

# Breaking Generational Curses: Young, Black and Beautiful

**Jennifer Malcolm** 00:10

Welcome to the Jennasis Speaks podcast, The Transformative Power of Women's Stories, a platform that empowers women storytelling, to promote collective vulnerability, acceptance and healing. I am your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. Welcome back to the next episode of Jennasis Speaks where every woman has a story and every story matters. I'm Jennifer Malcolm, your host, and with me today is Coryonna Robinson. Coryonna is one of my husband's past students prize pupil I will say, and he readily spoke up and said that this is a story that we should capture. So I'm gonna read a little intro about you. And then we're just gonna jump right in, Cory. So we're happy that you're here. You're a student, just a recent graduate of Baldwin Wallace University as our teacher.

**Coryonna Robinson** 01:08

Yes.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 01:10

I do believe that you are now officially our youngest interviewee for this podcast, which is powerful, though, and I'm looking forward to interviewing my two teenage daughters, they're a little hesitant to jump into this. But I want this piece to be about all age, all walks of life, all purposes of healing so that women find their place to come alongside each other to empower and heal along with each other. So welcome, Coryonna.

**Coryonna Robinson** 01:40

Thank you for having me. Thank you.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 01:44

So we'll start with some easy questions. So this actually is our first time really chatting. I have known of you through I call him hot. Chad, and you.

**Coryonna Robinson** 01:55

You call Dr. Malcolm

**Jennifer Malcolm** 01:57

I call my husband hot. But yes. You know, him as Dr. Malcolm, and he was a few years back when he was very you were in his class. And you were going through some stuff at BW and kind of having some breakout times to speak to fellow teachers, professors, students at VW. And he just we loved who you are who you represented. Your you went to Ghana I think,

**Coryonna Robinson** 02:27

yes, I went to Ghana last year graduation, right. graduation, I was congratulating the day before and I flew out the next day, I was like, wow, first time with a plane to terrify.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 02:40

Like an easy, I'm gonna jump on a plane and just go to like Tennessee or something you're going across to the other side of the world?

**Coryonna Robinson** 02:46

Yes, it's terrifying.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 02:49

Let's jump into your story. And just tell me about when you were growing up and what that look like. And I know you're a native here of Cleveland, Ohio, as well. But just give the audience a little bit of a glimpse of you know, how you were raised.

**Coryonna Robinson** 03:03

Okay, um, well, for people who are listening to this, if you are in Cleveland, I was born in inner city, Cleveland 55th. In woodland, actually, I grew up, not not poor, but my circumstances were very Nolan Boyd. And I'm going to try to paint a picture. So imagine walking outside, and all you see is dead grass, apartment buildings that are extremely close. Brick was closed down buildings, and just a main street, there's no flowers, there's no nature parks. And it's just the gas station up the street. And it just came on very, to me depressive, kind of, I couldn't really go to the park. Because it was always a situation where some one might try to do something to me at the park. So I had to stay on the porch for most of my childhood life. And looking at that, I thought it was sad because I was deprived of opportunity that a lot of other kids get I couldn't go to the playground, I couldn't really swing on the swings. I had to worry about somebody doing something to me, I had to worry about somebody either fighting or doing something to someone else. And just grown up in that atmosphere and that mindset, it made me a tough cookie, as I'm going to call it has always watched my back. And there was one situation actually, um, where I was sleeping. I mean my little sister, we shared a room I was sleeping and my bed was right next to the window. And the window you had to like pop it kind of open to get in. So I tried to break in as we were sleeping. And I kind of got up and I started clapping and making a bunch of noise and they ran away. But I was really young. I had to do like six or seven and to have that mindset as such. A young age, it kind of I don't say it took away my childhood, but I feel like it did. Because I had to grow up, I had to worry about things that I shouldn't have to worry about as a child. My job as a child is to go to school, come home and play like. But I grew up kind of tough. But my mom, she tried to make sure that we had everything we needed. And she tried to give us the best childhood that we could ever ask for. We were extremely grateful for the things that she could do for us. But she couldn't control the circumstances. Because she didn't have the means at the time. And I'm not pointing the finger like, well, you should have done this. And she was an amazing mother. And she did what she could she sacrificed for us. But it still didn't take away from the atmosphere, and everything like that. So I kind of I grew up a little tough. A little tough.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 05:52

Yeah. So were you aware and it sounds like you were but for clarity. Were you aware that this was not a normal childhood that you being on a you know, front porch, as your playground and that as far as your world really went? Were you aware of that? Or did you hindsight as you grew up, realize that that wasn't, you know, normal?

**Coryonna Robinson 06:13**

I was aware of it as a child. When I went to school, we read books, and then these books, it was presented that these kids were going to parks going to zoos, on vacations with their families. And I'm like, I'm not doing any of that. Like, is this a normal childhood? life? Right? Like, we weren't able to do any of that. And so it kind of put a damper. Sure. Yeah. Cuz I was like, dang, I can't, I can't do any thing.

