Corey Andrew Powell (00:02)

Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of Motivational Mondays presented by the NSLS, the country's largest leadership honor society now with over 2 million members nationwide. I'm Corey Andrew, your host. And today we have a really big powerhouse guest joining us. Monique Rodriguez is a trailblazer in the beauty industry, an inspiring entrepreneur and a woman of deep faith. And you may know her as the CEO and founder of Maielle Organics, the organic

global haircare brand that has revolutionized the way we care for textured hair. Thank you for that, my sister. But beyond her business success, she's also a speaker, mentor, and now an author. In her new book, The Glory in Your Story, is a guide to activating what she calls fearless faith to change your life, career, and the world. So Monique, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Monique Rodriguez (00:53)

Thank you, thank you for having me. Great introduction.

Corey Andrew Powell (00:56)

Well,

thank you. You know, it's just your story. So it's very intriguing, but you lived it. All I had to do is read about it. So really quickly though, I mentioned the name of the company is Maillet and we had a discussion before we started talking about the meaning of that name and I thought it was French or Spanish and all these things. So please break down first the name of the company and why you named it.

Monique Rodriguez (01:19)

Yeah. So the name of the company is my L. And the way that you can remember is to think of my L's. It's named from my daughters. You know, I have two daughters, Mia and Mackenzie. Their middle name is Gabrielle and Ariel. So they both have L at the end of their middle names and they're my, my daughters. So they're my L's. And then I realized shortly after starting the company that Mio

means honey in French and I believe Spanish as well. But I didn't know that. I really thought that I was being creative by combining their names. And then I discovered that, you know, it actually has a meaning of honey. And we were creating products that had honey in them. So for me, it was like, I am on the right path because this is just too aligned here to, you know, have the name mean that. And then I thought I was really just being creative.

Corey Andrew Powell (02:18)

Well, it was a combination of the two. It was a creative effort. It just had a nice beautiful payoff in the end. And you know, it's interesting you bring that up because another guest I had on a while back, maybe two months ago or so, she is, I guess, a spiritual advisor, she would refer to herself as in some ways. And she talked about how we very often are so dismissive of things like that as coincidence. And she's like, no, those things are not coincidence.

There's a path and an alignment that we have to sometimes realize that is bigger than us. And I know that you're really spiritual in that way with your religion. so it all makes sense for your brand as well.

Monique Rodriguez (02:57)

Yeah, and you know that I read a book a couple of years ago and it had a quote that said, there are no such things as coincidence. It's God's way of remaining anonymous. And I don't believe in coincidences. Like I believe that it's alignment to say, you know, your previous guest point. So I 100 % agree.

Corey Andrew Powell (03:19)

Yeah. And that's a great segue to talk about your book as well, your book, The Glory in Your Story. And it's all about faith and perseverance and stepping into what you feel is your purpose. So for those who are just learning about you and who you are and what you've been doing, can you share a little bit about your journey from being a nurse, I understand, to becoming now the CEO of a multi-million dollar haircare brand? That's pretty fascinating. So share that story.

Monique Rodriguez (03:43)

Yeah. And, you know, the the book, it highlights, you know, the story and my story of my faith journey of how, you know, I pivoted from working as a registered nurse to becoming a CEO of a multimillion dollar brand, having no business experience and not coming from this space or industry. You know, I want to really just emphasize the importance of just finding your purpose, you know, doing things that you're passionate about and

being able to dream big and having the aspiration to do things that many would deem impossible for somebody that looked like you, if that makes sense. I started my nursing career when I was 22 years old and I became a nurse because it wasn't something that it was a passion of mine. It was something that my mom highly encouraged me to pursue because she was very traditional.

You got to go to school, go to college, get a degree and find a stable career. And, you know, you work that job until it's time for you to retire and you collect the pension. So it was very traditional, very, you know, just survival, like not thriving in life. And even though I had dreams of being in the beauty space and you'll read about that in my book,

I kind of put my dreams to the wayside because I listened to my mom and her voice of wisdom and sometimes, you know, the wisdom that comes from people we love can sometimes be projected fears, right? And, but when you're 18, 19 years old and you're graduating high school, you don't really understand that. So because it wasn't encouraged for me to pursue my dreams or passion, was encouraged for me to go

the traditional route of having a job where I can just survive in life. And that never set well with me. I always felt this burning desire deep inside of me that there was something more to life, but I was missing, like I couldn't exactly put my finger on it, but I knew that God had more in store for me. I just didn't know how to achieve it or go after it.

