

# **Prosperity Unveiled: Financial Literacy and Bridging the Wealth Divide**

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Full Episode Transcript

With your host

Alan Moore

XYPN Radio with Alan Moore

**Alan Moore:** Hello, and welcome to this episode of XYPN Radio. I am your host, Alan Moore, and I'm excited to welcome Bri Franklin on the show today. This episode is a little different than our usual show, as Bri is the co founder of Prosp(a)rity, a non profit organization with a mission of helping close the generational wealth gap that Black women experience, with a particular focus on predatory lending and student loan debt.

Bri went the Ivy League route and attended Dartmouth, and graduated with over \$100,000 of student loan debt. After graduation, she worked in various temp roles until she ended up out in the Bay Area. She moved in with her boyfriend for what was supposed to be just a month, but two weeks later, COVID 19 lockdowns happened and her plans changed again.

During the Black Lives Matter movement resurgence in 2019, she decided that she wanted to do something that would have a more direct impact on her community. She did a survey and found that there was a disproportionate need among black women for financial literacy, help navigating their student loan debt, and more.

That ultimately led to the launch of Prosperity. We talked through the various programs that they offer, which range from early intervention efforts to corporate work, and also how financial advisors can get involved. Without further ado, here's my interview with Bree. Hey Bree, welcome to the show. Thanks so much for being on.

**Bri Franklin:** Thank you. It's my pleasure. I'm so looking forward to today's conversation.

**Alan Moore:** Absolutely. You know, this, this conversation is actually going to be a little bit different because of your work with a nonprofit and, and how you're doing financial coaching and literacy for for your clients. I'm really excited to, to be able to share sort of a different corner of the business, if you will, the industry with with our listeners.

To kick things off, I'm, I'm curious about your journey to becoming a financial coach, financial advisor. Did you, did you always know you were interested in this or did this sort of develop later on?

**Bri Franklin:** Oh man. So it's a really ironic question and to specify, so I, My work entails working with finance coaches and professionals, but that has required me to become very unlike I used to be when it comes to dealing with finance for a point of reference, I remember almost 10 years ago as a college sophomore.

I told my dad, I was like, when I, you know, make money someday and, and, you know, have more socioeconomic growth in my life, I'm just have, you know, outsource it and just have someone, because I hate numbers and I'm terrible at managing money, and I would just love to have someone come and take that roll over for me.

He's like, well, I, I don't know about that. I think it would behoove you to be the one who's directly in charge. You know, you can't always trust everyone. And so that really intimidated me for a long time, but recently through this line of work, I've had no choice. But to become a lot more comfortable and competent at managing money financially, but then also on behalf of my organization.

And then of course the people that we do engage with, but to answer the question this was certainly not a path that I ever saw my life taking, but I really appreciate that it did pan out this way.

**Alan Moore:** Yeah, for sure. But what, what was your sort of plan, let's say with college? You know, you talk about your, your sort of journey in, in accruing student loan debt and how that has sort of influenced you.

So what was the plan when you were going to college in terms of career?

**Bri Franklin:** Man, so I remember The first real conversations I had were around middle school and early high school, and I remember the seed of going Ivy League was planted when I was around sixth grade, just because I was always the, I'd say, type A, goody two shoes, straight A student, yadda yadda, so everyone's like, oh yeah, that's the perfect place for you, but In terms of what to actually make of that four years, I started having inclinations to go more into journalism.

My godmother, who is my mom's older sister, she's been in media her whole career so now going on 35 years, and I've always had a deep respect and admiration for just her job and you know, getting to tell stories and using her gifts as a communicator and knowing that I had a lot of those same talents.

I always excelled in writing, English language arts, so it seemed like the perfect This is the first pipeline for me to tap into, but then I also became really proficient at languages and I love traveling, learning other languages, studying other cultures. I grew up speaking Spanish through school, not fluently, but just, you know, having been taught for a number of years.

And then I also took a little bit of French in middle school and then I studied Mandarin in high school. So then people started moving me towards the international relations. I always found the outside of things and thinking, oh, you'd be a great diplomat or a foreign ambassador you know, through the us embassy.

And so then, that was really what I pursued and those conversations ramped up by the time it was it was time to get cracking on college applications. And so when I was prospecting, I was really focused on schools that had a great government program, and trying to harness that into an international relations career.

And so that's ultimately what led me to choose Dartmouth. It really came down to there and Emory. So being from Atlanta, ATL and Loud and Proud, Emory was, That's my, my homeschool option, right? And it's of course an excellent school. And I do look back and think, man, I think I would have really loved going there, but I was really gravitating towards the government international relations path at the time.

So upon matriculating and arriving on campus in Hanover. That was what I intended to study, and after getting a C in Intro to Government, or Gov5, I think it was called, that burst that bubble out of the air rather quickly, and I was like, okay, this is, this is not the way, I got to come up with a new game plan.