**Jennifer Malcolm 06:46**

That a normal child and a normal, you know, the joys of you know, exploring and romping, and playing and imagination, and all of those things that you did not get the chance to experience. So it was it just you and your sister and your mom living together

**Coryonna Robinson 07:03**

for the first 11 years of my life. And then this amazing person came into our lives. I call him my papa. He's my stepdad. And he just made everything seem okay. Like we were still in predicaments. But he came in our lives and he was like, Look, ladies, we're going to try to make the best of the situation. I we're going to start doing family things together. And we will we will try to go places don't see your coin. Um, pioneer water land. Where else do we go? The zoo? Sounds like okay, we're getting there. All right. Yeah, just the four of us. That's great.

**Jennifer Malcolm 07:50**

And I love that you call them step, pop, you said step pop, pop, pop pop. One thing can be called Chad instead of step dad, my kids calm step, Chad. But then it became step chatty, so they call them instead of step Daddy, they call them step chatty. So we all have those little names for those that are so important to us, and really put their fingerprints and love into our lives. And it sounds like he was one of those that expanded your world in that regard. So as you as you were growing up, what did Junior High High School look like? Then? You know, as you have now have a stepfather and seeing a little bit more of an experience a little bit more of the world, like a lot of children get the opportunity to so how did that unfold through your junior high in high school years?

**Coryonna Robinson 08:41**

junior high, I'm going to be honest with you, I don't remember it. I just got through a

**Jennifer Malcolm 08:47**

survival.

**Coryonna Robinson 08:48**

Yes, I was extremely bullied in junior high. So I think I just kind of just dismissed it. Um, when I got to high school, my first two years were awesome. I went to jarhead architecture and design. Like I forced

myself to go there because I didn't want to be a statistic. So I'm like, let me go to one of the schools that is like, top in Cleveland, let me push myself to do better even though I didn't have. I don't say the proper education. But I just I didn't know the things I was supposed to go into. But I still learned them. It was hard. It was tough. And I was one of those eight plus students. I was always on it like that. Yes. I was a reader and everything like my mom, my mom she used to hate when I used to fact check her shoe like Cory, please stop. I'm like, But mom, this is not that. That's not enough. I came with poster boards one day when I wanted to present to her. I forget what we were talking about. I think it was I think I was reading chicken soup for the teen soul. And I was talking to her about depression. I remember And I can't wear a whole poster board and I'm like, Nah, this is what depression is. You had it all wrong. You said it was xiety and stuff. No, this is what it is sure, like, really? That's another

**Jennifer Malcolm 10:14**

day just like the whole PowerPoint presentation of, here's your diagnosis. And here's, here's what it really is. This is what it really means. That's outstanding.

**Coryonna Robinson 10:23**

And I'm high school, I worked. I worked a lot in high school, because I started helping take care of my sister a little more. My mom was working, just a lie. She was and I saw that she needed help. Like she needed help, even with my pop out there. And I was like, You know what, I got to pull him away around here. I was 16. And I had three jobs. And I was going to school. And I was like, wow, this is it wasn't rough, because I trained myself to be in a routine of it. And I was like, Okay, I have to help take care of my sister. I would buy our school clothes, buy our shoes, just anything to help my mom buy groceries, just to show her like, Look, I'm able bodied. I can go to work. And I worked at the king Kennedy Boys and Girls Club. I was a junior staff member. I spent most of my time in the computer world or either helping out with homework, the other junior staff, they will be at the gym. I wasn't really active. So I was like, No, I'll stay here. I'm okay. also worked for cmha, which is the housing that we stayed in. I worked literally right up the street. It was like the king Kennedy Boys and Girls Club was right around the corner from the cmha office. So I could just walk right around the corner. And then I later on became a hymens employee at the downtown location. And I worked there for years. years like I graduated high school was a college I was still working this summer and winter breaks. I love that place. So beautiful. is so

**Jennifer Malcolm 12:13**

what's the age difference between you and your sister? So as you're taking care of her trying to help take care of your sister and buy her extra things? What's the age difference?

**Coryonna Robinson 12:20**

We're seven years apart.

**Jennifer Malcolm 12:22**

so you're now 15? She's eight. So you're really helping raise a young? Yes. Soul body? Wow. Yes, I have a quote from you that we did in our pre recording that I thought was powerful. And I do want to share it with the audience. You said, I'm not a statistic, I'm a seed that was planted in a concrete jungle and blossomed into something beautiful. I accepted my hardships. And instead of cracking under

pressure, I turned into a diamond. Can you share from your heart with audience what that really means to you.