And it wasn't until going through a very traumatic loss with the loss of my son in 2013 that, you know, when you go through traumatic, devastating things like that, life hits you and you do a lot of self reflecting. And my self reflection was becoming closer with God and my spirituality and doing something that was fulfilling. And that made me happy. And I decided that I no longer wanted to

live and pursue someone else's dreams, even though it was coming from my mom, but I wanted to pursue a dream that brought me joy and that made me happy. And that was a beauty in the haircare space. And that's how I started. And I just decided to step out on faith and go for it and started creating my own concoctions, my haircare concoctions and testing it on my hair, posting it on social media. And I saw that the gift that I was operating in, the gift that God gave me,

it made room for me because doors started to open and I decided to create this hobby that I was doing at home and create a business out of it. And that's what you see here today.

Corey Andrew Powell (07:15)

I mean, that is remarkable. Can I just tell you, I've been doing this show almost three years and this was like the first time when someone was telling me the story that I had to stop myself from laughing. Like, wow. I mean, there's so much there, especially for us having a really large young adult audience and even non-traditional college age people who are older, but still going through things, trying to figure stuff out after an adverse experience or trauma.

reinventing themselves after the pandemic and people who lost you. I mean, there's so much there and, your story is an example of serious perseverance and resilience. And I think so many people need to hear that because I think people out there are undoubtedly going through things like that. So sharing that is a big part of helping the collective world, you know, feel better by hearing your story.

Monique Rodriguez (08:10)

Yeah, I 100 % agree. And that's why I wanted to write the book and I wanted to share my story and my testimony because I think that when people see me and they see the glory, right, they see, you know, red carpets and doing photo shoots and all the fun aspects of running a business, but not necessarily knowing the pain that I endured, you know, with the loss of my son and even with building and scaling the company, the rejection that I faced.

the knows that I received, the doubts, the fears that played in my head, the people that criticized me that talked about me for doing something that God gave me the vision to do. Like nobody sees that. And I think that people look and see like this picture perfect overnight success. And I want people to know, like it wasn't picture perfect. Like we went through trials and tribulations and we all go through trials and tribulations. it's like everyone goes through

painful situations, right? And I just really want people to be able to identify that there's beauty and there's a glory in your story. It may not be all good, right? And that's where it tells us that all things work together for the good. He doesn't tell us that all good things work together. He said all things. That means all bad things, all good things, everything in the middle. It all works together for our good. And my testimony and my story is a reflection of that.

Corey Andrew Powell (09:38)

Yeah, that's incredible. It's about having that foresight to know that all the experiences are what shape us. And you need that adversity and as awful as a lot of it is for us to go through, it's sort of, it's got to be there because it's part of the balance of life. We all have those trials and tribulations. So your outlook.

on that is phenomenal. And I have to share this story that I know people are sick of me talking about, but when you were sharing your story, it reminds me of one of my favorite little videos I saw of the actress Taraji Henson. she talks about being almost 30 years old with a five year old kid. She told her family in DC, like, I'm going to move to Hollywood and be a star. They're like, girl, you're a black woman. You're 30 years old with a kid. Like Hollywood is not looking for you. she said, yeah, they are. And I'm going to have to go there and show them that they're looking for me.

And it was her family often, people who cared and loved her, but they were projecting their fears onto her. And so she says exactly, almost verbatim, what you said, which is if you allow other people to put their fears upon you, then you'll never leave politics. And you and she both are phenomenal examples of like following your own path. And that, of course, I can lead into another question when it comes to college age students, first generation ones, for example, who feel a pressure to

Monique Rodriguez (10:42)

change my

Corey Andrew Powell (10:57)

follow a safe career path as you were sort of fresher than to doing. What advice would you give someone else who's torn between following that dream and having a stable career?

