

## SEEKING THE EXTRAORDINARY

# Ep 9 - Higher Learning with Joyce Payne

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**[00:00:00] Lisa:** **[00:00:00]** Seeking The Extraordinary is sponsored by the Colony Group, a national wealth and business management company that seeks the extraordinary by pursuing an unrelenting mission of providing clients with peace of mind and empowering new visions of tomorrow. Visit the [colonygroup.com](https://www.colonygroup.com) to learn more.

**Michael:** Welcome fellow seekers of the extraordinary. Welcome to our shared quest, a quest, not for a thing, but for an idea. A quest, not for a place, but into the inner unexplored regions of ourselves. A quest to understand how we can achieve our fullest potential by learning from others who have done or are doing exactly that.

May we always have the courage and wisdom to learn from those who have something to teach. Join me now in seeking the extraordinary I'm Michael **[00:01:00]** Nathanson, your chief seeker of the extraordinary.

Through her life's work and advocacy, today's guest has made an important life-changing difference, not for a few people, but for thousands or maybe hundreds of thousands. She is the founder of the Thurgood Marshall college fund, which has raised over \$300 million for support and scholarships for its 47, historically black college and university member schools, and numerous students attending those schools.

Now that alone certainly qualifies her as extraordinary, but her resume just goes on and on from there. She served as executive director of the National Alliance for Public Trust and as Vice President of the office for the Advancement of public black colleges and council of student affairs of the association of public and **[00:02:00]** land grant universities.

She was the president of global systems Inc. And was a senior staff member under the Carter administration with the president's advisory committee for women, the president's national advisory council on women's education programs and the white house conference on families. She taught at the federal city college and at George Washington university.

And as an authority on women's issues in relation to higher education and labor force participation, she has published and presented a number of papers on the pursuit of equality for women, and African-Americans in higher education. A doctor of education, she received a heritage award from Alcorn state university for her contributions to the school of agriculture. She also received a presidential medal from Delaware state university and received honorary doctorates from Lincoln university of Missouri, Lincoln university of Pennsylvania, Kentucky state **[00:03:00]** university, the university of the district of Columbia and central state university. She was inducted into the district of Columbia's hall of fame and the national black college alumni hall of fame. In her life's quest for equality and social justice, one of her mottoes is that education pays off. Please welcome the extraordinary Dr. Joyce Payne. Welcome Joyce.

**Joyce:** Thank you so much, Michael. I appreciate that introduction. I hope I can live up to it, sounds very impressive.

**Michael:** I think your life's work lives up to it and actually, so let's talk about that introduction. It pretty much goes on and on, and actually I did a lot of research on you and your accomplishments go on even beyond what I just described. So why don't I just give you the floor for a little bit and have you start by telling us a little bit about your personal journey and how it led you to founding ultimately the Thurgood Marshall college fund.

**[00:04:00] Joyce:** Well, Michael, before I share those that life story with you, let me, let me thank Joseph and Mark Thromond him for making it possible for me to be with the colony group today. And as I was saying to your colleagues earlier, in looking at some of the other speakers, I was so impressed and rather intimidated by all of the wonderful things they've done. They have moved mountains, used their wisdom and talent to make a difference in the world. And so I hope this conversation will land me somewhere in that arena. And I must also say, I have to add you to the extraordinary list, looking at your, your title, it's CEO, it's chairman, but most importantly as inspiration, inspirational officer, I was so impressed with that.

I mean, how many CEOs had inspirational officer in the titles that says volumes about you, I think it says volumes about the Colony Group's, commitment to people and the [00:05:00] planet. Yeah, I think that's just wonderful. But let me start by talking about my, my childhood. I'm a Washingtonian grew up in segregated, Northeast Washington.

And now that the world knows that I was in the Carter administration, you know how old I am, but I'm not going to buy into that because this is all about how you view yourself and how you value yourself in terms of your place in this world. But I grew up in segregated, Northeast Washington, with seven sisters and brothers and in a neighborhood that was predominantly black and also in a neighborhood that was rich and robust, in terms of teachers, your teachers that you see in high school and junior high school living next door to you. One of my teachers lived, on one side, I've got my history teacher lived on the other side [00:06:00] of my home. And so we were surrounded with all of these giants. Who not only gave you love and care each and every day, but also demanded a level of discipline.

When I talked to my grandchildren about, teachers reprimanding me or reprimanding other children, when they were out of place, they can't relate to that at all, but that's the kind of community I grew up with. My mother was a full-time housewife, and especially with, with eight children. My father owned a trucking company and, he managed the business and my mother made manage the money.