**Coryonna Robinson** 13:01

Um, when I say concrete jungle, when you think of a jungle, you think of a bunch of flowers, you think of just beauty? Well, that's why I think of a jungle just beautiful flowers everywhere. And then we put the word concrete there, I want you to get into the mindset of just breaks and just buildings. That's it, there's nothing pretty about it. It wasn't, there was nothing pretty about it. Um, so I have to plant myself within those means and force myself to grow through hardships through statistics through oppression. I blossomed. Ad didn't crack under pressure. And I didn't become a statistic I forced myself out of those means I wasn't supposed to graduate high school. According to statistics, I wasn't supposed to go to college. When you read on statistics, it says you're going to stay within the socio economic status that you were born into. I did it, I did it. I said, I cannot accept this. I do not want to be under the poverty line. I don't, I don't want that for myself. I don't want that for generations to come. So let me force myself to not crack under all this pressure. And let me get out of here. And that's what I that's what I did.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 14:26

It's powerful. Where do you feel like that internal drive or desire to say like, this is not going to be you know, my, my future and I'm really going to push through. Where does that internal drive come from?

**Coryonna Robinson** 14:43

My mom and my grandmother, um, they are some of the most intelligent women in my life. And even though my mom and I we but it's it's so much she instilled in me to always be want better for myself? And my grandmother, she was always there to tell me the truth, and to kind of not cushion the blows. But to just help guide me along this path. anything positive I wanted to do? The both of them joined together and they were like, Look, go ahead, go do it. If I wanted to go to Cal, go do it like you You want to get out of here? That's please.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 15:26

Yeah. And having that that support from two amazing, powerful women and advocates in your life had to at least continue to fanned the flames of a spark that was in your soul to you know, overcome and to get through some of this as well. What do you did you realize that you wanted to go to college?

**Coryonna Robinson** 15:46

I always wanted to go to college.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 15:54

And, and for the audience, you're first generation, correct? Yes, I am. That's so good. That's so powerful. And in honor of meeting you through my husband, who was your professor, you know, what a joy and a gift that, you know, you have impacted our lives. Even you don't know how you've impacted our lives. And those fingerprints that you have in our soul, and the beauty that you've given to both Dr. Malcolm Chad and I, that that's amazing. And I just wanted to honor you in this in this podcast as well.

**Coryonna Robinson** 16:35

Thank you so much. Thank you very welcome. So tell us about your experience as a woman of color growing up in Cleveland, in your neighborhood, and then through high school on into bonala because I'm a bond Wallace graduate as well. I my yellow jacket for life 1998 for my undergrad, and 2020 for my MBA.

**Jennifer Malcolm 17:01**

I went to BW for my MBA. And so it's been my alma mater. And yes, we shared that in common as well. But what was that being for you growing up as a person of color.

**Coryonna Robinson 17:15**

It was hard. I'm not even going to stay here a lie. It was difficult. Because I was already looked at as less than or as dangerous whenever I went somewhere that wasn't in my community. And I was like, Oh my goodness, like I just I want to eat like we would go to restaurants. And we were just getting looked at and I'm like, Oh my gosh, we would be the only black family there to like, like, we just want to eat just like you want to eat like what? Why are you looking at us like that? It didn't really start hitting me until I got to college because I was in the middle of the suburbs. Short. And who can I see about one experienced attitude in my freshman year?

**Jennifer Malcolm 18:01**

Absolutely.

**Coryonna Robinson 18:03**

Um, my friend and I we were walking from the gymnasium to Finley Finley Hall, which is probably close to the gymnasium. We were in the crosswalk walk in and the Big Four truck was a confederate flag plastered on the back window. It wrote, like it tries to hit us basically is Spanish tried to hit me and my friend. And as it got closer to us, they wrote with windows down, tried to spit at us and call us inward. And I was like, Are you serious? We just want to go to our door. Right? That's great. It will happen in classes like I was forced to we're not forced, but x to speak over the whole black community. I'm like, I'm not every black person. Just because I'm black. Yes, I can speak to my black experience. I can't speak for their like experience. Jesus Christ. Oh, it was it was a lot. I had to pull my professors aside sometimes to like, look here, please stop calling me we start talking about interceding because don't assume I'm front the inner city. Even though I am But still, like you assumed I was right or even asking me?

**Jennifer Malcolm 19:18**

No, that's and that's huge. Because that's you when you start getting stereotyped or that you are the one advocate to carry a black woman's voice or black culture voice or inner city voice. I know that I have a friend that they in their community, they have one gay man working there. So anything that goes into, you know, it's like, please be our your token representative. And it's it's emotionally exhausting. When you're like, I just want to be me. I want to be a woman. I want to be a student. I want to experience college life just like everyone else does. I want to experience my classes just like everyone else does. And if I choose to use my voice, if I choose to contribute more, because of the experiences that I've had that's my power. That's my that's my choice versus nursing. Can you be our token? Black woman? Speaker for this?