Monique Rodriguez (11:07)

Yeah, my advice would be, you know, I tell my kids this, like, you're not in a rush to have it all figured out. And I remember being 18, graduating, well, and actually I graduated at 17. And I felt the pressure to have it all figured out. Like I needed to know exactly what I wanted to do when I grow up and what career path I wanted to have. And

you don't have to have it figured out. Like allow your college years to be a year, be years of like exploration, discovering who you are. You know, of course, when you go to college, you need to have a major. And I feel like you should align your major with whatever brings you passion, whatever your passion about, whatever brings you joy. And then allow yourself to network, meet people, build relationships.

discover who you are as a person and not feel like you got to have it all together because your twenties, you know, that is the year that you are discovering yourself and that you will make mistakes and you will have to figure out what are the right choices that you need to make where your 30 year old self will thank you for it later. But, you know, I think it's more so about just alignment and discovery. Right.

And I think that your 30s are the years that you really start to like come into who you are. I started my company when I was 30, right? In my 20s, yes, I was working as a nurse, but I was unhappy. So, you know, if I can go back and talk to my younger self, I would tell my younger self, discover what makes you happy and do that. And the money, everything else will come. I'm not saying like don't get a job and not have any income to survive. You need to survive.

but don't feel like you have to be stuck to that one career or that one job forever. Like you will probably go into one career, you may become, let's say a police officer, for instance, and that's your discovery of who you are. But when you turn 30, you may start a business. Like you don't have to just be stuck to that one thing, right? You know, just because you majored in something. I majored in health and science. That's not what I'm doing today, so.

Corey Andrew Powell (13:32)

But it's interesting about that. I would imagine some of that learning from health and science played into and plays into your business right now because you're dealing with products for the skin, hair and body, right? In that regard. And there is an affiliation there with health and science, which I would think is almost like a bonus.

Monique Rodriguez (13:51)

Yeah, definitely.

Yeah, definitely. you know, I don't obviously I don't regret, you know, anything that I've done. And I do feel like my nursing career allowed me to have a health and science background to understand, you know, number one, like the ingredients and how ingredients are important and how they're absorbed into the bloodstream and the skin and how the hair grows, like the anatomy of the hair and the structure of the hair.

that health and science background helped me understood like how to work with the chemists to formulate products that perform and met the goals that I set as the CEO of the company and I feel like that's why you know we have some really great high performing products because of the intentionality that I put into making sure that our products perform well and that they are designed to do exactly what they say that they're going to do right and so that's one aspect and that my nursing career also helped me

Understand like how to develop rapport and relationships with people, know going into a patient's room And I have this large IV needle and I'm gonna stick you and draw some blood from you You have to trust that I know what I'm doing that I'm going to stick you in the right vein and not you know Stick you multiple times you have to trust that this medication that I'm gonna give you is the right medication and it's gonna help you you have to trust that

my assessment skills that I'm providing as a nurse are great assessment skills that I'm going to relate and report back to the doctor. And all that comes from developing a rapport with my patients and having the compassion and empathy and skill set to be able to take all of this together and provide great patient care. And so taking that same skill set was a skill set that I

used to develop a relationship with the community that I was serving hair products to because I wasn't a celebrity. I was an average person with 500 followers that started making hair products and I expected people to buy them. But people are not just going to buy from you. People buy from who they know, like and trust. And in order for them to know, like and trust you, you have to develop a relationship with them. And the

empathy and compassion characteristic that I took from my nursing career, which I feel was there even before my nursing career, because you have to be a certain type of person to even enter into that field. But that same characteristic and skill set is what allowed me to nourish and develop the community before I even had a product.

Corey Andrew Powell (16:26)

Yeah, and I love that you mentioned the journey that got you there where you're pulling collectively all the things you know, it all sort of leads you to this one grand moment where all that collective learning comes together in your business. And I love that. And I hear that often with lot of successful people and CEOs who I've interviewed on the show. They often share that they had this, what we call a nonlinear path.

Monique Rodriguez (16:55)

Yeah.