And my oldest son, sister, and I spent a lot of time working with my mother. Helping her to understand the business section of the Washington Post. Watching the market, finding ways to invest my mother's and my father's rather, income. And so we started ,very [00:07:00] early, my parents made an effort to identify where our talents were and if we didn't have those talents to build them, and we were interested in how the world works.

You know, my mother and father would always remind us that money had no nationality, that we simply had the dollar because we needed to identify as an American dollar. But beyond that, all it took was love, lots of labor and longterm planning. And I heard that constantly. Love, labor and long-term planning.

And so we were in the business of longterm planning and, that gave me the independence, the self-confidence, the sense of value in our family, that I think makes you strong, makes you resilient. And I didn't think of it being any problem at all, growing up in a segregated community, because there was so much love and care.

When I first went to when I left that community, so to speak [00:08:00] and, and went to an, I won't name the university, but I was on a campus that someone called me a name and I thought they had mispronounced my name. And so I turned to correct them. And that was sort of my first introduction to the harshness and the brutality of racism and segregation.

**Michael:** How old were you then?

**Joyce:** 16. I graduated at the age of 16. I was probably on the campus at 16 or 17, and I was really crushed by that and, you know, talked to my dad about it. Of course, he found a way to, to comfort me and to move me beyond that and continue to talk about our history and our greatness now, and the fact that we had all of this love and care.

And so I think that kind of cohesiveness that loud, that richness in my community made a difference. My father also was one who believed in sacrificing and [00:09:00] giving. And I remember I was probably seven or eight years old, and I got very upset because he would bring home these bushels of fruit and, grapes and oranges, and what have you, and he would allow all of the other children in the neighborhood to take advantage of it before he allowed us to enjoy it. And I would be so upset and I would tell the children, that's my father, that's my dad. Get away from my dad. And he would look at me and say, Joyce, you have to learn to share. And, it will give you a healthier heart and he continued to say that.

And so I remembered that as I grew older and and as I realized that, being called names or being dealt with in a negative way was more their problem than mine. And so I learned to transcend all of that noise in the environment [00:10:00] and recognize that I had a purpose in life. And that purpose was to make a difference. That purpose was to make the necessary sacrifices to be resilient, to be independent, to not only recognize my own value, but leadership is also about building relationships and recognizing the value of others. And so essentially left that community, that first college. Went on to DC Teacher's college, which was on Howard's campus. Got in a little trouble on Howard's campus in terms of student demonstrations and what have you.

And ultimately ended up at, Atlanta University to do my graduate work and had an opportunity to be introduced to W.B. Dubois, who was the great sociologist of the period, and also to Vincent Harding, who was a well-known historian who ran the Institute for black world and was a [00:11:00] professor at Spelman.

And so again, I had the opportunity, to be introduced to the history and the richness of, of Africa. And that experience made a difference in my life. Left Atlanta university came back to Washington, DC and got involved with Howard University again, and, worked with the Carter administration on women's issues, on issues related to women's mobility and education. And, so I've always seen education as, as an opportunity to empower the community. But I also see it as an intersection with the economy. How can we use our education to make a difference in terms of the promise and prosperity of America? And so today I have six, six of us are still surviving in my family and we're still, [00:12:00] competitive with one another. We're still politically active. We're still very socially active. And I have one sister who was jailed in Mississippi. I was in Georgia marching with, with guns in my face, and trying to look brave, but scared to death. And so I have relayed all of those experiences with the students we work with in Thurgood Marshall.

I should go back to say that that after all of the nine years of education, I had the opportunity to compete for the position with the association of state universities and land grant colleges. And again, was able to carry out my passion. And that was to work with the historically black public colleges.

So sort of underground, I created the Thurgood Marshall college fund as a result of making telephone calls [00:13:00] for the United Negro college fund. And for those who may not be familiar with UNCF, they represent, I believe about 38 private, historically black colleges and universities. And I was working with all of the publics, like Morgan state, Howard is one of our members as well, but it's more public than private given the federal dollars they received, but I was making telephone calls for UNCF and didn't realize that those funds were not going to my Alma mater and seized that opportunity to create the Merit scholarship program. Did some research on how African-Americans were spending their dollars during those years and identified three companies that I would target to present the idea of a Merit scholarship program.

Made some contacts with South Carolina State that had a very close relationship with Miller Brewing company and [00:14:00] got their vice president involved, made a pitch to Miller Brewing company. And one of the vice presidents, who was an African-American, was very impressed with the opportunity and introduced us to David Stern at the NBA, and we were off and running. We got our first half million dollars from Miller Brewing company and Philip Morris. They set us up next door to the Jackie Robinson foundation on Park Avenue. So you can't go wrong with an office on Park Avenue. Very impressive. We pulled together a group of individuals to work on creating the organizational structure.

