about that. But so much of my confidence comes from the fact that I know that I'm living in my purpose and that God has placed his hand on my life and my purpose. So I walk in with confidence cause I'm like, you can't take out something, you literally cannot keep me from achieving what I am supposed to achieve, if that is what God has set out for me to do. So that for me is where the imposter syndrome comes in. And I look at it as it's sort of a 50-50 partnership between me and God, I do my part and he's blessing it so much more abundantly than what I am doing.

Leah: I feel like you have read my journals recently, like what is happening here? Things I'm just like, but I think my prayers are always, like, I deal with going back to like the insecurity of like, who am I? I don't deserve this. It's the fear of like, I'm not doing my part. I don't feel like I'm doing enough. God can't bless nothing. Like I have to give and do more. And so it's just this battle of like, I need to do my part because I've got to give God something to bless. And then it's just like, he keeps reminding me. He's like, if you do enough to make it happen, I don't get glory.

That is not a license to be lazy. That is not what I'm saying. Like, no one that knows me for one second thinks I'm lazy, but it's like it's also, and I guess this is a question I have for you as a business owner. There's 5,000 things you need to be doing at any given moment. All the time. Decisions need to be made, investments, figuring things out. The one thing I would love to know from you is, how do you process the information and then make decisions on, "Here's the most important things that I need to be doing next?" Because this is a conversation I've been having recently with my team and my mentors is like, sometimes I'm like, "I don't know what's the next most important decision to make," and I can freeze up when I'm just being like, "I don't want to make the wrong decision." Because I've invested money or, you know, spent money doing the right thing at the wrong time and with the wrong person. Does that make sense?

Fawn: Yeah. So I come into everything like a wrecking ball. I am pedal to the metal with everything. And let me tell you why I am able to do that. So I am in the middle of

right now, five different deals that are all completely different. And it's real estate. It's investing in other spirit brands. I'm literally in the middle of five different deals all this week. And all of them are one step in front of the other. You just keep pressing forward. So here's my thing, is, I think a lot of people actually talk themselves out of doing what could have been a massive blessing to them. Something that could have absolutely been the next big thing, and they talk themselves out of it and they talk themselves out of it by saying that they're praying about it. I'm praying about it. I'm praying about it. I'm praying about it. And so many people end up in those prayers talking themselves out, because they're the ones giving themselves their own answers. Right. Then that's where the insecurities creep in. That's where the fear creeps in. That's where the anxiety creeps in. And then all of a sudden people assign that to God. I've watched this happen so many times. So what I have done for the last 20-something years is I have what I call a "box me in prayer." What that is, is when I am doing anything, I pray that if it is God's will that the doors will be opened in such a way that no man can close including myself. But if it is not his will, that he will close those doors in a way that no one can open them, including me. So what that does is it gives me the freedom to just pursue. And if the doors close, it's not a big deal. My whole life is like, did you see the, the movie, the Leonardo DiCaprio movie *Inception*?

Leah: Yes.

Fawn: Okay. Do you remember, they're going door to door to door, just trying to figure out? That is my life. That is my life, checking doors. And if that door opens, and I go on the other side of that door and it's a part of, and it's like, "There is a path, I'm going to take it and I'm going to take it without being afraid because until the Lord closes that door until he blocks it, that to me is my answer. That is the answer to my prayer." As if, if I am able to pursue it, to do it, to get it done and he doesn't block it or close the door on it, that was his will. And so it sort of takes the guessing game out of it. You said something earlier with regard to your, your journal and your insecurities and things of that nature. And I think that what a lot of people do is they focus on their weaknesses. And insecurity is, well here's the challenge is whatever you feed grows. I am a true believer that you starve your insecurities, do not focus on them. You starve your flaws. You do not focus on them, because if you spend all of your time focusing on your strengths and focusing on what you do right, then you start gaining more strengths and you start doing more things right. And so I don't spend a whole lot of

time, I am flawed, but I don't spend a lot of time on it because I'm not going to grow that area. If I'm flawed, if I make a mistake, I apologize for it. I give myself grace, I move on. Why? Because I don't want that flaw to grow.