**Alan Moore:** I love that story, because you know, Lister's Listeners have heard me talk about my college journey, but I went to University of Georgia to be a pharmacist because UGA had a great pharmacy program and it took a whopping one semester for me to learn I was not going to be a pharmacist when chemistry was not fun and I did not do well.

**Bri Franklin:** Are you a Georgian native? Sorry to cut in.

**Alan Moore:** Yeah, I am. I grew up on the South side of Atlanta down in Henry County, about 20 minutes South of the airport.

**Bri Franklin:** Yes, I know exactly where that is. Always nice to meet someone else with, with ties to the, to the South.

**Alan Moore:** Absolutely. Yeah, I went to University of Georgia and then I say I started chasing snow after college and found some out here in Montana where XYPN and AdvicePay are headquartered now.

Okay. So, pretty typical experience, I think, for, for students where, you know, we think Or maybe I should say we're told what we should want to be when we're young and people give us lots of ideas. And and I find sometimes, you know, it's like things we did in like third grade, people in high school are still referencing back of like, Oh yeah, but you did this one thing back then.

So clearly you should be, you know, this should be your major. But you went to a school. primarily for this program that program ultimately you know, realize that wasn't the career path you wanted to take. So what was sort of the next step of the journey to to discovering where you wanted to end up?

**Bri Franklin:** So I, it took a lot of very painful and real conversations with myself, my family, my advisors, my professors, because I remember just. I was almost having like an Oprah counseling session with one of my profs Professor Herman. Shout out if you ever do see this and she was just really instrumental in giving me the freedom to really pursue English because, you know, I unfortunately I think as a lot of people here, there's a certain narrative around lib arts degrees and especially humanities majors and there's just so much ridiculous and, reductive stigma attached to getting an English degree or arts or theater. I'm like, there is a real place in the world for all of these things. Perhaps a degree is the best way, but we'll, I'm sure, get into that line of thought a little bit later. But because government wasn't working out and then I'd also tried to do Some classes in econ, because I was really just trying to find my footing, you know, going from being a by product of Atlanta public schools to an Ivy league.

It's such a steep learning curve. And I really don't think that there's enough preparation, at least from my lived experience and that of people I've talked to in terms of what it takes to actually get ready to compete at that level. Because admissions criterion can be such a crapshoot, right? And then of course, now we're seeing the reversal of affirmative action, but I know full well, I was an AA admit.

Like I did not have, I mean, I had great grades, but comparatively speaking, on a national scale, I wasn't even close to really being like at that top tier level, but the school. Made the choice to bring me in. And so I was really trying to make

the most of that opportunity. And as I was giving more thought to what chance I stood of graduating and how I was going to get through the challenges of the distributive requirements and satisfying things that are completely out of alignment with my skillsets, like, you know, engineering and, you know, they have all these official names for the class types, but by the end of my freshman year, I was very close to leaving and transferring out.

And just saying, you know, this is a mistake and I don't belong here and I could cut it anywhere else. And when I returned, I took two consecutive off terms cause Dartmouth is on a quarter system, not semesters. So it's 10 weeks at a time. And I was off that summer and that fall and it gave me a really good stretch to just hit reset, recalibrate, and then try to say, okay, to pick up the pieces.

I think what makes most sense for me is to do English, you know, because I know for sure, I have a knack for, for literary arts and writing. And I've always been told since I could write you know, and complimented by just how well spoken. Great at communicating I am and how to leverage that into academic success.

So I got a lot of flack. I got a lot of resistance and a lot of people who thought that I was wasting the degree and wasting the money spent being there to study that. But I know for sure that that was 100% the best course of action I could have taken to turn things around.

**Alan Moore:** Yeah, my, when I was in college, we sort of had that same view of like, Oh, what are you going to do with that degree in communications or history or, or English.

And now I would say the hardest roles that we have to hire for are good writers and just high quality writing skills is something that many of us, myself included, missed along the way. And being able to, and yeah. Those degrees, while they may not, you know, necessarily lead you down into a particular industry there are very few roles, I think in the, that you can get into that being great at, at writing and communicating will, will harm you.

Like those are always going to be beneficial skills to have no matter where you end up. So, what did you ultimately decide to do out of school? What was sort of the first job there?

**Bri Franklin:** Oh, gosh. So, this is where the, I would say, the T chapter, right? Spillin T. This is where we migrate to that portion of the story.

So, because I was so determined to get through and get out of Dartmouth as fast as possible. I go back to with the quarter system structure when I came back in winter 2015, I was on for the rest of my time. So a lot of students usually will pace themselves, you know, take the summer off, right, to intern or extern or do whatever maybe even to take a little bit of a vacation and just get your, your stamina back before you have to go through another 10 week call at a time.

But I was just like, I'm walking in and I'm going to go all the way the rest of the way through. And so that actually allowed me to finish a term early. So I graduated technically in March of 2017 and I went back to Atlanta and I remember my mom, my lovely mom came up all the way from Georgia and. Help me pack up my things.