So that was sort of it the first 10 years. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention that during that period, my president of the association was unaware that I was working on this scholarship program. So when they found out they were not very pleased, but when I [00:15:00] put that half million dollars into their bank account the tone changed. So I worked on that for about a year before they realized what had happened and it gave them an opportunity to talk about their commitment to diversity and celebrated it. Anyway, I'm going on and on but the PR company with Miller, they helped us market the program and they did all of the branding for us, set up opportunities to make presentations to other corporations and ended up saying to me, Joyce, do you think you can deliver either Barbara Jordan or Thurgood Marshall to use their names? And of course I was really, you know, taken aback by that. That's a very daunting responsibility. And they did some research and found that Thurgood Marshall's name resonated much more than Barbara Jordan, even though she had a very powerful voice, I think, either one would have been [00:16:00] absolutely wonderful, but of course, Thurgood Marshall went to Lincoln University, went to Howard university for law school and you may know the story. He was unable to get into the University of Maryland. And so, I was able to cultivate a relationship with a colleague and a civil rights friend of his, and he intervened on my behalf and got me an audience with Thurgood Marshall.

I prepared this voluminous document to convince him that we needed his name. And I must've had maybe five minutes with him and he said, I don't want to hear all of that. Just tell me what you want. So I never got an opportunity to present my research and, ended up with one page and maybe two sentences. And it was Thurgood Marshall that said, I will allow you to use my name, to create the Thurgood Marshall college fund or to create a merit scholarship program. We didn't have the name at that point. And I [00:17:00] sort of skipped down the Supreme court steps, knowing that I was going to be able to put a dent in the universe as a result of getting his support.

**Michael:** So you met him at the Supreme court. So what was it like, what was he like? You only met him for five minutes, but what would he, what was he like?

**Joyce:** A little cantankerous, sort of, dismissive. Let's do this and, you know, move on and not very open in terms of dialogue. I did ask him at the time while I was there, would he be willing to come to the gala that we were going to use to announce the fund, and he said no. Without any background, he just said, no, not doing that. And that was it. So we were off and running at that point, we had our first dinner to announce the program. And one of the biggest snow storms in, in history of Washington and [00:18:00] my daughter and friends of hers managed the dinner for me. I think we had about 800 people there. We had Charles Dutton who was our master of ceremony.

And there's a story behind that, I met or was introduced to Charles Dutton after giving a speech in a prison in Baltimore. And one of the inmates said to me, you mentioned that you are having this dinner and you're looking for someone to serve as the master of ceremony. And I said, yes. He said, Charles Dutton is a good friend of mine. I'll introduce you to him. And of course I wasn't very impressed. I said, Oh, fine, fine. That's good. I said, have him call me, call my office and didn't think any more about it. The next morning I walked in the office and my secretary said, Charles Dutton is on the telephone for you. And at that time. I don't remember the show, but he had some television show [00:19:00] and he was a well-known name.

And so you, you can't dismiss people, I guess that's my point. You never know where you're going to get great information, contacts and how people will change your change your life. And so we had a wonderful dinner. We raised about another half million dollars, and that was the first 10 years. The second 10 years we spent most of our time fundraising and building the organization. We had our second executive director or president in, let me see 2007. And now we have a third president who is the first one to serve in terms of a president of the university. We've never had a president of a university we've always had corporate types and he's taking it to a whole new level. And so it's been a wonderful 33 years, Michael.

**Michael:** Wow 33 years. So let's take [00:20:00] this apart a little bit. I did some research on the Thurgood Marshall college fund. And I'm very interested in mission statements and vision statements. And I read that the mission statement is to ensure student success by promoting educational excellence and preparing the next generation of workforce talent through leadership development. The vision statement, much more general: Changing the world one leader at a time. So tell us a little bit about the specific work of the Thurgood Marshall College fund.

**Joyce:** We have our overall vision is to produce students who are ready for the world, who are world ready. To not simply produce students who come out with credentials, they have all of the right academic, boxes checked, but they don't have that, that social box checked.

They don't have that commitment to the [00:21:00] promise and prosperity of this nation checked. They don't have that, that drive to change the world. And so I don't think, and, and I'm sure that many of us associated with the fund feel the same way. I don't think it does us much in terms of serving as a multiplier to simply produce students who have the credentials and don't have the passion, don't have the sense of value. Again, don't understand the cultures of the Asian culture or the African culture, and don't understand the cultures is across this enterprise. You know, I grew up in the city of Washington DC. And now I live in North Carolina and it's a very different place to be, a wonderful place, but, you know, I have myself open to opportunities to learn new foods, new music, new gospel [00:22:00] songs in the churches that I attend, and also a different quality of life. It's much slower. It's much more deliberate in terms of, relationships. You have to be careful about mentioning names because there are only 90,000 people in this middle city and they all seem to know each other, but that's been very valuable for me. So we want to produce students who understand the world who are culturally flexible.