Leah: Right. Yes. I love that. Oh my gosh. I mean, do you use like affirmations or any during the day?

Fawn: Everyday. So I do what's called SAVERS. There's two books that when you come into my company, there are two books that you receive. One is *Miracle Mornings*, the second one is *The Miracle Equation*. Both books will rock your world. If you have big goals that you're trying to hit. I recommend not only reading both, but doing precisely what is in both because they work. But a part of *Miracle Mornings* is you get all of these things done before 8:00 AM. So my norm is I wake up at 5:00 AM. And from 5:00 AM to 6:00 AM I do what is called savers. So that's silence, that's meditation, prayer, affirmations. So literally verbalizing it. I really like a program called Think Up, an app where you can record your affirmations and your meditation. On mine, I actually introduced the things that are affirmations and I tell myself to repeat after me. So it's literally my voice telling me to repeat the affirmation after me. And then after I conclude that part, I literally say this concludes the affirmations portion of this meditation. And then the rest of it are my meditations. And then all I do, all of my goals that I have, I hear them every morning in the meditative state. So that's the S is the silence portion then the A is the affirmations portion. And then the V is visualizations. A part of that process of that meditation, that silence, those affirmations is I'm also visualizing whatever that goal is that I've set. And for me, I always have like, my vision board is right here. I always have like 50 goals going, some that are more immediate than others and then there's exercise, but exercise comes at six o'clock actually. So the R is for reading and the S is for scribing. So journaling. So from five to six o'clock I do all of savers with the exception of the E, then from six to seven o'clock I do yoga three days a week, the other two I'll randomly do sit-ups or something, or just spend more time reading on those days. And then from seven to eight is coffee hour with my husband. We call it Weaver coffee hour. And that's actually one of the things that I learned in traveling around the world and interviewing all these couples is they all had a daily ritual. And I remember being in Australia and calling my husband. And by then I think I had done maybe the 10th or so interview and I called him and I said, "Babe, we need a daily ritual, I because all

these happy couples had daily rituals," and we've been doing a coffee hour since then. And that's, I think maybe 11 years ago.

Leah: My husband would love that one of his love languages, his main one is quality time. That would be great for our marriage. And I see him every morning, but like, I think to your point, to have that intentional dedicated time would just build so much. And you have that chance to, to chat and what's going on in your day. And what are you worried about? What do you, what are you excited about? So I love that. SAVERS.

Fawn: It's a great time to connect. So the savers and then our coffee hours. So I'm not actually starting to work until eight o'clock, but from five to eight, I have filled my own soul and I've sent my intentions for the day.

Leah: There's something about filling your cup up, right? Because what you give out is, is the outpouring, right? When you want a cup runneth over that's, the outpouring is what you give. But if your cup is not full, you have nothing to give.

Fawn: You have nothing to give. And every morning I am filling my cup because as a leader, you are only a good leader if you're pouring into your team members all day, that is my job. It is chief encouragement officer. I have to be pouring into them. Well, if your cup is empty, you have nothing to pour. And so that's, I think that deficit is a part of why some leaders are not actually leaders. I don't remember whose quote it was, but I do remember it, and I've, I've quoted it forever, which was if you are a leader and no one's following you, you're essentially out for a walk. And that's how I see, you have all these people that claim to be leaders, but literally nobody's following them.

Leah: Oh, that's actually awesome. You're just out for a walk. Oh my gosh. That's one of the things that my husband and I do is we'll try to do a walk once a day. Cause we have a studio up above my garage now. So like we're both home and you know, coronavirus. So that's one of the things that's like, "Hey, can you go for a walk?" So we've both been so busy. It's like, now we're trying to schedule them be like, "Okay, at this time, we're going to go for 10 minutes. We're just going to walk around the block." There's something about like getting outside and walking. I mean, you might not have as sedentary as a job as he does, but he's like on the computer all day.