**Coryonna Robinson 20:09**

Yes, yes. It happened in group projects to like people, which is automatically kind of pair up, and it will just be me sitting. I didn't think too much of it because I was like, I kind of expected it to happen. I didn't really hang out with the, my peers. So I'm like, I'm trying to expected it to happen. I was kind of isolated. Um, I was like, Okay, I'll sit by myself and just wait for whoever else is by themselves. Like, I want this group project together. I just I tried my best not to allow it to affect me, except enough going on to college. Like, it wasn't done before in my family. That was hard. That was so hard to do.

**Jennifer Malcolm 20:48**

Did you live on campus, or were you back and forth.

**Coryonna Robinson 20:51**

I lived on campus because I was a workaholic, stayed at home, I would have ignored my classes and just been at work. So I was like, You know what, I'm going to stay on campus, I did have a work study job, but it didn't take over. Okay, my life.

**Jennifer Malcolm 21:09**

And it's interesting, because being, you know, a graduate choice of bw, and being Caucasian, what how I experienced bw in college and how you experience it, you know, is different. And my, my high school actually went to a small Christian High School on the east side, orange Christian Academy, and half of the school was African American, and half was white. And so junior high in high school for me, you know, it was a very, very small school. But it was, you know, 50, it was 50/50. And then I went to BW, you know, if that's not the case, it's, you know, very suburbia, mostly white people. And, again, if you're in that bubble of, I'm trying to a learn college, it's scary for any freshmen going into college, learn how to do things on your own and be responsible. If the good grades you are, I'm like you and I was a plus student, I got my first C on a test in my freshman year at BW. And I was like, oh, and like, I never went out. Like, I ended up becoming like this nerd of a student of bw, Double, double majored got a minor, and you graduate with almost straight A's. But the same way, like that driven pneus of that piece, but you and I obviously had very different experiences. And, and it's interesting to be in the same umbrella of something, and have vastly different, you know, experiences with, you know, peers, professors, community, even just the the city itself of this, this truck that rolled by you probably had nothing to do with that campus. But it was just someone that was in the area.

**Coryonna Robinson 22:55**

Yes. It, it came in microaggressions to throughout my college experience, through professors through my peers. And just it was a lot going on, like, for instance, um, the I don't want to say the black fraternities and sororities, but I don't know the technical term for it. They weren't on campus. So I couldn't even I couldn't get into Greek life, even if I wanted to. It wasn't represented on campus. They said they were there when I came for, like freshman orientation. But once you get into that, they're not there. Well, I got to go to either CSU or to Ohio State or yes to, to engage have an even Greek life. Yes. Wow. I did not know that. And it will be situations where my friends and I we will go out to eat. And either Lang Hall, because I didn't eat their cafeteria. So I'm sorry. We will go to main hall. And I remember I talked to Dennis the manager because I later on became an employee. And I was like,

can't we have cell phone here? Please? He was like, Yeah, sure. Like, I've never thought about that. And the night we had soul food. What I'd say it was so many complaints. complaints from the students told me this food isn't healthy. Why is it here? And I don't want to say it was a certain crowd of people. Sure. I was really cool with the black community. There was coming in like who thought it is Cory. Did you notice that? I was like, Yeah, like, thank you. Like, we wanted a little piece of home away from home and I was like, geez, why did they complain about the fool like if this campus is promoting inclusion and diversity? Why is it that when it is that door is open Why is it McDowell? Why is it complaints about it? If this is supposed to be a campus where people can feel like they can be themselves, especially if we have a think, diversity day? Yeah, well, we have that big event. Really like your show for this, but

**Jennifer Malcolm 25:19**

when it's right day to day, well, it's, it's the inclusion until it affects my my food or my, what I'm comfortable with. And then it becomes very white and very Caucasian, because I'm not used to culture or food or experiences. And so, you know, we can say it's a situation of family a community is, you know, does diversity inclusion, but until it really affects, you know, my my space, and then it will pull some feathers. So what was it like being a first generation college student when you've got that that acceptance letter from for for college? How did it all transpire?

**Coryonna Robinson 26:02**

It was a lot of emotions. I was scared, I was excited. I was nervous. And I was like, Okay, I got the acceptance letter. What's next? Now APA. That is a whole different beast with itself. Oh, my goodness, my mom and I sat there for hours trying to figure that thing out. I'm like, I don't even know what this stands for. Like, what is this?

**Jennifer Malcolm 26:25**

I don't think anyone understands it. Because we have to fill that out every year for our two in college. And I, we still struggle, like it's ridiculous. The complexity and the language. Like, can you just simplify?