Corey Andrew Powell (16:56)

to get to success. But then when they got to this place, they're like, I'm going to pull some of that knowledge, you know, that organization I had as a, when I had a paper route as a kid, I had a whole skill, I had it worked out how to deliver papers. And then I'm going to pull what I learned when I was interning at MTV when I had to do mailing lists for, you know, they just really were able to pull it all together. And my journey is the same way. So I love that the lesson there is, it does also pay to, to your point.

See what you like. Yeah. Go out there and try different things when you're young. You're expected to know it all. So try it all. Yeah. guess.

Monique Rodriguez (17:30)

For sure. And even in my 20s, when I was working as a nurse and you people will read this in the book is that my L wasn't the first company that I started. I had to explore different things. had to like see what I liked. I had to see what brought me joy. So I did a lot of like multi-level marketing, you know, business ideas and startups during my 20s. But I realized that that wasn't for me. So yes, when you are in that, like I said, exploratory stage,

Just try a lot of different things like discover who you are, discover what you like and whatever it is that you do, whatever job you have, work that job with integrity. And because you're not working for man, you're working for the Lord and he sees everything. So no matter what you're doing, have integrity, still work your job to the best of your ability because if he can trust you with little, that shows that he can trust you with a lot.

Corey Andrew Powell (18:27)

Yeah, and living with integrity is a big one. Just now when you said that, all I heard was my grandmother's voice going, everything you do in the dark gonna come to the light. know, so have integrity because it's gonna come out anyway if you don't. So live your life with, yeah. And it's a big deal because I think if you live with intention, like positive intention and integrity at the end of the day, you can, it's very simple. I sleep well at night. Absolutely.

Monique Rodriguez (18:39)

Very true.

Corey Andrew Powell (18:55)

because I know I'm not a mess and I care and I help and I try to make a difference in people's lives. Even doing a show like this, having you and I have this discussion, we are helping people. you know, yeah, I sleep well.

Monique Rodriguez (19:09)

Yeah, I do too. I absolutely do too. don't miss no, I don't need no melatonin.

Corey Andrew Powell (19:15)

Exactly. But when it comes to that though, we again, focusing on people who are just starting out in the world, self-doubt is difficult for a lot of them. And even as adults, lot older adults, a lot of us still kind of struggle with that. And so when you align that with something like imposter syndrome, as they're going out into the world, I was wondering, how about you? Did you ever face self-doubt in that regard and sort of almost second guess your efforts when you were starting out in business?

Monique Rodriguez (19:44)

Yeah, absolutely. And I would say because I suffered with that because it wasn't normal. For me, it wasn't normal in my community, nor was it normal for like my parents to instill that level of confidence in me. So I think that like we are all products of different childhood traumas that we grow up with. know, some people may not suffer from imposter syndrome because their parents instill great confidence in them.

and their parents instill that they can do and conquer anything in the world, right? That wasn't my story. I didn't have parents that let me know that I can do anything. I had to learn and teach myself. And as my faith grew and as my faith increased, I started to realize like, I'm supposed to be here. Like, God gave me a seat at this table because of something that he gifted me with.

And there's something around, there's the people around this table that want a part of my gift, right? That's why I'm here. But it took me a while to get there because I did grow up being told that I wasn't going to amount to anything, that I shouldn't have been in certain rooms that I should be in, or, you know, because your dad suffered with drug addiction, you're going to turn out to be X, Y, and Z, or just like him. That was my narrative growing up.

So when people place labels on a kid and that kid is not having encouraging words and messages spoken over them, yeah, that can affect a kid when they're older and they will suffer from imposter syndrome. We suffer from imposter syndrome because of what was told to us and the labels that were put on us before we even had the capabilities to realize who we are and to understand ourselves.

But we have to be able to overcome that and it takes a sense of self-awareness and I had to learn how to have a great sense of self-awareness to know who I am and more importantly, whose I am to develop that level of confidence to know that I deserve to be in every room that God has placed me in. I deserve to be at every table that He has placed me to sit at.

because I have something to offer that the world needs because we're all here on this earth to be vessels. We're all here to make a difference and we're all here to be impactful to this world. But I had to teach and learn that myself.