Who are culturally competent, who also have the language skills and want to not only get a job with Colony or with Boeing, but also will get that job and make a difference and have the grit and the persistence and the fortitude and the attitude to make a difference. And so those are the kinds of students we're looking for.

We have an acquisition, talent acquisition program. We bring students to [00:23:00] Washington. We used to be in New York we're now in DC. We bring about 500 students in annually and we put them through an intensive one week of professional development. And we say, you arrive as a student, you leave as a professional.

And so we're very big on talent acquisition. We now say that Thurgood Marshall pays off. It's the place where it can make a difference in terms of your career. So we have the talent acquisition program. We put a lot of emphasis on leadership development. We work with Gala to use their strength finders so that we know where the strengths are. As opposed to concentrating on C's and D's, we kind of, we try to concentrate on the A's and build on those A's. We also have an entrepreneurial program. We connect the students who are in technology with our business students, so that they can find some synergy. We know [00:24:00] that whether you are working in the banking industry or working for Walmart or, Boeing, you're going to need the technology skills and understanding of how it works. So we have a multitude of programs, but all of those program's underlining factor. Is leadership development.

**Michael:** Are you involved in advocacy as well?

**Joyce:** Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. We have a staff of government affairs, a staff of about four individuals not only work at the national level, but also at the state level in helping our universities increase their budgets and helping our universities contribute to the local economies. Our state legislators, in many cases, they are not only interested in what are you doing for the students you're serving, but also what are you doing to contribute to the economy? And so we want our universities to serve as an adjunct to the [00:25:00] economy of Louisiana, to help them clean up the environment in that area, or as an adjunct to the state of Mississippi, to help them with their agriculture industry.

So education is much broader than, again, simply the academic part. We concentrate on research, education and public service, especially the land grant institutions. Those are the institutions that have strong extension and outreach programs.

**Michael:** Where does your funding come from?

**Joyce:** We are funded solely by the private industry and we also receive funds from federal grants but most of those funds are on behalf of all universities. And we do a lot of flow-through in terms of support. We advocate for student financial aid. We advocate for greater research. We have several universities that are R2 research institutions.

We're trying to move those to R1 [00:26:00] institutions. Like the North Carolina state university is one of, they R2 universities. They're doing phenomenal research on agriculture issues, on water quality, on what's the latest, it's aquaponics and hydroponics. And and so we'd want to provide even more support for them to not only provide that for the state of North Carolina, but to provide the research and the models for that throughout the country and in the world community. And so we get our funding from corporations like Colony. I think it's very important to develop these relationships with major corporations and businesses.

And if you look at our board of directors, you will see that we have 22 corporate leaders from Boeing, Walmart, Costco, and [00:27:00] a number of law firms, and also, five of our board members represent the financial industry.

**Michael:** Wow! So you've got a total of 22 board members?.

**Joyce:** We have a total of 25 board members 3 of us are non-voting. I am a non-voting member of the board, the president. And we also had one of our board members who served as the board chairman sometime ago with Miller Brewing company.

**Michael:** Yeah, sure. That's common for the founder to serve on the board for several years and ultimately just become a, you know, sort of a guiding force for the organization.

**Joyce:** I try to stay in my lane, but I, I also try to give them the benefit of our history. I think it's so important, especially when we look at where we were 33 years ago and where we are now, this has been a phenomenal year for us. It has probably been the best year we've ever had in spite of COVID. And so as we fight the dual pandemics of COVID [00:28:00] and social injustice, we have, have been able to penetrate a number of new corporations, bring on new partners and also, expand our reach, our global reach and celebrate the work of Thurgood Marshall. As you know, being the civil rights attorney he was, social justice was high on his agenda.

So we recently announced the creation of a center for social justice that was named after me. So I was very pleased and proud of that. We're very excited and we're in the process of raising funds for that center.

And it will basically be a research center using the scholars on our campus, convenient thought leaders throughout the country from legacy organizations and from, you know, major corporations to come together to see what we can do to make a difference.

**Michael:** Do you sometimes sit back and reflect on exactly how big this got and does this surprise you at [00:29:00] how successful it's been?

**Joyce:** Well, it doesn't surprise me I have always viewed this as, as an opportunity to be bold and to do great things. The response this year has been surprising, especially given the fact that we are dealing with so many challenges. And so I have been surprised in 2021, at the extent to which we've been able to get into the C-suites and, and to talk about, you know, the growth and development of the fund.