Fawn: Oh, I absolutely am.

Leah: I guess all of your meetings are now. I mean, how many people are coming down to, are you in Shelbyville or Lynchburg?

Fawn: Yeah, we're in Shelbyville.

Leah: Yeah. I know where that is. I'm from Tennessee. So that's the other reason I was excited to chat with you. Cause I grew up in Tennessee, so I've known about Jack Daniels and whiskey, and then, I remember the moment that I saw the billboard for Uncle Nearest. And I was like, "What is this?" And then I looked it up. I'm like, "Oh my God, they have a woman CEO like that." I was just like, "What? This is the coolest thing ever." So anyway, I was just like, "Oh my gosh, that's so fun." So thank you for the mornings. I think that anyone listening, like, I hope that's like the biggest takeaway is, you know, filling yourself up. And I'm definitely going to get that the morning miracle book and look at that because you're right. Like how you start your day is how you fill up your own cup to give from. I love that. One of the things that I did want to touch on when I was looking at the story and something that I can tell you're very passionate about is just sharing the story of the relationship between Uncle Nearest Green and Jack as he grew up and then afterwards, and how much he cared about them. And one of the things that I loved is you said that like, love unity and honor, when we don't expect to see it, that's something that was striking to you about that time and about their relationship. And it made me think, gosh, in all this research that you've done and all of the interviews that you've had and everything that you've seen, what is it that you learned about this group of people that loved each other so much, that in a time when that didn't happen with African-Americans with white people, what is it that we can learn from their experience in relationship to today's issues that we have where we still have systemic racism and you know, just so much division.

Fawn: Yeah. I think it's really interesting. One of the things is you have to put yourself in other people's shoes, and everything is not black and white. During that period of time, and it's why I like to, to share the story, it's why I'm so passionate about it is because we want to make every white person out to be the devil. And we want to make every black person out to be someone who has been completely and totally disadvantaged. Neither are true. And we have to begin looking at people as individuals.

I can tell you if, and you've lived in Tennessee, and so, you know, there are plenty of white people here who have not grown up with any kind of advantage whatsoever. They didn't have an advantage in school. They grew up in a trailer park. They've never really had anything, they've been on welfare their whole lives. So to look at that person and to then just assume that because they don't understand where you're coming from, that they're racist. You're now saying that they are in a position of power. If they don't have anything, then how can they be racist? What they are is a person who has never been around a kind, loving, intelligent African-American. And so they've not experienced it firsthand. What they have experienced is their own family who looks like them. And so we have to get to a place where we're not looking at people and then automatically putting our own assumptions and projections onto them and casting them in a certain light. This will not be popular, and Lord knows I'm not a fan of Trump, but let's be, even when we're looking at what happened with the capital riots. You have all of those people that were out there, the majority of them were not scaling the walls, which by the way, was kind of funny when they panned out on the cameras and they could have just walked up the stairs, but that's a whole other, that's a whole other topic. But look at that group. When you look at that group, let's call it hundreds of thousands of people, maybe even a million people that were there. We have defined that entire group by the people, the mob that went into the Capitol. That is completely unfair to the people who really did find that Trump spoke for them because they felt marginalized. They've heard people talk about Black lives matter, which is incredibly important. And we need to say that every day of the week, but if you are white in this country and you've never had an advantage, you've been poor your whole life. You've gone to the gas station and only been able to put a dollar into your tank at a time. You don't want to hear it. You don't want to hear about how you have this advantage. And so I believe the reason why he got 74 or 75 million people to vote for him, which if you look at it, that's nuts, but what does that mean? That means almost one out of every two people who voted in this election have voted for him. That means there's a lot of people around us who aren't admitting they did, but they did. And so we need to address this issue where we want to sort of have everybody on this uneven playing field. Somebody is up here, somebody down here. And for me, what is so important and so interesting about the story of Nearest Green, is that immediately following the civil war, he was wealthier than a lot of his white neighbors. People don't want to hear that, they don't want to know.