**Coryonna Robinson 26:39**

This is this? I was like, Whoa, we were really doing this family like, Okay, I'm going to school. I went to school and my family was so supportive. But I wanted to kind of separate myself, from my family, because I got into this mindset of becoming my own woman. Who did I sure want to be, I was Cory. I was sure Rita's daughter, I was Alice's granddaughter, and it was like, well, who am I really. And so I chose college to find myself. And also make my family proud of me. And when I graduated, that was the best day of my life, my family came together. And, um, I found was kind of dismissed. I'm not one of them to be completely transparent here. They put all their differences aside, and they came and they supported me to walk the stage and they were so so proud of not to the bragging started the social media posts. They were like, she graduated college like, we have college grads here. Okay. And to know that I was able to do that. For my family, there would be no more dirt thrown on the Robinsons name like a family doesn't do much, right? No, they have a college grad, they have someone who's trying to plant seeds and become better. And now I try to enforce it within my my baby cousins. Like No. Do you want to live in this for the rest of your life? Like we got to get out of this. And I just aim to inspire them. I even if you don't want to go to college, like I want you to try to do something? Absolutely.

Because it's easy to just give up on yourself. But do you want a life of regrets? Or do you want a life of I did it I failed I tried it again. And I was succeeding at it. Like choose choose your heart. Choose your heart because you both situations are hard to live through.

**Jennifer Malcolm 28:46**

Absolutely. And that piece of when we fail, you know they say you you learn the most through failing. When you overcome and you succeed that level of confidence that raising of your chin, the the demeanor that you now carry the joy, the everything that's in your soul that may not have been there that that it dispels doubt it dispels fear, it dispels the I can't do it. And doesn't mean that you're going to overcome every time doesn't mean you're going to succeed every time. So the benefits and joys of learning from the failures and and we learn some of the deepest lessons about ourselves and overcoming through those. But that when you succeed it really changes your DNA. It changes something in your heart and your soul in your mind that now you are a vocal piece for your cousin's for other people in your community to say okay, I did it and I I know it's tough. I know it seems insurmountable but it is doable. What made you want to become a teacher?

**Coryonna Robinson 29:54**

I always wanted to be a teacher. I was such a little nerd

**Jennifer Malcolm 30:01**

nerds rule the world.

**Coryonna Robinson 30:05**

My sister and I used to play school when she was like about three or four. As a guy for a few years to kind of get into the magic of being a kid. I used to play school with her we shared a bit row. And we had a bunch of teddy bears, like teddy bears were our thing. Sure, and we had the storage totes, we will flip those over, I will give her some notebook paper, we'll do addition problems, vocabulary words, and I was standing in and play teacher to her and those teddy bears. For years, I always wanted to be a teacher, even when I worked at the Boys and Girls Club. They were like for you to be so young. Like how do you know how to engage with kids who basically your age like there, they were around my age group? And I was telling like, no, get it to get it going or do your homework. I had to do mine to have a gardener do to get it done. Come on, I'll help you. You need help. Right. And I would try to find creative ways to help them and then when I got to college, that was the Okay, you took the professional. This is the you are always teaching but here's the actual, um, what am I trying to say? The

**Jennifer Malcolm 31:19**

Was it the structure, the knowledge?

**Coryonna Robinson 31:21**

The structure.

**Jennifer Malcolm 31:22**

Yeah, it gives you the, the railroads to be able to now assign other people. That's awesome. And I remember they love that you're saying that you you played with your sister and teddy bears and school.

So my sister and I, we grew up in in Grafton, Ohio, and it's a little country, Podunk town, and we just me and my sister during the summer. And so we had, we played bank, we played school, and we play church. And we did the same thing, setting up our dolls, or setting up our our teddy bears and animals and making fake money and having like checkbooks and doing math problems. So I love I love the similarities of some of our stories and experiences and how you're wired and how I'm wired. And I ended up becoming a high school science teacher for three years. And until I was pregnant with my son, who's now 19. And so I did have a chance for you know, several years to you know, give back and put my heart and soul into teenagers. And and that's a fun nuance of that a lot of people don't know either of my story. So

**Coryonna Robinson** 32:40

Thank you.

32:40

Oh you're welcome. The school that you are now teaching at is also one that you were a student at for what I hear.

**Coryonna Robinson** 32:50

Yes.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 32:51

So tell the audience a little bit about that.

**Coryonna Robinson** 32:54

Oh, is based in inner city, Cleveland. It's right by I think that's Metro hospital. Like you know, all your Patrick day is I'm literally in the back of William teaching. And my mom, we used to live on 30th before we moved to 55th. And she walked me down. It was a preschool. So they're probably working with kids, two to five. I teach three to five. I teach the actual preschoolers. That is the funnest job I've ever had. It was so hard. I just got through my first year. June 10 was my first official year. How's that? Yes.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 33:37

And you survived COVID teachings.