Corey Andrew Powell (22:14)

Wow, that is so powerful because most of us, we will, I would say the whole construct of life is that we start off in our home with our parents and idealistically, you think that we're all going to get the exact things we need from those people raising us, but you raise a great point. So many of us don't get that. And, you know, I feel fortunate that I had a mom who, in my case was very, as you described, where she was like always telling me I can

be this and I can be that. But then the world, because I'm a man of a pigment and hue and my hair is a certain texture, the world reminded me that my mom's words were great but had limitations as far as expectations of what I really could accomplish unless I really, really fought hard for it. So I think in some ways all of us

have a little bit of that, right? Somewhere along the line, someone has made us all feel less than. what I love what you're saying is that we are enough, just as we

Monique Rodriguez (23:17)

Mm-hmm. For sure.

Corey Andrew Powell (23:19)

Yeah,

that's wonderful. I love that message. With that said, when it comes to those of us who don't have those positive influences and positive voices in our lives, collaboration and mentorship are sort of big areas in which those people who don't have that can find it. So how would you say mentorship plays in helping young people especially find that support group and how can they do that? How can they find

that kind of support of positivity.

Monique Rodriguez (23:50)

Yeah, that's a great question. I think exposure is one of life's greatest gifts. And I did not have mentors early on. I eventually collected mentors as my journey continued to evolve. And mentorship played a huge part of my success because I have a spirit of humility. So I think when you think about mentorship, it first starts with having a humble spirit to say,

I don't know everything. I need to raise my hand. need to ask questions. I need to go out here and find the right people because a smart entrepreneur knows that and knows that they need to find the right people to surround themselves with that are smarter than them in the areas that they may not have expertise in. And I was really good at that. I was really good at saying this is my lane of expertise. This is what I know, but this is also what I don't know. And I need to find people that know that.

And in the beginning, finding mentors was very hard because especially for someone that's like an introvert like myself, I was not the most talkative person to go up to someone and say, hey, can you be my mentor? I didn't even know the proper way to gain mentorship. And now that I see that on the other end, because people ask me to be their mentor all the time, I think the first step is when you are seeking mentorship,

As a mentee, what is it that you can also offer so the relationship can be reciprocal? Because a mentee and a mentor, should not be just a take, take, take, or I'm just giving, giving, Because for the mentor, that can be exhausting. Probably the mentor is extremely busy and has a million things going on and they're taking their time out to give you advice or offer you something. And if you cannot offer anything, not even a cup of coffee,

then you need to go back to the drawing board and say, what can I do to reach out to this person and say, hey, can I pay for a coffee date just to pick your brain and offer you some advice? Even though the coffee does not equate to the amount of knowledge that you're going to receive from that mentor, but it's still the gesture of like, I don't just want to take from you, but I want to see what I can offer and give you as well. So it starts there with understanding what value can you reciprocate as a mentee.

And then the other thing is sometimes your mentors don't necessarily have to be in the physical presence. They don't have to be somebody that you even know. You know, a lot of my mentors in the very beginning were people that I read about people that I obsessed and I stopped their stories and I followed their journey. If I followed them on social media, I would

find out where they're speaking at. would research them on YouTube, listen to all of their speaking videos and you'll be surprised at how much you can learn by just stalking someone online. How much information and I have a lot of virtual mentors that are still probably my mentors to this day that I have never even met and they don't even know. So, you have to be resourceful as well too but you know, my physical mentors were mentors that I met.

from going out to networking events and building relationships over time. My mentors were not people that I went up to a networking event and said, hey, can you be my mentor? Because they don't look at me like I'm crazy. They don't know me from a can of paint. But I realized that you have to build relationships with people and eventually that relationship can turn into a mentor. So some of my best mentors to this day were people that I known for

at least two or three years before they officially developed into like a mentor or an investor. So I think that, you know, as we are in search of mentors, like know that it takes time and it takes relationship building because there are lot of crazies in these worlds and people don't know your true intentions. They don't know you from a can of paint. What you need to focus on is how do you build with this person and not go into it thinking like, can you give me all the answers to the test?

How about let me get to know you first and then that will eventually form into a mentor-mentee relationship.

Corey Andrew Powell (28:12)

Yeah, no, that's great advice because I think it's the approach that most pop most will struggle with to your point if people Who don't know how to do it? Try to do it nine times out of ten. They are going to just walk up to a stranger go. Hi, can you be my man? Yeah What you would think it you would do but you're right. If someone said it to me, I'd be like and you are Right so

Monique Rodriguez (28:33)

Bye.