And, and we're also doing much more without universities this year. And in spite of the challenges they're facing, I told someone the other day that. They were saying, well, I guess some of your universities will be closing. I said, no, I don't think so. I said, these presidents are very resilient. They are accustomed to using limited resources to make a difference.

And so dealing with limited resources it's not new, it's not new for [00:30:00] Thurgood Marshall and it's not new for our university. So we find a way, but I, I can only say Michael, that I'm just extraordinarily pleased that we have grown. And I think it's because we have a tight organization. We have the respect of the community. Our financial management has been superb. We can stand up to any nonprofit organization and we run it like a business. We are also very data-driven. Our decisions are not just inspirational and aspirational. We try to look at what's going on in the world and where can we do our best work? And that's why I was so excited about talking with you. We have a very limited number of students who are in the investment market and the investment industry and the financial industry. And I think we need to do a better job at introducing them to all of the opportunities that are available.

**Michael:** I'm looking forward to that as well [00:31:00] joyce. As you point out there have been two pandemics and we see it that way as well at the Colony Group and, yeah, I'm very much looking forward to learning about ways that we could potentially partner with you as well. I will tell you the financial services industry. It is in my opinion, one of the least diverse industries, of the major industries out there. And there are many exceptions and I am always hesitant to make generalizations, but it's an area that, that needs to do better in terms of its approach to diversity generally.

**Joyce:** Well, you know, the fact is we are, we're going to continue to struggle with that issue for awhile, but I'm impressed with the reality that we're facing. We're at an inflection point right now. And I think that's making a difference.

**Michael:** Yeah. I think a lot about what it is that makes people like you, like you. What it is that makes certain people achieve such phenomenal things in their lives and make [00:32:00] them what I call extraordinary. One of those things is I see a current of optimism among many of the people that I speak with. And you said, this is no time for business as usual. The relentless pandemics of the virus and social injustice have created a firestorm across the world and widened cracks in the very foundation of democracy. We must envision a new bold narrative that challenges regressive social policies and undermines globalism as a deterrent to international engagement. One that is more diverse, equitable, and inclusive than before. My question for you is, are you an optimist?

**Joyce:** Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I wouldn't be in this business if I wasn't and I certainly wouldn't be in North Carolina where, I might say that, you know, we have some people who are still fighting the Civil War in North Carolina and I have to approach that very diplomatically, but I am definitely an optimist.

I think optimism is again about leadership. I think [00:33:00] it was, Thomas Freely in one of his books that I read said it's not about, you know, fear, it's about understanding.

It's about knowing the environment in which you are living. And so I think the more you understand that environment, the more you dissect that environment, the more you cultivate relationships with people of like-minds people of unlike minds, folks who are generationally different, ethnically, racially different, you grow. And so I'm optimistic that segregated DC that I grew up in, no longer will no longer exist and for my grandchildren and for their children. And I think the only way we can do that is to bring together people of like minds. Marilyn Ferguson, wrote the Aquarian Conspiracy. It's an old book. It's probably not in print any longer. And I think it was put out in about 1980, but when I read that [00:34:00] book about becoming the revolutionary of one, that you can change with simply changing a policy, tweaking a policy, changing the narrative. The one page that I received from Thurgood Marshall represented that optimism. I was a little intimidated knowing I would meet him, but at the same time, you know, I know that he's a man that he has gone through the struggles like my father and my father's father. And that is the only way I could find out is to meet him and make the pitch and take my chances.

And so I believe in taking risks. I believe in pushing that envelope as far as we possibly can. And seeing what's behind, behind the closed door, you know, I told some women recently, they were talking about, we need a seat at the table. And one of them mentioned, Shirley Chisholm. Because Shirley said, bring a folding chair if you don't have a place at the table, [00:35:00] my position is build the damn table.

Don't table yourself. You decide who gets at the table. One of my other beliefs is that you, you got to put the sweat in early in your life so that you, you won't bleed through the battle. It takes a lot of sweat in the beginning, but it pays off in the end.

**Michael:** So you mentioned women and you have been an academic in terms of women's rights and advocating for women as well. Is that part of your work with Thurgood Marshall college fund or is that separate from your advocacy with TMCF? ,

**Joyce:** Well no, I sort of thread that into many of the initiatives we're working on. For example, we are very concerned about the, I was talking about it earlier, the 23 million women who are not 23 million, I think it's 2.3 million, but [00:36:00] it's still too many women out of the workforce. We're all so concerned about the absence of African-American teachers in the classrooms of America. We have here in North Carolina, I think about 80% of the student body are students of color. And 80% of the teaching staff is non teachers of color. And we know that there's some major problems in that arena when you look at academic development and, the large number of students who are pushed out of the classroom or pushed out in school.