**Coryonna Robinson** 33:39

Yes. So that is

**Jennifer Malcolm** 33:42

the caveat of your first year of teaching.

**Coryonna Robinson** 33:45

Wow. That was that experience and how I got that job is so funny. It was a job fair that we w told us about. And I wish I didn't know these people. I pretended to I was like, You know what? Talk to me. Talk to me. And I went up to them. And everyone's like, do you know? Are you familiar with the signature family and children? I was like, Yes, I am. I was not I I was walking around the job fair. And I

was just collecting stuff. And the ladies, I guess, like they weren't at the table yet. But I had took like a brochure and I went and I sat down and read it. And when I went back, like are you familiar with them? I'm like, Yes, I am. I was like, I literally thought about you all like, Uh huh. Yeah, it was like, five minutes ago and really? Like, yes, she was like, oh, my goodness, I thought you I'm like, you know me. Oh, we're gonna go with it. That's awesome. And she she directly sent me the link to the application. I went in that was my first official interview is well post b, w, and R Like, this is it like I have I prepped, I took all my notes, all the theories, all of the just everything, I took it with me to the interview. And the examples I had of students work when I was student teaching. I had that too. When I went in, they were like, We love you like, we're, we're hiring you right now. And I was like, Oh my god, like, wow, I got a job. I graduated like two weeks, and I got a job already. Thank you. And I even told him, I was like, Yeah, I attended the center as a child, I made sure to wait until after the interview, to tell them that because I wanted them to hire me because of the knowledge I had. And the credentials, I didn't want them to hire me just because I went there. I wanted to know, like, I went to school, I got this education. And I know what I'm talking about.

**Jennifer Malcolm 35:55**

You're qualified, you're qualified for the job, and you're knowledgeable for the job not giving not give me a mulligan, because I attended here. No, that's, that's powerful. That's powerful. What are the what are the things that you're hoping to teach your three fours and five year olds, as as you're now able to plant seeds into their hearts and souls and help build confidence and laughter and play, but what are some of the things that are really on your heart to instill to this young generation,

**Coryonna Robinson 36:28**

um, it's two things. I want them to know that they are human beings as well. to not allow someone to disrespect them. And to be respectful about it, I apologize to my students, when I'm wrong, I do. Um, if I raise my voice, I apologize. Like you're human. You deserve respect. If I'm expecting you to give me respect, I need to give it to you as well. And the second being, you can do anything you want to literally, I, I experienced so many different elements and personalities, but just little things that they love to do on a day to day basis. Because I, I work your way out. Okay, we, we only have like major holidays off, but I'm there all the time. And I have students who love to paint, but they also want to dance and they also want to sing. So I tell them instead of trying to be great, at one thing, it's okay to be good at multiple things. And they took that and for them to, to take that in and actually apply it to their their teaching what they're learning. I mean, they do a great job at it. Every day is a new adventure with the they plan my hair because they want to be hairstylist one day, but the next day they want to be astronauts like Okay, let's do it. Let's do it. My classroom is very big, free, like we still have structure. sure the kids know, you come in you you wash your hands, you sign your name, and you go eat breakfast because they eat in the classroom with those. But after that, go explore go be a kid I want you to explore. I want you to ask me those questions. And they are so smart. Oh, my goodness. It amazes me. It does. These little three year olds are talking to me about this pandemic, as if I'm talking to you about this pandemic. They were? Yeah, they sit me down almost every day. Miss Robinson, why don't why aren't they wearing a mask? Like? Do they know they can get sick? Wow.

**Jennifer Malcolm 38:43**

No aware, right? while we're there. I love when you said at the beginning of your lessons with your students about really instilling that they're humans. And they matter and that you apologize for raising your voice or yelling or or not being kind. Because in our family, my father was the first to always say he was sorry, whether he was right or wrong. He always modeled that we're going to be in communion with each other, we're going to have reconciliation with each other. And I'm going to model what it means to ask for forgiveness or say I'm wrong. And it's powerful. And so as I'm raising, I was a single mom for almost a decade, and raising teenagers on my own. I often said to my kids, it's not even what you say it's how you say it. So you could say the exact same words but drop the tone or the attitude. And the other the what the last several years is just be kind. Be kind in your words doesn't mean that you have to give up your boundaries. doesn't have to mean that you have to give up your wines or your names. But you can be respectful and to be kind in your words. And I think when you're pouring that into the heart of 3-4-5 five year olds, the flowers and the seeds that will bloom when they're 16 17 18. When they're 30-35, raising their kids when they're 40-45-50. You know, all that is going to be remember what Miss Robinson, you know, is saying about human kindness and saying, I'm sorry, when we're human, we make mistakes, we're all gonna make mistakes, we're all going to cop an attitude, we're going to not respond in the way that we hope to or want to. But when we're humble enough to say, I'm sorry, it goes a long way.