Leah: He went from enslaved to being wealthier than a lot of his neighbors. Wow.

Fawn: And so when you look at his story and the fact that he was paid well for being a master distiller, for being a skilled master distiller, that you had this white orphan kid who then became, he was just, I mean, Jack was a salesperson, that's what he was. He was a really brilliant sales person. He was a brilliant PR person. He walked around with a fricking top hat in coat tails. And just would walk into a bar and buy everybody a drink, that is PR and marketing at its best to this day, like who walks around in a uniform. And so that is, that is what allowed him to be able to make the money, to have his own distillery, was his skillset at sales and marketing. And so when people then say, well, he wouldn't be what he was, if it wasn't for Nearest. That's not necessarily true. He could have hired another master distiller. Why I have such a huge amount of respect for him is that Nearest Green as that African-American was skilled. And he recognized that, he honored that, he paid him for that. And then he made sure that everybody knew his legacy while he was alive. And then his descendants made sure that everybody knew Nearest and his boys' legacy after they were. And so I look at it and say, "Alright, guys, we need to really truly admit to ourselves that all Black people are not angels and all white people aren't devils." And we also, white people, need to admit to ourselves that all white people aren't angels and all black people aren't devils. Every person has the ability to step into someone else's shoes, just mentally, and to try to understand their struggle. If you can do that, you will find that you can connect with everybody. You don't have to agree with them. I don't agree with the people who fly Confederate flags, but I talked to them because I want to understand what they believe. What was their worldview? How were they indoctrinated when they learned about the Civil War? Was it the same as what I learned? And I can tell you a hundred percent, it was not. That indoctrination is different, but I will tell you why I am not offended or bothered when I see that. They have no power over me. If I am offended and bothered when I see that, I have now given away some of my own power, which by the way, I need, in order to be able to achieve everything I want to achieve in this life. And so I look at that and say, "I want to understand what formed your worldview, help me to understand what formed your worldview." And I will share with them what formed my worldview, but I do not force them to believe what I believe. And I do not think that I need to fully understand or believe what they believe. I just need to respect it, that their worldview is different.

Leah: That's a really good, good point. Like I, I look at how, I mean, I grew up in the sticks of Tennessee. And when you say the worldview, I love that because I look at, I mean, I grew up, like, I would say that I grew up racist, like wave the Confederate flag. I've, I hate to admit this, but like I said, the N-word a lot and said N-word jokes and all of those things. And to your point, it took me actually moving out and actually meeting people that did not look like me, having those conversations and really hearing what they feel, what they think that is not like me. And to your point, like, unlearning the things that I thought that I knew, or I think that the process of unlearning and relearning is, I mean, to me, it's a lifelong, like I didn't move away till I was 19. So for 19 years I had this view and this thought of us and them, and then you get into the world and you're like, "We're all us, right? Like there's differences, but golly, the differences can be so beautiful." And so that's one of the conversations I have a lot with my girlfriends. It's so hard. Cause like I have people on both sides and one thing that I'm getting better at, I'm not going to talk about my negative things, I'm getting better at is being able to ask how you came to that opinion and not pushing that on them because it's so, because as a person like anyone that's ever quit smoking and then you're just like, "Oh my gosh, you can totally quit." It's like you judge what you came from. And that's an issue that I've had. I judge what I came from and I get angry and you know what it is, it's probably because I still have shame associated with that. And I get mad because it's in me. And so I'm in awe and I think that's, what I want to learn is to, to have more of that, I don't know, coming from that place that you do that's like, I look at it and I can ask questions and not get angry and push that out. When there's a disagreement.