And so I continue to work on those issues. The issue of women, I don't think can be separated from the issue of economic development. I think we, in many cases, the drivers of the economy and if we have more women in leadership positions, I think we can, can also see a change in policies much more sustainable human centered policies.

I believe in that strongly. And [00:37:00] I think the fact that we are mothers, that we bring a different sensibility to the question of development of a human development and the human condition. And so I do believe that we need more women on boards of directors. We meet need more women in Congress and the Senate and ultimately in the White House.

**Michael:** Well we may see that soon. We'll see. So, and speaking of the White House, I think our listeners probably would be interested to hear a little bit about your work under the Carter administration. So any stories you can, you can share, or maybe just tell us what that was like.



**Joyce:** Well, I must say that, Carter was probably the most, humane, the most caring person I have ever met in a leadership position. And I was so destroyed when he was not reelected. You know, I thought he understood the issues very well. He may have [00:38:00] been too thoughtful, too careful, too vulnerable for the competitive environment he was operating under the politically competitive environment, but he met with the council on several occasions. Was always very concerned and I was always impressed that Rosalyn was sitting next to him and she had an opportunity to voice her opinion and he seemed to be the kind of person that encouraged input.

So we would have dialogue about where women are today and, and where they needed to be. What were some of the challenges that families were facing and how the white house could play a much more major role in helping families survive and helping families to thrive. So I would simply say that I was just very impressed with his outreach and visibility to sort of mobilize women and hear their voices and [00:39:00] to respond to those in a very strategic way. He was from my vantage point, one of the greatest presidents in this country.

**Michael:** Do you have allies right now in the government that you work with regularly?

**Joyce:** So we're working with all of the senators, congressmen, and especially those committees that have to do with education. And so we're working across the board. We recently had our presidents come to Washington to meet with the leadership, and we do that annually so that we can have the walkthroughs and the conversations about grants and student loans. We're very concerned about the student debt. And fortunately our universities are very reasonable but we still have a large number of students, especially students who are working on their doctorates, or in law school or in medical school, the mounting debt is just unreasonable.

So we've been working on those issues. And as I said earlier, we're also working on trying to get [00:40:00] more of our universities into the research agreement, especially for emerging technologies. And you mentioned that the lack of diversity in the financial industry, but the lack of diversity is pretty much the same across the board, Michael, especially in science, technology, engineering, and agriculture.

**Michael:** You certainly would know better than I would so I absolutely take your word for that. I will tell you, I'm also a lawyer I don't practice anymore. I believe that the legal industry has done a better job with diversity. I look at progress that's been made there, and I don't see it as much in other places.

**Joyce:** Well in some areas, of course, you know, we have law schools within our membership and they're doing a great job. And we're working with a gentleman out of Raleigh trying to get more patent attorneys, more black patent attorneys. And so my point is, is that we have to work on diversity and inclusion in every sector of this [00:41:00] economy. And, it's really about opportunity. You know, we, we don't want to get into the whole notion of quotas and numbers and what have you, but we know that we have a bank of talented students out there or ready to make a contribution to the nation or contribution to these corporations.

And I think given the opportunity, we have seen that these, these companies are very pleased. We're very selective about the students. They understand the challenges they're going to be facing. We try to prepare them for the soft skills they need to navigate the industry. And and that the quote that you mentioned earlier that's a statement that I made. I served on the board of CulturalVistas ,and CulturalVistas in the international arena and working on trying to get more African-Americans in in international studies.

**Michael:** I was aware that you got appointed to that board, I believe in 2019. Is that correct?

**Joyce:** Yes, that's correct.

**Michael:** Yeah, I'd read that. And you do make a lot of statements [00:42:00] about globalism and the need to have a more international approach to some of these problems. Maybe speak to that a little bit.

**Joyce:** Well, we not only an international and global view and, you know, I think our community or any community, the States whether we are talking about Canada. The US, we don't live in isolation. We are in a global community, whether we like it or not, and it's unavoidable. And so I think it's very important to, to meet with the scholars in China, to meet with the scholars in Taiwan, as we have done in Singapore, we have learned that some of the technology they're using in their research institutions is far more progressive than what we have found in some of ours.

And so I think it's very important to have that dialogue. I was very impressed with some of the universities in China. They are not only working with government, but in planning their future, they have government and industry at the table planning collectively [00:43:00] about the future of the universities, about the labor force in Shanghai and how those three sectors can work together to contribute to the labor force and to the economic development of that area.