Corey Andrew Powell (28:37)

It's important maybe to reach out and I love it because you're saying to approach it more thoughtfully. Sit down, think of who you'd like to be your mentor. What is it about them that you respect and what do you want to learn from them? that down. So when you approach a potential mentor, it is thoughtful and you'll make more of an impression. Yeah, because in my mind, Oprah and Obama,

Monique Rodriguez (28:43)

Yes.

Absolutely.

Corey Andrew Powell (29:07)

I talk to them like every day, what should I do? I look at how they've structured their lives, how they speak, their ability to be orators, they're like, for me, they have been my mentors since day one. Yeah. You know, they don't know it.

Monique Rodriguez (29:22)

They

don't know it. Yeah, and that's totally fine. Yeah, their minds too.

Corey Andrew Powell (29:27)

Right. mean, look, I I just got to go out and I got to go out now and just launch a million dollar brand so I can keep up with you. But at least we have the same mentor. It's a possibility. you know, Monique, you actually are very candid though about the adversity and that's something I so appreciate. I know that's not always easy. You talk about the professional challenges and of course losing your son, which you talk about in the book. so I wonder

Monique Rodriguez (29:35)

Yes.

Corey Andrew Powell (29:54)

for students or people out there, young people, but I think this is a universal for everybody message. People who are facing hardships, their own hardships, what would be a mindset shift that you would recommend to help them change and sort of get back on track and push through the adversity?

Monique Rodriguez (30:15)

Well, for me, I have to lean on my faith, was a huge proponent of my mindset shifting and, you know, pursuing this journey of faith and knowing God's Word and what He tells us helped me to not stay in a place of darkness because God, has blessed us with this great thing called emotions. He has given us that.

But when we are in the emotion of sad, darkness, anger, we're not meant to stay in that state of emotion. Right? We are meant to cast all of our cares, all of our burdens, all of our feelings, any hardship that we're going through. We have to give it to him. We have to release it because he tells us it's not our burden to carry because when we decide to carry our burden, that's when

we're trying to do things and figure things out our own way. And that's what causes this overwhelm, that's what causes stress, that's what causes anxiety, depression, etc. Negative thoughts. When I know that it's not my battle to fight, it's not my hardship to endure. So with my faith, has taught me to pray, to release and to give it to God and to trust God. And that's where faith comes into play because faith is the evidence of things

We hope for things that we can't see. We can't see Him working. We can't see God in the physical realm, but we have to trust that His Word is true. His Word is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And when you revert back to Scripture, when you're going through things and the Scripture reminds you of God's promises, for me, that's what helped me to not stay in the darkness, to not stay in the hardship, and knowing that it's just a season.

He tells us joy comes in the morning. You're not going to stay in this season forever. You know, and you have to believe that in yourself and your with your whole being that this is just a season. Things will get better. You know, this is a part of the process. It may not feel good when we're going through it. You know, I went through a very painful trial with the loss of my son. And that situation could have broke some people that have that went through that.

I was broken for a minute, but I didn't stay there and I was able to overcome. And through that pain, I was able to identify purpose. And that's why I say that no matter what you're going through, no matter what you're facing, if you can stay focused on God and His promises, you will be able to find the glory in your own story.

Corey Andrew Powell (33:04)

What an inspirational person you are. Thank you. Yeah, mean it. And, you know, I do this, as I mentioned, I've been doing this for a while now and I love all the conversations, but there are certain ones that are really moving and transformative. And this is one of those. So I just want to say, keep doing what you're doing. And we loved having you here today. You are, course.

the CEO of MyO Organics global haircare brand that has revolutionized the way we care for our textured hair. I'm gonna go out and try it. Excited. And thank you for being here today on Motivational Mondays.

Monique Rodriguez (33:36)

Thank you so much for having me. It was a pleasure.

Corey Andrew Powell (33:39)

Thank you for listening to Motivational Mondays presented by the National Society of Leadership and Success and available wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts. I'm Corey Andrew Powell and I'll see you again here next week.