And, you know, we just took a flight back that Wednesday and it was just like, Oh, okay. I can kind of rest and breathe. And then, you know, you went right into spring break. So some of my friends had some fun, a little too much. But then it was just like, okay, all right. Now I've got to figure out what am I going to do to support myself.

And thankfully, housing was pretty much a given just because I think we've gotten to a place where it's so normal for people post grad to return home for even just a year or two and recalibrate, figure things out. So, I didn't have that immediate pressure, but it definitely was a conversation and, you know, my dad and step mom and everyone's like, okay, so what are you going to do?

And my mom through one of her close relationships, she had been trying to get me into like a very fixed and safe and, you know, moderately well paying job with the city of Atlanta through the airport. And I remember it was basically like I was a shoe in for it and had everything I needed in front of me to take it on.

But something inside of me was just like, Let's see if we can do this unassisted and on your own merit and, you know, just try to really gun for something that's more in line also with what it is you want to do. And I remember my friends make comments to me. About my skills. And they were like, you really should go into PR when you graduate, like you're so great at organizing things and bringing people together.

Obviously you've got the writing piece on lock and they were like, just from the event standpoint, they were like, that could be a really great career for you. So then I actually went through you know, there's that book of lists that gets published and I emailed and called all 50 entries for that year.

And then. This one that I got a hold of a local small one in Atlanta, they moved me forward for an interview. And then over the next few months you know, went through the process and then it landed my first job in June. So that was really exciting and a great badge of honor just to know that I could.

Do it right myself. Unfortunately, however, it was only a three month contract. So when it was over, I was like, Oh my gosh, I'm back on the market again already. You know, and so many of my peers, by contrast, they had gotten funneled into the consulting route, or they were, you know, in finance, they were you know, with big name firms, big tech, like just, just emanating stability and security.

And I, on the other hand, you know, was after that contract wrapped up I went and got a temp job and then I was on a circuit for about a year, year and a half of temp and, you know, just. and Brace myself to take all my student loans once they went into repayment which happened 20, like late 2018 and 2019.

**Alan Moore:** Cause you, and I mentioned this earlier, but you do talk about your story of, of graduating with significant student loan debt. How are you managing that I guess, were you still in sort of a grace period in terms of making those payments or were you on an income based repayment program? Like, how are you managing you know, being in student loan debt while also sort of, you know, searching for the career?

**Bri Franklin:** I think you give me too much credit with the word managing because I was very much hiding from the verdict. And I mean, I could do it all over again. I would have done so many things differently if everything up to that point had played out the same way. I absolutely would have taken a much more hands on face the music kind of approach.

But unfortunately, the truth is for so much of that, I did put my head in the sand and I was in forbearance. So thankfully for the private loans, those were sheltered and, you know, I paid kind of like a re up fee. And of course it doesn't go anywhere towards your loans, but you pay Salome, I think 150 each time you want to extend that grace period.

And then once it runs out, though, it's fully exhausted. Whereas the federal were much more. Easy to, I guess, suppress, right. And not have to be an immediate burden. So yeah, Sally Mae, those caught up with me come about summer 2019. And so, or rather a few months before that, it was just becoming impossible to keep up with the payments because, you know, minimum wage work comes with minimum wage earnings.



And then that's only when I was having work. I tried my first hand at entrepreneurship with the thinking that. This is, I see all these infographics and inspirational posts on the internet where it's like listing careers by earnings. And then for entrepreneurship, it's like limitless because technically that is true, your talent.

And so I'm thinking, okay, you know, if I stand any chance of getting out from under this giant pile of money. Before I'm old and gray, I think entrepreneurship is the best bet. So I started up a consultancy called the English Major Takes Tech. And that was also me reclaiming and just taking back that status and saying, no, you're not going to shame me for this.

And I'm going to show you that this can open doors and that there is a market and that these skills are actually valuable. And so I did get a couple of contracts, you know, I mean, we're talking. 4,000 right at that. So it was, it was certainly far from lucrative, but it was enough to be somewhat stable in terms of, okay, you know, for the next three months, I know that I'll have this stipend coming in through that contract, but unfortunately things fizzled out.

And then that left me back where I started. And, you know, by that point I'd gotten so far behind on those \$750 a month salary made payments that it tanked my credit. And I remember, In July 2019, I saw that my score had dipped to around, I want to say either 519 or 539, but either way, I mean, you know that that is a dirt poor credit score to have.

And then also there was a domino effect because with my dad and his wife being co signers on some of those loans. It also trickled over to them. They didn't say to what extent, but I just remember getting a very heated and passionately worded email from my dad and just basically expressing his disappointment because he had been cautioning me from day one about not letting it get to that point.

So it really was just kind of a everything hit the fan and blew up in my face sort of moment. However, as I deal with things, like I, I harnessed that adversity and I decided. I'm not living like this anymore. And within the week I had interviewed and gotten two jobs and just kind of started the trajectory all over again, had to throw all pride and humility as an Ivy League grad out the window.

And I got two part time jobs, one at Orangetheory working the front desk and another at Athleta, you know, just on the sales floor. And that was how I started

to really Rehabilitate and started using the debt snowball to begin working my way through that challenge.