I'm not sure we're doing enough of that. In some of the States we do have in Louisiana, at Southern university, in Baton Rouge, they're working with their economic development state representatives to try to make a difference, but in many of the States, we simply aren't doing enough of it. So I think it's, it's important that we have those international connections that we build on those not only for national security, for economic development, and so that our children understand how the world works and have a greater appreciation again for cultural differences. And so those experiences have really shaped me in a way that has made a difference.

I spent a lot of time in Africa, [00:44:00] in my early career, and really wanted to retire in Senegal is one of my favorite places and had an opportunity to spend some time on, at their fine universities spend some time with the Andrew Young foundation in Kenya and had again, an opportunity to see all of the work that they're doing around aquaponics. And so, you know, we can share those resources, share the experiences and do more bilateral exchanges for faculty and our students, so they can have that experience. I like what you talked about, Michael, and the piece you wrote about cultural abundance.

**Michael:** Wow. Im impressed.

**Joyce:** And I sort of took that terminology to apply to our international interests. That's what we're looking for and different kinds of, you know, approach to it because you're talking about not only people [00:45:00] being abundantly privileged, but never stopping to want even more to strive for greater wealth and greater privilege, but at the same time, missing an opportunity to appreciate what you already had.

But for me, when I thought about cultural abundance, that's what we want our students to do. We want them to take advantage of the cultural differences and somehow factor that into your, into your life. And that's why I'm so pleased to be on CulturalVistas' board of directors.

**Michael:** That's great! So I want to do a few rapid fire questions with you now I do this typically at the end of these podcasts. It's an opportunity for us to get some more learning from you in a pretty efficient way. I actually got called out a little bit last time. I had the privilege of interviewing, Dan Jansen and Bonnie Blair, and I asked them what have been their biggest mistakes and this was another learning for me and [00:46:00] that what I discovered was extraordinary people often don't see anything as a mistake. They just see things as learning opportunities. And it sounds like you agree with that. So I stand, I stand corrected and I'm now saying, what have been your biggest mistakes or learning opportunities?

**Joyce:** Oh, my biggest mistake was, was not, taking advantage of an opportunity to go into the financial industry. That was my biggest mistake.

**Michael:** Are you serious?

**Joyce:** I am serious. Very serious.

**Michael:** I have to hear more about that.

**Joyce:** I would not have gone into education. I definitely would have gone into the financial market. Matter of fact, I was interviewed for a superintendency years ago and I didn't get the job because I said the number one goal that I have on my agenda is to teach black [00:47:00] children, economics, and financial services. What the financial services market is about. Teach them, how money is transmitted all over the world. They need to understand that. And I think they have a better understanding of that. They will have greater control over their own destiny. And so that's the one mistake I made.

**Michael:** Interesting. I would not have expected you to say something like that, you know, don't you, well, this is, I don't want to lead you, but I'm going to say, don't you sometimes feel like the universe brought you in a different direction for a reason though? I mean that you may see that as a lost opportunity and yet look what you've done. You've changed the whole world and maybe things happen for a reason.

**Joyce:** Michael, I, and I shared this with Mark sometimes I think that every black family needs to have a medical physician, a financial advisor and a minister. [00:48:00] And that minister needs to be about liberation theology, not just the cookie cutter type that we see every day. But someone who understands that your spirituality is important to your uplifting, to your values. And so I think those factors are very important and I'm not sure where I was going with this.

**Michael:** Well, I completely understand that you've actually clarified that for me. I get it now, you would have changed the world in a different way, had you, yes, I think I understand that now.

**Joyce:** Yeah but I also, I also take the position that I am rich with opportunities. I mean, when I see these students, when I get an opportunity to spend time with them, I am so fulfilled. I go back to what I said earlier about my dad. My heart is very healthy and my head is even healthier, because I have seen their growth and their development. And it goes [00:49:00] back to what I talked about earlier in terms of leadership. Leadership is about building those relationships across the board. And so I had built relationships with thousands of students. Some are working in Singapore today. Some have started an agricultural industry in China that I met when I was there. One is thinking about running for the governorship in the state of South Carolina. Don't think it will be anytime soon, but to see them, it's, it's very rewarding.

**Michael:** What are you most proud of?

**Joyce:** The Thurgood Marshall Fund.

**Michael:** Did your parents get to see you found the Thurgood Marshall college fund?

**Joyce:** Absolutely. Absolutely. My father didn't but my mother did. My father simply wanted me to come home and get a good government job and stop messing around in college because I was there for nine years. He said, Joyce, you never wanted to work and work hard. [00:50:00] And so you need to come home and do like your, your sister and simply get a good job and work like that. But my mother understood the long range, the longterm. Thats back to the money issue of labor, love, and long-term

**Michael:** You've certainly talked about your parents as, as I would describe as, in addition to all the other roles they played as mentors for you. Other than your parents, who is your greatest mentor?