Fawn: Well, I tell you why I'm able to do it is my group of friends and the people that I have put around me, look like the UN. It is every race. It is every age. Like I did a dinner party not long ago. And it was a social distancing dinner party. My house is big. God bless it. So everybody was in a different room with their own families. And we, you know, we brought in a caterer and all the rest of this, but as I took video, as I went around and I was like, did a thing on social. I actually had to look at it and go, "Wait a minute, you've got a couple who's in their eighties, in this room. And you've got a couple that's in their twenties in this room and everybody in between every color, every background," but I've intentionally surrounded myself with people with different worldviews, because that's how you are able to not judge. That's a really important

piece. And so for me, the reason why I take the time when I see a police officer, if I can to stop to say hello to thank you for those service, because I understand that for a lot of them, they've never had a Black person smile at them. That changes things. When they meet someone who has been kind to them, that changes because now you've added to their worldview, a smile. That is something they didn't have before. And also understanding that we're not all right. Not everything that we believe is right. When I was in Los Angeles, before I moved here, I moved here the year 2016, so the year of the Trump election, the first one, and it was really interesting because in Los Angeles, every single time, he kept talking about the Mexicans, the Mexicans and all these negative things about the neck, Mexicans, and they're stealing the jobs and they're taking well being from Los Angeles. One of the things I didn't understand was who the hell is he talking to? Because in LA, if we don't have Mexicans, we don't have farmers. We don't have people in the back of the house of the restaurants. We don't have people in the back of the house of the hotels. There's no one cleaning the hotels. These are jobs that white people, Black people, they just don't take in LA, in New York, in Chicago. It just is what it is. So the majority of those are your Mexicans and those immigrants are, who are in those positions. And so having been in the hotel industry, having been a general manager at a Hilton property in my former life, I was wondering, who is he talking to? But what I also knew is Kellyanne Conway, as crazy as she came across in these media interviews is one of the most brilliant GOP pollsters they've ever had period. That's like not disputable. And I knew that about Kellyanne. And so my husband's in overseas government affairs for Sony pictures. So I knew about her. And so I knew that he was striking a chord with someone. I just couldn't figure out who it was. Then I get to Tennessee, I buy a house and I need a housekeeper. I need a gardener. I need all of these different things that are help. And everybody who was referred to me was white. Every person who did all of the domestic jobs that in LA would have been done by a Hispanic person. They were all being done, but my gardener is the sheriff of Lynchburg. Now we voted for him. I mean, so all of a sudden my worldview changed because I understood who he was talking to. And, oh, there is an undercurrent that if we don't acknowledge that there is a group, whites are still 60% of this country and a good percentage of that 60% have never felt empowered. If we don't acknowledge that we can't fix this.

And so when I am looking at the story of Nearest Green and Jack Daniel, the reason why I love telling that story is you have a man like Jack, who did not see color. And because he didn't see color, we're able to know the legacy of Nearest Green. If you look at all the other distillers in Kentucky and you know, there's a lot of them all making bourbon, all had enslaved people and we don't know any of their names. We know Nearest because of Jack and because of Jack's family, we need to honor those who did the right thing and not demonize an entire group of people. And I think if we can figure out how to do that, we can fix a lot of this. And I utilize the story of Nearest Green and Jack Daniel and the equality and the friendship and the love and the honor and the respect that they had among themselves to inform how I treat people of every race and every worldview that does not mirror my own.

Leah: Oh, that's so beautiful, just, Oh man, I think that everyone needs to listen to that. And then we can all say, like, we have a lot of work to do in being able to internalize that and say, how does that show up in my life? How do I look at someone else and not immediately say us or them. And how do I take a moment to really allow them to be who they are show up as the worldview that they have respect them as a person, learn from them and be able to have a conversation so that we can share? You know what I mean? That's how things happen is, is being able to sit down and have a non-heated conversation, to your point. Also, if you walk in and going back to your leadership of having the radical candor and being able to like, accept what someone else says and be able to like have that honest exchange.