**Alan Moore:** It's incredible. I mean, you know, it's hard to even, it's hard to describe the stress that you experienced during that time, particularly when you feel like it has hit the fan, you know, it's easy for a while to hide and, and maybe we.

Pretend like there's no stress, but whenever it sort of hits front and center, and like I said, when it starts to impact your loved ones, like all of a sudden it gets really real in terms of the, the impact and ultimately what the next steps are. So where did your journey then take you in terms of launching the nonprofit?

Like what was, you know, you're, you're working part time jobs, but then a couple of years later here you are running a nonprofit. So I guess what was that, you know, what was that journey like?

**Bri Franklin:** Yeah, I would say another highly unconventional start, and it's funny because in 2018, I got invited to a young non profit professional's Luncheon as someone's plus one.

And I thought, oh, this is cute, but I will never work in the nonprofit space because I just didn't know hardly anything about it. It was spoken for sure from a place of ignorance. But life is funny that way. And so in January, 2020, I took a leap of faith and I do what I call climbing the glass staircase.

And, you know, I sold my car, bought a one way plane ticket, that typical thing, packed everything that fit in my two suitcases. Sold and good-willed the rest. And I moved to the Bay Area and so I continued to work at Orangetheory. And then because I was able to live with a family friend for a little bit just to get on my feet, didn't have to worry about the San Franciscan cost of living, which is out of this world.

And. I was also able though to collect on the fact that their minimum wage was double Georgia's. So it was just continuing. By that point, I think I had knocked out two small debts for a couple hundred dollars each. By this point, I was beginning to focus on my credit card debt, which sat at around collectively like \$3,000, maybe \$2,500.

But I just remember, okay, like this is the next step in the journey. And so I was there all the way through into February and I had actually begun conversations about transferring to another studio further down the peninsula in the San Jose

area. And I had begged my then partner at the time you know, to let me crash with him and his housemates.

It was supposed to just be for a month. And I was like, look, you know, because the running theme through our relationship was my, my debt situation made me way over reliant on him. You know, he's such a great person and I appreciate that huge act of generosity. But we had talked about it and we were trying to keep it so that I was not just being kind of like a leech right on them and just, you know, taken up resources and be it in, in their area, in their space.

But it was literally supposed to last for exactly a month. And as we saw the world, the universe had other plans and two weeks in was when the shelter in place order got announced. And then it was just like, what have I done? You know, like now I'm here living with these guys and not knowing up from down.

I'm back out of work. I don't have any real savings to fall back on. This debt hasn't gone anywhere. And it just felt like one helpless conundrum after another. So for really those two, three months, I mean, I just kind of leaned into it and I just thought, well, maybe there's something to this. I think maybe this is a discontinuation of the path I was on.

To prepare me for something else. And I could not figure out for the life of me what that was, but at me being true to my English, English literature and English major roots, I just started blogging and journaling through the process. And I began uploading content pieces and I created a series called pursuing prosperity. And I commissioned my cousin, who is a fabulous and super talented artist, to do the graphics so that I could actually make it into something.

And I just started posting on my Instagram, on my LinkedIn, and just really trying to, you know, voice my experience and what that climate had brought me into, and then working my way up to May and June of 2020, you know, that's when everything started to layer in from the racial perspective, and being out in the bay when, you know, you're driving by the highway, you see the SWAT team lined up to prepare for protests, and all this outrage and justified backlash over George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, right, like this, you know, kind of, in a way, symbolic trifecta they've become of that BLM revival.

And I just remember thinking as someone who belongs to this community, I have to do something. It's not enough for me to just retweet or write a poem or upload another blog post. I need to figure out a way to really come in and stop this from getting worse in whatever way that looks like. And so I initially ran a

survey and I was just trying to check in and just hear from people like, how are you doing?

How is this time impacting you financially? And as I meditated, I prayed, I reflected on it. It was just so clear. Like think outside yourself, Brianna, don't, don't just limit to your own experience, try to see how others are faring. And so I ran that survey. I hit up about 18,000 people on LinkedIn. I connected with them on what I call an ad spree in the months leading up to that.

And then it was just like, okay, if you want to get the word out, what better place than to start with these 18K strangers? And, you know, you can introduce and this be your, your first impression with them and who knows where it'll go. So once I did that, the data came back and it was just so abundantly clear that black women were going through it, you know, unilaterally, like the worst all things considered, right?

Student debt of their own, lack of finances and fallback and safety net. You know, a lot of cases, single parents, young children, like just all these responsibilities that they cannot shed. So that ended up becoming the basis for the prosperity project. And then just kind of one day at a time for those few weeks of June, it was like the next day I put the website domain, the next day, the Instagram handle.

The next day you know, the, the basic marketing and it was just like, holy crap. I think I just started a nonprofit. It was never anything where this was like a life goal or something that I had just been actively working toward in a traditional sense.

