

- Boom! That's what I'm talking about. Tez Bryant. All day y'all. All day.

- (laughs) You're crazy man.

- Hey, y'all, Dhani Jones here with Stand Together. Check out this extended conversation with music mogul Tez Bryant where he talks about his mother, keeping it real, the friend he met on the first day of band camp, and the person who taught him the principles of life. What's amazing about Believe In People the Series is that we want to be able to celebrate those that have been inspirations in your life.

- My mama didn't play, man, you know.

- Don't talk about the switch. Don't talk about the switch (laughs).

- She didn't play. She had me when she was 16, so we kind of grew up together. And she always kept it real with me. I found out she was making \$18,000 a year bro. I told my mom, You, you, you supported me enough to help me get to this point where I earned this marching band scholarship. I got out of the city, I got out of the hood. I'm gonna go figure it out. And that's been my goal man, and the first time I was able to and stable enough to, to retire her, I retired her like years ago. I was able to come back around and now we'll be able to say, "You're really good now."

- You made that transition, you read that W-2, you put that number down and now you're all of a sudden at Jackson State.

- Going through the process of, of being a freshman in a HBCU band was definitely tough you know.

- Mm-hmm.

- So that wasn't no joke. That's not no joke. Like if you watched Drumline, it's probably times 15 what you saw on the movie.

- So you got your mom, was there anybody else at Jackson State?

- Dr. Lewis Liddell, the band director at Jackson State university. He's the father of that family, the Sonic Boom in The South, that's the name of my band, he's the head, he's the head of the family. He's the one who, believed in me, gave me a scholarship. You know, my best friend right now, I met first day of band camp and we're still best friends to this day. First day in the hallway, he come up to me like, "Where are you from? Where are you from, bruh? You from Jamaica or something?" 'Cause I had a heavy New Orleans accent. And I just took those things I learned in that marching band, those principles of discipline, leadership, being a great listener. As a manager, I had to form relationships, you know.

- Mm-hmm.

- It worked for me in my first years in the business to grow Wayne's brand and become a superstar like he was, and this is all started from the concept of mixtape right in those conversations, in that dorm room with my best friend Jerome.

- Wow.

- This is the dot connector, all of this success, that's what we got. I didn't know anything about the music business. All I knew was, mixtapes work. And I appreciate all the tokens that they instilled into me-

- Mm-hmm (affirmative).

- From my mother, to my best friend, you know, who may not know the rock that he's been as a friend throughout this entire journey and, and, and even to Doc Liddell to step in and really be, you know, instill in me so many valuable principles of life.

- What's been amazing about your journey is that, you know, that business that you're in is the business of teaching people, right?

- It's in my spirit, it's on my heart. That's why I'm going back to teaching college. I'm trying to pour that into my son, and hopefully, you know, uh, take him on a path where he don't have to bump his head, the places I bumped my head, right. And I think that's what life is about. You figure out your path, you figure out your purpose, you work hard at it, you do it. Pay it forward 'cause it's gonna continue and as much as you give I feel like you receive. I'm a witness of that. I'm a firm believer in that. And I think that will be me for the rest of my life.

- At Stand Together, we know that a deep belief in people has the power to change the world by unleashing every person's unique gifts. Check out the rest of Believing in People's series at StandTogether.org/BelieveInPeople.