And I think too sometimes when we get into those types of conversations, we come into it on the defense. Like what if it stops coming in on the defense or offense and, and making it such a competition. Right. We have such a divide because we only have two, right? When you it's blue or red or, you know, black or white or white or people of color, there's not adjusting. Like collaboration, like how do we learn from each other? How do we take all these differences? And when I think about America being the greatest country in the world, like, think about that. So 60% is white, but that means 40% is not. And how far that's come and like, Oh my gosh, what if we just learned from one another, we could truly be the greatest country in the world because we're getting better every day instead of like looking or across the aisle pointing their finger. It's like, okay, well, why do you think that way? Cause maybe I

can learn something and then we can share, and then we can grow together. What if we just decided to learn from each other?

Fawn: Yeah. And I also think that as dangerous as coming into a conversation, defensive is coming in with your own projections, coming in predetermined about how you believe a person is viewing you. And so you projected and I've watched it happen so much here in the South. And it's been interesting, especially during those heated times in 2016, I'd pull into a gas station and I would see, you know, a white person in a, in a pickup truck that with the tattoos and you would absolutely assume that they were racist or redneck or whatever. And I would smile and I'd say hello, and you could literally see the frost completely go away and the warmth come forward. Well, it's because they were projecting because they assumed that I didn't like them. They assumed that I was judging them. And so they were projecting that onto me, but by me, then smiling and saying hello and striking up a conversation. I then completely remove what they were projecting and give them the freedom to just be who they are. And there's something powerful about just letting people be who the hell they are. If you want to be who you are, if you want to be authentic and genuine and true to who you are, you also have to understand that your worldview shaped you and allow other people that same grace.

Leah: Oh, I love that. Oh my gosh. I hadn't. It's so funny. I do. I've been so looking forward to this conversation since your team said yes, and I had no idea, this is where the conversation was going to go, but I'm so grateful that you showed up and, and as yourself, and I just love you so much more now than I did when I was just a fan girl. And I'm like, you're even better than I thought. And, you know, I look at you and you've, you've been a mentor to me without realizing it for a while now. And it's cool that I get to have that conversation and like directly learn from you. And the whole reason I started this podcast was exactly for this experience. Because how many other women look at you and fan girl over you? And now they've gotten to hear a little bit more about your heart and who you are and what you're passionate about and do and learn from your wisdom that you've developed. Well, I want you to share where people can find you. And then the last question I always ask, I'll give you a minute to think about it is I'll ask how do you define success today but where can all of our listeners find you on your own personal and then with Uncle Nearest?

Fawn: So with Uncle Nearest everything is @Unclenearest like Nearest and dearest. And me I'm pretty much \fawnweaver or Fawn.Weaver on everything. So just look for the blue check mark. That's me. So that's where you'll find me very important is that blue check mark. So if you see a Fawn Weaver with a blue check mark, I'm the only one. And so I'm pretty easy to find.

in terms of how I define success, success to me is being able to live my life exactly the way that I want to live it, completely and entirely uninfluenced by anyone else. And to be able to define for myself what happy looks like to me. And I live an incredibly blessed life and am extraordinarily happy. I wake up that way, I go to sleep that way, no matter how much stress and craziness is going on, because I set my own terms and I made my own rules and that's the life I'm living. And that's a blessing. I don't think many people get to that place in life. And so to be there at 44, that to me is success.

Leah: I love it. To me, what I heard was freedom, right? Like you have built your life so that you can be free to be who you are and live the life that you want. And that's, that's very similar to, to what I had a mentor that talked about designing the life you love. Because to have the life you love, you have to be the one to design it because no one else can give, like, give you a life that you're going to love because it has to come from your own desires and your own heart. And then my very last question, actually, would be what are you most proud of?

Fawn: I am most proud of being able to live my life authentically me. No apologies, no judgment. I just get to be me.

Leah: I love it. And then I'm sorry. I said it was the last one, but I now have rapid fire because you're just so amazing. Okay, if you were going to suggest one or two books for someone to go read other than *The Miracle Morning*, cause we got that one, what would be another book? And so this podcast is all about women that are trying to grow in their career, but not just for success for the sake of success, kind of like you like, success without fulfillment is the ultimate failure. Right? So like what two books would you recommend?