**Alan Moore:** It's so cool. And I, I appreciate you sharing how you know, the, the Black Lives Matter movement really helped inspire you to want to do something that, you know, again, more directly felt like you can help.

And it's. Just really, it's an interesting path to, to just sort of put it out there into the world of like, where, basically, where can I help and then finding, finding your spot, basically. So you, you founded, so this was 2020 when you founded the nonprofit. What was the original sort of mission statement or mission of the nonprofit?

**Bri Franklin:** It was very, very cumbersome and I would say overly worded you know, and that takes time to refine, but initially it was. Equipping Black women and girls with resources for financial, career, and holistic success. Well,

I can't believe I remember that because we changed it so many times, but that was our initial, you know, mantra and our galvanizing mission statement.

And we were really just trying to find the words and find the vocabulary to, to support, you know, how this was all playing out and just to show and not just say, oh, it's bad, but being able to say it's so bad that for black women, they owe 111% of their income towards student debt. So quite literally money they don't have.

It's so bad that their average lifetime network is between zero and \$11,000 prorated by decade. It's so bad that they are defaulting at five times the rate of their peers. It's so bad that 12 years after graduating, they owe 13% more on their student debt balances, whereas their white male counterparts have paid down 44%.

So it was just. I like, you know, obviously speaking from that passionate and emotional place, because it completely hits home for me. It made it that much easier to just get out into the wild and just hit people up. And I now I'm, I think fearless to a fault because I'm so unafraid of approaching people and just saying, Hey.

We would love to get you on board with this, or, you know, your story could really add a lot of value to this movement or, you know, here's our program. Can you benefit? Like, how can we help you? And so it was just very quickly, you know, how, how fast everything came together. In terms of building community, getting our initial volunteer force together, I really didn't even have to ask.

It was just, hey, I'm running this survey, and my response would be, or the response I'd get would be, where can I donate? Or do you all need volunteers? Or do you need legal help? Like, just people were throwing resources, and I mean, it couldn't have been a better time. For an organization that had long term viability to get its initial start.

So I look back on that like, wow, I mean, boy, was that a really fortunate kind of moment in time to be able to benefit in that way. So yeah, that was, that was how we initially led our crusade was just helping more from a holistic vantage point. And then over time, of course, we've done more research and fine tuned things to become a lot more niche.

And therefore more competent at the services and the things that we do.

**Alan Moore:** I imagine, in 2020, it was like every corporation was trying to write a check to show that they supported the black community. Has that, I'm assuming those, the, the number of checks have, have reduced sort of countrywide. And, and the focus there, have you been able to kind of create some more sustainable I guess, funding sources through grants or that sort of thing?

Or, or have you been successful fundraising through donations from individuals, companies, that sort of thing?

**Bri Franklin:** This is an excellent question because it was over the last few months that we really, as a team, woke up and were like, we are not in 2020. We're not in Kansas anymore. We're not in 2020 anymore.

And it's a completely different climate and people did warn us. Some of our earlier advisors were like, just remember, this is a moment. This is not a movement. And a lot of people who were professing to be all in on this. Don't be surprised if they go dark after just even a couple months, and that is exactly what happened to tee

I mean, you could see a market drop off and people who were just like, "Oh, I love this. Congratulations. How can I help?" You know, you follow up even December of that year. And then certainly, you know, you get out to 2021, 22. And I mean, it's just, they've all but like changed their name and email and gone off the face of the planet.

And thankfully I did brace for that in some way because I was like, well, I know it won't last forever and we'll continue to do what we can to maximize support and resources while it is currently happening. But absolutely. I mean, I've even heard people on the inside of those circles who are allies and they are trying to disrupt things for their peers and say, Hey, like, we can't let up on the momentum just because we are back to feeling more comfortable again.

But they have said that they've heard people say things like, Oh yeah, we've, we were, we ran out of our black money. Like we've finished doing that and we're done here. And you know, it's not an emergency anymore in their eyes. And just to hear it said that starkly, of course, it's always going to stop you in your tracks.

Like, wow, people really reduce us to just a bucket of resources to allocate, like not an actual ongoing effort to achieve equity and make life prosperous and successful for all. Like that's, that's terrible. But yeah, so in keeping with that knowledge, this year, 2023 has been all about everything you just outlined of

trying to become more revenue stable and creating the infrastructure and not just you know, getting complacent in that.

I would say hand to mouth dynamic that a lot of nonprofits fall into of being so donor reliant and so grant reliant where. The minute that things go awry, or someone decides that they're going to switch up their giving priorities. Just, I've learned the hard way personally, like you cannot expect to thrive when you are at the mercy of someone else.

So we've taken a lot of measures to put more control in our own lap and control our destiny and building out things that allow us to earn revenue. So doing speaking engagements where there is no negotiation, like our rate is our rate. And we know we can time it and it helps us with being able to forecast and scale and also getting outside the box, even beyond the C3 confines.