**Coryonna Robinson** 40:32

It does.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 40:32

That's a powerful lesson, you're teaching those little ones.

**Coryonna Robinson** 40:35

Thank you.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 40:36

You should be proud of that.

**Coryonna Robinson** 40:38

Thank you.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 40:39

So over the last several months, with all black lives matter, George Floyd, how were you personally impacted or your family impacted? You know, through, really, the last three, four months.

**Coryonna Robinson** 40:56

I'm going to be completely transparent here too. It's been rough to see that, because you see both sides, you see people fighting for our rights, and you see the people fighting against black rights. And I'm like, these are human rights, like we human beings, we shouldn't have to be gunned down or suffocated or killed in our sleep. And I'm like cheese that we can't, it seems as if we can't do anything. And I had to take a break from the media. I did, because it was so much to digest at one time, and I fell into like a just like a funk. I was in a funk. And I'm like, oh, my goodness, are we ever going to receive

racial equality? racial equity? Are we ever going to receive any of those things? We we kneel, we're wrong, we protest, we're wrong. We don't say anything. Oh, you're doing a good job. They're like, Don't speak on your rights. Don't stand up for yourself. And that's the message that I feel like is being portrayed right now. But I said, No, I'm not wanting to just sit down and take it like, I'm sorry, I'm not. I fight in a different type of way. I speak up for myself within our organization. I've been asking for like months now can we wear head wraps is a part of our culture. Even though I know it's, it's not acceptable I carry is a part of who I am, and where they're at. Or I teach, teach my students about who they are because I feel you learn a lot from your history, because you can know where you're going from there. I've had days where my students and I we will sit in, we would do breaks because I like to break here. I do Fox breaks. We break hair. I talked him about head wraps. We're right now talking about who Barack Obama was. They call him brock obama. It's close enough. And I'm reading a little more multicultural books to them. Not only black culture, but also other cultures, as well, because I feel this is not only a black person's issue, it's also any persons of color issue is well, and you're seeing all of that, at one time with this with the kids that's in the camps right now that's been separated from their families. And all these black people being gunned down shot at the protest across the world. that amazed me, that that really touched me because I'm like, not only are we fighting here in America, they're fighting across the world for us to receive our human rights. And this is so beautiful to me, because we're all tired. We're tired of being treated less than when I'm going to say this. And I apologize in advance. We kind of built this country like we helped build this country, it was on our backs, my ancestors are slaves. And it hurts to what they were slaves. And it hurts to say that. Because that's my reality. That's my truth. But my ancestors were also kings and queens. And they don't tell you that part. They took that away from us. When we came over on almost ships, they separated, separated us from our families, they took our names from us. And when you have that stuff, you know, like my family did this. I can go this far. I don't know who my ancestors are, as far as slaves, I don't know. And to see that. We're now starting to embrace who we are as a culture. And we're not just taking the craft anymore. It's a beautiful, it's a beautiful thing in that aspect. But it's also ugly because it's like we still have a ways to go. But we cannot give up. We can't at all It's, it's an amazing thing to see that we are taking steps to strive for a better future for ourselves. And I love that,

### **Jennifer Malcolm 45:10**

thank you for your willingness to share with me, you know, and and I didn't reach out to you. And Chad didn't encourage me to reach out to you because you're African American, he encouraged me to reach out to you, because you are one of the students that have really stood out to him for multiple reasons. Through the years that he, you know, he was your professor. And as we're capturing different stories, it is about different nuances that bring healing, different nuances of having voice and giving courage. And I've shared this on the podcast previously, that my story is going to fall flat on a lot of women, it's not going to impact them at all. But my story is also going to impact a lot of women. And it's going to give them courage and voice and confidence to heal, have a deeper conversation, journal, sing, dance, whatever that is, and capturing your story is going to do the same thing, there's going to be a lot of people, they're like, Alright, there's just another story. But there's gonna be other ones that are like, Wow, she's powerful. She's an overcomer. And she, she rose out of some of the concrete jungle. I love that I love that phrase, you know, rising out of the concrete jungle, into a perfect diamond. And now as an adult, you're able to sow those seeds back into the next generation, from a very young age, to give them a lot of what your grandmother and mother gave you. And, and to give them courage and hope

and perspective, and, and voice and that's a very powerful position that you know, that you're in. And that's beautiful. So thank you for sharing that part of your story.