Fawn: One book would be *Write it Down, Make it Happen*. It is a fantastic book because that really is about living out your dreams, whether those are personal or

business, that balance is really, really important. And a lot of people miss how important that balance is, and people wake up and go, "I'm going to have a balanced life between my work and my home." And they don't understand, if you do yoga, you understand this, that balance is about practice, but it's not just about practice, it's also about focus. If you are trying to do a balancing pose and you are not focused on a single spot, you will fall. Every time, it's a, the dancers, they do the same thing. It's that spotting. It's what allows them to do those pure wets and not get dizzy is they have a spot and every time they turn their head, their eyes meet that same spot. And so that focus is incredibly important. So *Write it Down, Make it Happen* would be the first book. I would say the most powerful book I have ever read in my life is *The Power of The Subconscious Mind* by Dr. Joseph Murray, and has an accompanying book that is called *How to Use the Power of Prayer*. And I think both are important, because if you just read *The Power of The Subconscious Mind*, and if you are specifically a Christian as I am, and as the majority of this country is, then there's certain portions of that book that can feel very like *The Secret*, and heebie-jeebies, you wish you kind of thing the way that he, but when you begin with the book that preceded it, which was *How to Use the Power of Prayer*, and it's a little bitty pamphlet. Then you understand why he refers to things the way he does and *The Power of The Subconscious Mind*. So what it allows you to do is to really embrace that book. But I do not think that there has been a single book that I have read and I've read it easily. I don't know, 10 times. And I literally will go to page, these three methods of meditation. The one I typically use is thank you, father. And it's on page 43. And I know that because I literally have spent months at a time only reading page 42 and 43 over and over and over again. So that I would, I would probably say is the most powerful book aside from the Bible, that's a given. It's the most powerful book that I have read.

Leah: I love that. And then favorite cocktail to make with Uncle Nearest.

Fawn: Oh man. So every season it's something different. Right now, I am absolutely, I have a sweet tooth. So let's just get that out of the way. Yeah. I've got a sweet tooth. And so what I am loving at the moment is what is usually a cognac drink, which is a cognac classic cocktail, it's called the sidecar. Ooh. And we call it the Tennessee sidecar because instead of cognac, it's Uncle Nearest, it's so much smoother. That cognac version gives a crazy headache. And so the Uncle Nearest version is perfect.

It's smooth, but it's also dangerous as hell. So I still get that warning out there that, because it's so delicious that people will just keep sipping and I'm like, yeah, you're going to want to stop. You're definitely going to want to stop at somewhere between two and three. Definitely. I don't know. Right now the sidecar I'm loving. I love a New York Sour, if it's topped with a full-bodied Cabernet. Loving New York Sour. So those are my two go-tos.

Leah: Awesome. I might have to see if your team will give us a download of a recipe that our listeners can try.

Fawn: We do cocktail calendars. We have all of them.

Leah: That's awesome. Awesome. Well, thank you so much. I appreciate your time with us today.

Fawn: Thank you, Leah. I appreciate you.

Leah: Thanks for listening! At Her Story of Success, we are on a mission to help women-business owners, leaders and professionals build your tribe and reach your next level of success by connecting you to one another, equipping you with resources and empowering you along your journey. We would love for you to be a part of our tribe and further this mission by sharing this podcast with a friend or co-worker you want to help succeed.. And you can stay up to date with all of our episodes, blogs and events by signing up for our newsletter at Herstoryofsuccess.com.

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company. How we use them is more like a VP of marketing, and the thing I struggled with is the processes and checklists, the project management of marketing. I felt like I was wearing a lot of hats and juggling a lot of things, so she helps us with the both long and short term marketing strategies, and then providing my team a roadmap and insights that we can go and execute on. Piccolo Marketing Mentor has helped thousands of business owners just like you and me develop our strategies to improve our marketing machine, which is how we get qualified leads and make sales. So to learn more about Piccolo Marketing Mentor, you can visit them online at piccolomarketing.com