Now we're more of a hybrid social enterprise where we still have our traditional C3 work, but we also are doing. We have a show now, which is exciting, called UnDEBTfeated, that I host, and I interview people who have overcome being debt constrained, just to really help give inspiration and motivation to those currently suffering, and that creates sponsorship opportunities, right?

We can say, hey, you know, plug your company, and have your CEO, or whomever, be on an episode and then that gives you airtime and you know, our show is targeting the 30% of Americans who identify as being debt constrained. We also are working on an app and that is gamifying all of these concepts to do more preventative work to keep children from becoming harmed by debt constrained and predatory lending.

And, you know, when you're entering the tech space and the fintech space, like just, of course, that earning potential is almost quite literally. Limitless. And so just knowing that we have put so much effort and investment into creating the revenue drivers, it, it just comes with like this, oh, like, I don't feel like I can quite breathe because it's one thing to create the vessels and another to actually reap the financial benefits from it.

But just knowing that we are positioning ourselves and taking all these measures to. I would say proof us against, you know, further dips in market times and you know, just the traditional limits of the C3 model. It just feels like I've done the work so much justice. And like our team has just. You know, really banded together and we're like, okay, we can survive this and, and we have what it takes to be able to you know, continue driving our fate and not be impeded by any unforeseen setbacks.

**Alan Moore:** So can you talk me through the, the different programs that that Prosperity, your nonprofit has and it's sort of the, the purpose of each of sort of the primary programs?

**Bri Franklin:** Yes. So through TPP, just, you know, in the standalone nonprofit work, we have our three I's we call it. So our interception arm is called HIRE, which is an acronym H I R E, and that stands for Honor Your Skills and Abilities, Identify Avenues for Impact, Research Monetization Methods, and Evaluate Return on Investment.

And this is geared towards, we have a program for both high schoolers and college students, and the entire premise there is to. Finally, stop the crisis from spiraling further, because as of right now, student debt is on track to hit 3 trillion by 2042, and a four year degree is set to cost around \$435,000 by 2035, and that is just because there has been, you know, lack of regulation and checks and balances for bad actors, but also because of the ignorance and just that youthful blind trust of these institutions, and with a lot of teenagers and young people, student debt is their first experience with debt.

So basically I'm going into the classrooms and running engagements and just sharing my story and just not holding anything back and, you know, working with teachers and the students, I'm sorry, teachers and the parents of students to make it a unified effort. To rally around keeping teens from becoming harmed by predatory lending.

So we're not saying, you know, college is bad and don't go to school or even don't take out debt. We are just trying to help people have better, more up to date conversations about it and deciding, is it necessary for what kind of career I see myself or my child pursuing? If it is, How do I avoid the harms that come with that?

And so that's taking out, you know, of course, doing everything you can to get scholarships, grant funding and just steering away all costs from private loans. Cause those are the ones where they are like, you know, absolutely no loopholes. I mean, unless you have a for profit college situation, but those are so few and far between.

So that's that pillar. Intervention is 35 to free. So that's actually the program we started with. And that gets its name from the 35 estimated billion dollars in student debt as well as 35% financial literacy rate Black women hold collectively. And that entails positioning debt relief as a means for building



wealth because we're thinking, you know, you can't throw someone into a pool and say, swim in Olympic lap if they don't know how to swim.

You know, you're trying to keep them from drowning. So we are alleviating that debt constraint to better position Black women to catch up, you know, and even to their male peers, like other Black men who are building wealth and achieving more financial success earlier on in life. And then we also have our interference pillar.

So this is all about systemic disruption and going into companies. So as I mentioned, you know, our speaking engagements, that's what this is where companies pay us, usually financial institutions to lead engagements and workshops. And break all these things down and just help paint a picture of what can go wrong, you know, with this type of exploitation.

And as the model for that is shining the light on the dark side of student debt. So we talk a lot about individuals who have lost their life through that constraint. There's two in particular, Jessica Madison and Alexander Edinger. She died of predatory loans and ultimately missed the cancer that killed her because she was so consumed in a work to live scenario.

Whereas Alexander was only 20 years old and he was tinkering with an investment app. And even though it wasn't student debt, he thought he was in about \$730,000 of investment debt. And he took his life just based on that fear. And the worst part is that wasn't even accurate. It was just a settling error.

So, yeah, so basically the whole premise is helping people not be harmed, helping people who have been harmed, and changing the systems that cause harm.

**Alan Moore:** I mean, it is really interesting. You cite some statistics on your website and around that, you know, Black women are the most educated and go out for, for graduate degrees at a much higher rate than other populations.

So we have this group that we've told, Hey, the, the path to success is you've got to get a master's or a PhD or a doctorate. Like you've got to, you've got to go big. And then when we get there, a lot of times, you know, earning potential doesn't typically, doesn't always follow the, the graduate school trajectory, if you will.

Cause a lot of times we end up in, in good positions, but like, not necessarily the highest paid positions out there. And so it is sort of this cycle where we, that I

feel like you're kind of coming in on the front end and, and saying, Hey, what you've been told is just wrong. And, and yes, that could be a path, but it feels like there's, there's a lot of assumptions and cultural assumptions that we've, that we've really you know, advocated for that, that you've got to help, help your clients sort of work through, help these students work through in order to really be able to sort of see the realities of, of what they're signing up for.