**Coryonna Robinson** 47:07

Thank you so much for allowing me to

**Jennifer Malcolm** 47:10

Very welcome. What are some as we wrap this up? What are some closing remarks that you may give to other young women that you want to encourage or empower to break out of and it doesn't even have to be a poverty, inner city, African American, but what are some things to say, you know, what, you're stuck in a situation you're young, it could be I'm being sexually abused, I mean, emotionally abused. I am, I'm a part of a military family that, you know, packs up and moves, you know, every, you know, 369 months. But there's, there's young women that are stuck in different places for whatever, for whatever mentality and there's that, that that block that says, This is how it's always going to be what are some words of encouragement that you can give to the next generation of women?

**Coryonna Robinson** 48:06

Um, first want to touch base on don't allow yourself to stay within that stuckness. And I know it's easier said and done. But I went through a lot of that stuff you just mentioned. And it was a mindset change for me and I'm not going to say it's an overnight fix is not at all it's going to take time you're going to cry, you're going to just feel low, you're going to have your day so you might have your weeks but don't allow yourself to just stay there because you are worth way more than you are giving yourself credit for. You are important you are wanting you are valued. And I want women to know that we sorry, I'm getting emotional.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 48:54

Tears are welcome.

**Coryonna Robinson** 48:59

We are amazing. Ever. Anyone who just who fears moving on or just fears the unknown, don't allow that fear to hold you back. It Don't. Don't. It's okay to be scared. But don't allow fear to hold you back. I'm sorry, I have notes. Good. I got one. Don't allow fear to dictate your life. You will rather say I try and it didn't work meant to say I never did this. Don't have regrets. And yes, I'm just selling.

**Jennifer Malcolm** 49:43

Okay, it's powerful. It's powerful. And that's a beauty is I love when you said you know, having a mindset that I can get through it is one thing. But knowing that it's it's gonna be rough. There's gonna be tears. You're going to overcome trauma, you're going to need a community around you to heal, you may need counseling, you may need medication, you may need advocacy. But all of that if you take one tiny step at a yes in your heart to believe that I can get out of this. And that's the piece here is we want this community to be one that we believe we see, we value where you're at. And we want to partner alongside women, wherever they're at, in their journey, whether they're healed, and using their voice, or whether they're coming out to be healed, and need an advocate and a voice in support, that

we're all on this journey of life. And that through human compassion, and kindness, and understanding, and willingness to be vulnerable, this is what it is.

**Coryonna Robinson 50:57**

Going through that right now. Actually, that's why I'm getting a little emotional, I'm coming out of a lot, I am letting my wife down. And I forced myself to just get out of bed in the morning. And that's even a great start. And asking for help is okay, like, I'm learning that like it's okay to ask someone like, Hey, I'm going through a rough patch right now, can you? Can you just listen? Or can you please come over? Can we go out for ice cream, it's okay to ask for help. And it's okay to go through those things. Because when you get through it, that is going to be such a joyous thing. And for me, I always thought, whenever you feel like you're at your lowest, that's when a breakthrough is coming through. That's when you're about to elevate on to something even greater, because it's going to get hard before it gets easy. And I put myself in that mindset. And it has happened every time whenever I feel like I'm at my lowest, something great happens. And it's coming. And that's what I want these women listening to now something great is coming. If you're going through it, something great is coming your way. This is the lowest you're going to feel

**Jennifer Malcolm 52:18**

I love it, and the wisdom that you have in your heart, Cory, the depth of who you are as a woman. And I think I'm 20 plus years older than you, your world before you you are going to impact the next generation and women and African American community, the white community in ways that you can't even imagine yet. And as you press in, and you take that step to continue to heal, and use your voice, to teach and to laugh and giggle and to create, you know, the breakthrough that you're going to a personal experience with be gift to those around you is powerful, powerful. Thank you so much. very welcome. Do you have any closing remarks for the audience, as you're like, we're both crying here. I always bring tears to the studio because I can't get through the stories. And that's the beautiful part is it's one woman at a time. And today we're honoring you. So any closing remarks for the audience?

**Coryonna Robinson 53:24**

I will like to say, even if I don't know you, I love you. You have someone out there rooting for you. And just keep pressing forward. And just focus on loving yourself. It's well love it.

**Jennifer Malcolm 53:42**

Well, thank you so much for taking your time today, to spend with me and honored to be a part of your journey. And Dr. Malcolm, and I are here for you at any point. Please know that.

**Coryonna Robinson 53:55**

thank you so much for this podcast. I literally want to thank you for this. This is opening a lot of doors. And it's allowing women to gain their power back through their words and through their story. So I thank you most.

**Jennifer Malcolm 54:16**

So, okay, so as we're both crying here now. I'm going to try to wrap this up. So thank you guys so much. Thank you, Cory, for being here with us today. And stay tuned next week for the next story of

transformational stories of women. And where every woman has a story and every story matters. Talk to you soon. Bye. Subscribe to the Jennasis Speaks to empower women's voices and reclaim the power over your own narrative.