And that means, taking good care of your body, taking good care of yourself, because that feeds into everything else. Who are the other members of that, that you got to work with of that group?

**Joyce:** My daughter

**Michael:** Your daughter, good answer, explain that a little bit.

**Joyce:** My daughter, she is deeply spiritual. She is the most loving person I have ever met. She corrects me periodically when I find a fault, she transfers that into something good and wonderful. And she has been that way since she came into this world.

And so she keeps me focused and balanced. I mean, she's the one who I had mentioned earlier, at the first dinner, when I didn't have staff, [00:51:00] that she said, don't worry about it mom, I'll take care of it. She pulls the formal dinner together, had 800 people there. Had all of the right speakers and just took it over.

So I would put all of my faith in her. And of course, you know, I must say that that now that Mark has come into my life and we are sharing our families, it's making a huge difference in both of our lives. Thanks to Colony for Mark.

**Michael:** I appreciate the kind words. And so is there any, you've done everything, but is there anything next for you in terms of your future?

**Joyce:** Next is for me to make a transition off of the board of directors of Thurgood Marshall in the next two or three years and have more playtime, that's the next, and I'm also working on the center for social justice. And so that's my concentration for the next two, three years. To build that center, to give it a solid [00:52:00] foundation and to bring in the kind of leadership we're working on some, some icons to head up the advisory committee for the center and Mark and I are also working with the Gambia Academy of music. In The Gambia a young lady by the name of Sona has created a school for performing arts there. And we're spending some time trying to help them get their school off the ground. And we're also working with the university of Rochester to build some relationships between our universities and the university around research.

**Michael:** So this is a, a broad question to ask someone, and you could argue that the answer is obvious, but I'd love to hear your answer. What will be your legacy?

**Joyce:** My legacy will be that I changed the lives of thousands of students and created opportunity. Simply open new doors of opportunity, a new generation of [00:53:00] talent and leadership.

**Michael:** One of my favorite books, I'm a, I'm a big fantasy fan and I love the Lord of the rings and there's a great quote from Lord of the rings. And it's attributed to to this Elvish queen and the quote is even the smallest person can change the course of the future. And not that you're small. But, but I think that you, you probably fit very nicely into that.

**Joyce:** Well, that's, that's my Marilyn Ferguson quote, as I mentioned earlier, Marilyn is saying that no matter where you are in life, no matter where you are in terms of your stage in life, wealthy, not wealthy. You can change the world with a little tweak. You can always be the multiplier. And so I'm the multiplier.

**Michael:** Three more, really quick questions. And these are truly meant to be rapid fire. What single habit technique or tip would you offer that has helped you be your most extraordinary [00:54:00] self?

**Joyce:** Exercise.

**Michael:** Good answer. I'm with you on that one. Do you have a personal mission?

**Joyce:** To remain healthy, healthy, and happy?

**Michael:** They definitely go hand in hand. What's the best advice you've ever given to or receive from someone else?

**Joyce:** The best advice was to create the impossible and exceed it.

**Michael:** You certainly did that. Well, it's been such a pleasure to talk to you Joyce, and to learn about your life's work and you really have made a big difference in the world and I thank you for that. And I'm looking forward to learning more in further conversations with you and, do you have any parting words?

**Joyce:** The parting words is that I hope that you will live up to that inspirational officer. I am so impressed with that. It's probably more important than your CEO and your executive, whatever the lovely titles [00:55:00] are. I think the fact that you are in a position to inspire others and to build relationships across the enterprise. Colony can be the model for the financial industry that we talked about earlier, Michael. So I applaud you for taking this opportunity to highlight black colleges and Thurgood Marshall, I think it says volumes again.

**Michael:** I'll just say on that word about inspiration. I think that a leader's role is to enable others, it's to make sure that others have the opportunities that they need, that they have all the tools that they need to do their best in the world. And then to flood them with inspiration because the inspiration can ultimately be the energy that they use to do their best work.

**Joyce:** Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Michael:** Ladies and gentlemen, that is the extraordinary Joyce Payne and thank you to our sponsor, the Colony Group. The Colony Group is a national wealth and [00:56:00] business management company with 15 offices across the country. That itself seeks the extraordinary as it pursues its unrelenting mission of providing clients with peace of mind and into powering their visions of tomorrow. To learn more about the Colony Group and how it manages beyond money visit [www.thecolonygroup.com](http://www.thecolonygroup.com).

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