**Bri Franklin:** Yeah, that's exactly, that's a huge piece we pride ourselves on is being able to just get real because it, I mean, it took me years of therapy to, to like forgive the people in my life who I felt had set me up for failure, right? Because, you know, you hear these narratives and especially me being a type A, very much people pleaser by nature.

I did not want to be the black sheep in my family. I didn't want to be stigmatized. I didn't want people thinking that you know, just, Oh, she's a lost cause. Like she's not going to college and just writing me off because I didn't go to college. Like I've seen happen to, you know, my younger brother. Unfortunately he ended up in a place where because academia was not his strength.

And I fully don't think there's anything wrong with that. I think he was very athletically gifted. He's very charismatic. There's a number of alternate paths he could have taken, but it's like no one cared enough to help him look at the next best alternative. And it was just, okay, well, whatever you do, you've got to go to college.

And I think that pressure definitely played a part in some of the not so great choices that he made, you know, just trying to cope and self help and. Build his own self esteem back up behind that. And so of course, when we look at like this, this vicious hamster wheel cycle black women are on, that's exactly how it plays out.

You know, step number one, we already come into the game so far behind, you know, we're not starting with generational wealth and headstarts. So we are already highly susceptible to predatory lending. You know, grandma Sally Mae is just like, Oh yeah, you know, we got you here. Come take out these \$300,000 in loans and, you know, go live your best life in school.

We'll worry about that later. And then you go and you have to pay that back. And everyone says, okay, well the treatment for debt is more debt through another degree and getting a master's. And then you take out, you know, that next crazy amount. And then you're getting into the job market and because of,

you know, racism and systemic bias, you're getting overlooked and you're getting skipped over for promotions and for higher paying, more lucrative opportunities.

And then for those who do go on to have children, cause there are statistics tying debt constraint to waiting or just completely foregoing having families. Those who do have children start the cycle all over, you know, because they're like, well, I want to be able to live out, you know, this very basic human right of having a child, starting my own family.

And unfortunately it's like the suffering just continues. So yeah, we were trying to be a lot more in people's faces, but in a way that's effective because I feel like so much of what goes wrong is that people are just looking at it and they're blinded by the status symbols and look how many degrees I can frame and hang on my wall and you know, just black and educated, like all the trap, all the hashtags and the trending things, and they're just completely neglecting how bad it can get.

So we're here to be that squeaky wheel and just say, people, we need to focus on what actually matters and what good are all these credentials if you are literally suffering because of them.

**Alan Moore:** So for advisors who are listening, who are, you know, that this message resonates with them. This is something they're interested in being a part of.

How can they help? How can they get involved? We've talked about donating which, you know, on your website, the prosperity project there is a donate now button for folks who just want to, who, who would like to make financial donations, but what about, are there other needs, I guess, in your organization as it comes, as it relates to the financial coaching side or.

You know, I guess it really anything that advisors could participate in.

**Bri Franklin:** So to make sure I understand, you're asking like, what are ways that financial planners can engage with us?

**Alan Moore:** Sure. Yep. And how can they help? Like if they're, if their passion, if they have a similar passion as the mission of your organization, like how can they get involved and be able to help your organization continue to grow and make a difference?

**Bri Franklin:** Oh, yeah. So definitely through our preventative work. So, you know, getting into high schools, we, we realized that this is not something that we can conquer solo. And so we're trying to plug into existing infrastructures to really increase our presence around the country because we're like I guess with, in terms of our longevity, it's like, oh yeah, we'll have work.

Pretty much forever because it is so far reaching, but obviously that's also because that affects so many people adversely. So, yes, definitely engaging with us through our higher initiatives you know, helping us open doors with school districts because we feel like a top down approach will, you be a lot more advantageous instead of going, you know, classroom by classroom and really help us pick up the pace.

Our 35 to free initiative. So in all transparency, we are still reworking some things behind the curtain because we realized that in, in line with the climate change and where people are now a lot less willing to write "black checks" and help causes that are specifically, you know, singling out black folks for whatever the reason we are trying to figure out how can we readapt the model to become more state sustainable and scalable over the long haul.

So that's requiring us to, have some internal dialogue, but you know, we're definitely trying to learn from and consult with financial practitioners you know, just for their insights and as we do reintroduce it, you know, then being able to engage with them like we have been before to coach our Prosperettes, which is the, the loving affection name that we have for our beneficiaries.

But then, you know, if you're part of a larger corporation, absolutely, our Prosperity Through Clarity arm, which is where we go into the corporate side, That is going to be, like I would say, the easiest, most low hanging fruit right now, because that's already, like, we've been doing that we've gotten great feedback, a 96% satisfaction rate so far, and on our end, it's just a lot more easy, it's a lot easier to support and, you know, to continue rolling out and getting in front of new organizations. So certainly those would be three great places to start.

**Alan Moore:** So I'm curious sort of where your focus is right now. Cause you, you know, your organization is doing a lot of different things. You talked about the new show that you have and that sort of thing. Like what, I guess, what's going to be keeping you busy for the next 12, 18, 24 months?

Like where, I guess, what's giving you energy right now?

**Bri Franklin:** Oh, well, with there's being so many things that are like out here draining it, I would say what gives me energy are the incredible guests that we have already lined up for season one. So I've really been taking a lot of cues from conventional TV.

Like I'm a shark tank junkie. Everyone knows that. I also gotten into how I built this. And just taking cues subtly and overtly from the hosts and just what makes an engaging story and how to, you know, tell people's stories and to do them justice, right? Because I think we want to differentiate and not being some ho hum like, oh, that ruined my life.

Like, we want to completely be that safe space and be like, yes, you can cuss, you can shout, you can say, screw you, Sally Mae, or upside Phi or whoever it is, you know, that has caused that financial harm and trauma in your life, but also being able to say. I overcame it and there is life on the other side of this.

So that's contagious for me because even though a lot of people assume I've already cleared my debt, sadly, I have not. I mean, I'm working and strategizing day and night to figure out how I can become one of those success stories too, because then that increases my stewardship capacity. It makes me even more generous both through TPP's work and what I do, you know, on my own merit.

Financially. And so just being inspired directly you know, being able to take cues from people and also hear different attitudes and perspectives, because I want to always be careful not to get so gridlocked into my own lived experience to where I then transpose that. And I'm like, this is just how it is for everyone who's ever dealt with it.

So, it keeps me sharp. It keeps me very, just always in a constant state of learning. And, and then of course, just the new collaboration avenues that that opens up. We, we are in talks with a couple of conference organizers to actually bring the show live and do in person tapings at one of them is the CAAFP next year, Conference of African American Finance Professionals.

We've been in talks with some other companies to do like private versions at their HQs specifically for their team bases. And so it just feels like now I can have a field day, like this is where I thrive and I shine in my element because everything, all in the details, down to how the show episodes are titled.

It's just like constant use and engagement of my very witty, clever English major type nature and, you know, being able to say, you know, our, our first episode was entitled debt constraint definition. So it's like the DCD and then the

next one, I believe it's going to be toxic money traits. So just, you know, small plays on words like that.

Where I just feel like I am constantly living my purpose. And no matter how what's the word not treacherous, but how much drudgery sometimes they can feel like it's still always fills my cup because I'm like, this is just part of the process. And overall. I have a lot to be pretty dang grateful for and to be able to move and take action in this really fun out of the box way.

I kind of give myself a little pat on the back, like, wow, I really, you know, had this idea for a show and now we're doing it. And even better yet, we have an amazing team who's capable and so talented. To be able to help actually make it happen, cause Lord knows this is far too much work for one person.

So I would say that's, that's my answer. It's just all of the above and all the creative and, and fun things that, that I get to do and live out through this work.

**Alan Moore:** It's always amazing when you get to spend more of your time doing the things that you're great at and that you love doing and less time doing things that you're not great at or don't enjoy doing.

So it's awesome to hear that you know, that work is shifting for you to be able to, to focus in those areas. So, Bri, as we're coming to the end of our show, I'll ask you the final question, and that is if there's one piece of advice that you wish you could go back and give your younger self, sort of one thing you've learned that you wish you had known then, what would that piece of advice be?

**Bri Franklin:** Do not always take everyone's advice at face value. Do not just follow the track because out, out of fear of how that could look or what people might say because if I had like just a fraction of the courage and confidence. And just sense of self that I did now, 10 years ago, I would have done things completely differently.

And I think so many of the bad decisions I've made have been because I just didn't really speak up or self advocate. And because I was just, Oh, well, you know, that's the way that they say it goes. And who am I to argue against that? And just not really believing in my full self and thinking that I, you know, was capable of.

Making right decisions, even if they may not have been popular, always understood. And I mean, I paid a heavy price for it. You know, like if I could educate my 18 year old self on what it means to be debt constrained, I think that

would have been the most pivotal conversation that I could have. But you know, and having to own that so much of this journey is, is having to learn lessons a hard way in a painful way.

And that you don't know what you don't know. Like I really try to give myself grace, but that would for sure be it is just don't go with the flow and just passively go through the motions just because it's what people are constantly prodding you to do, like really think for yourself. And get comfortable with diverging from the pack.

**Alan Moore:** I love it. Thank you so much for taking the time to come on the show and share your story and the amazing work that you're doing. And I wish you the best of luck as you continue to grow and, and you know, continue to fulfill your mission and, and all the work that you're doing. So thank you for your time today.

**Bri Franklin:** Of course, this is wonderful. I appreciate the platform and the opportunity. Thank you to everyone who will check this out and share. And you know, hopefully if there were any takeaways please let me know as I'd love to hear them. But yes, just thank you so much. This is a wonderful show through and through.