

# 011 You Don't Need a White Man to Get Ahead



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With Your Host

**Rachel Rodgers**

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## 011 You Don't Need a White Man to Get Ahead

When I became a lawyer, I was looking at law firms that were offering me jobs, different communities, different companies, different organizations that I could work at as an attorney. And I found that they were all lacking women, they were all lacking people of color, and definitely all lacking women and people of color in the higher authoritative positions.

And so, what I found is, listen, I do not want to be in an environment where an old white man is going to tell me what to do. And literally, this was my motivation to become an entrepreneur.

Welcome to *The Million Dollar Badass Podcast*. I'm your host, Rachel Rodgers, wife, mother to four children, lover of Beyoncé, coffee drinker, and afro wearer, and I just happen to be the CEO of a seven-figure business. I am on a mission to help every woman I meet become a millionaire. If you want to make more money, you are in the right place. Let's get it going.

Okay, people, I really want to talk to you today about a very important topic. I'm calling this episode You Don't Need a White Man to Get Ahead. And I think that as women, and especially as women of color, we need to talk about this, because I see it in the online business world, and of course, outside of the online business world. We need to talk about how we are still relying on white men to choose us so that we can reach the levels of success that we want to reach.

I want to start talking about this topic with a story from my college years. I'm 37 years old, so I graduated from college about 15 years ago. And when I was in college, I took a Women in Leadership course. I was super excited. I pretty much took every course in college that had the word women in it; women in literature, et cetera.

So, my women in leadership class was taught by a white woman. She was an attorney, and she was an adjunct professor, so she wasn't a regular

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professor. And we were studying this book – I wish I could find it. I couldn't find the syllabus. I actually went digging for it for this class because I really wanted to share the book, but I cannot remember what it was.

But we were taking the lessons each week from this book. And one of the lessons was, one of the chapters was about that we need white men to be our allies, to choose us, and open doors for us; that every woman, whether you are a woman of color or you are a white woman, you need to find a white man to be your ally and your champion, to advocate for you in the workplace for your career and open doors for you, and that is how we, as woman, will get ahead.

Okay, so that's one of the things that I learned when I was in college. And I want to talk about this concept because I have concerns. I have concerns for us as women entrepreneurs, I have concerns for us as women who are working on gaining wealth, even within a corporate environment. I think we really need to rethink this strategy of, "I need a white man on my side," because I call bullshit. I don't think we need white men. And I think the thought that you need white men is damaging and automatically requires you to play small.

It automatically requires you to sort of dumb down a little bit and make yourself palatable to whatever white male ally you are looking for. And the bottom line is that there are studies and stats that show that we choose people who are similar to us. And so white men are going to continue to choose other white men over us. They're going to continue to open doors for other white men before they open a door for a black woman or a white woman. And they're definitely going to open that door for a white woman before they open that door for a black woman or a Hispanic woman or an Asian woman. And that's just the bottom line.

The perfect example of this is if you look at venture capital. In the venture capital world, literally only 8% of all venture capitalists are women. Most of

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these firms do not have a woman on their team, on their investing team. So there are no women who are involved, or very few women. And as a result, only 2% of female founders get funded.

So, essentially, what does that mean? That means of all the millions and billions of dollars that were invested in startups, in 2017 is the most recent stat that I could find, in all of the startups that were invested in, millions and billions of dollars, 90% of that money went to men. And most of those men are white men. And I don't have the number on that, but I can guarantee you, it's in the 90s.

So white men are funding white men, white men are choosing white men, and that's what they're going to continue to do. So waiting for them to choose you is a complete waste of your time. And I know some of the women of color listening are probably thinking, you know, "Tell me something I don't know." And I agree with that, but I also want to point out to you a place where I have just woken up to how I was still relying on white men in some ways. So, we may be doing this as a habit and not even realize it, so that's why I wanted to talk about it, that's why I wanted to do a podcast episode on this topic.

So, I want to share a story; a story that I have experienced recently. And this is the reason why I sort of woke up. Okay, so here's the reality – and actually, before I even get into that, let's talk about this story. Let me tell you this story. So, I had a mentor, somebody who I considered a mentor, somebody who I hired to coach me several years ago, probably like four years ago now, who became a friend. And I was essentially the star student in that coaching program, as I often am, because I do the work because I want results.

And so I developed a good relationship with him. I went to an event. We found ourselves at several conferences at the same time. And I saw him as somebody who was opening doors for me, and mainly one door.

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He opened mainly one door to a special event and community of very high-level entrepreneurs; so where the smallest business is a million-dollar business. Most of the entrepreneurs that are there were running multi-million-dollar businesses and some names that I could drop that you would recognize immediately; New York Times Bestselling Authors, just well-known founders of big startups are part of this particular community that I was accepted into on the word of this particular mentor.

And so I was grateful to him for that. And I joined the community, and of course, I was the only black woman in that community – or actually, no, I'm sorry, that's not true, there was one other one, one other woman. And can I just be honest – in this community, you know, of the two black women in the community, we were both biracial. So I'm not saying it's black-women-light, but I guess, in a way, it kind of is. There's not even a 100% black woman in the room, and no black men, literally zero. And in terms of people of color, there were probably seven out of 150, if that, and most of them were Indian men, you know, which is like diversity-light. I will say that that is diversity-light.

So this is a community that I became a part of. And did I get valuable advice in that community? I did. Was I very frustrated about how there were no women speakers, there were no women elevated in that world, there were very few women that were even in the room as part of that community? And then, of course, there was all of the micro-aggressions that you would imagine would be in a community that was homogenous with mostly white men, a couple of white women, and very, very few people of color and almost no women of color.

So that's the community I was a part of. And this is, you know, it's par for the course. Like, we accept it as, "This is the journey. I'm going to go into this community, I'm going to get what I can get, I'm going to bring it back to my women of color, I'm going to bring it back to the women that I serve." And so I saw myself almost as, I won't say a martyr because that's a little

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dramatic, but really, it's like I'm putting myself in these situations that are uncomfortable. And not just uncomfortable in that, "Oh I'm growing so I'm uncomfortable." No, it's uncomfortable in that, "You people are fucking racist and don't even realize it and you're sexist as hell and you make really fucked up comments on a regular basis. But I'm going to ignore that so I can get this little business tidbit."

And so I was in the world, and again, brought into it by a mentor. And I was a part of it for two years and I exited. And even the second year, I really had pause about returning, and at the last minute decided I would go back. And so, you know, one white male homogenous community leads to another, because this mentor opened the door to this community, and then that community opened the door to a mastermind that I was a part of.

And all of these spaces are very white and very male and very non-diverse. And you know, even if they had a little bit of diversity, they were not inclusive, meaning that there were no people of color or women that were put in positions of leadership, there were no people of color or women that were celebrated, put on the stages, you know, looked to as thought leaders, and it just wasn't made a comfortable and inclusive environment, a safe space for women of color, women in general, or people of color. That was true about all of these spaces.

And so that was my journey and I decided to end it recently. And part of the reason why I did was because this same mentor who opened doors for me also decided to be a part of a – I'll use the word he actually used. When I had a conversation, which was essentially a confrontation with him, he used the word witch-hunt.

And so basically, this community, led by this mentor who literally opened doors for me – I'm a former client of his, I was coached by him for the better part of a year and have known him for several years, have a similar circle of friends, not exactly the same because I'm hanging out with the few

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women and the few people of color mostly in those communities and he also knows them and connects with them as well in some ways. And so anyway, he decided that he didn't want me to be a part of the higher-level section of that particular mastermind, for whatever reason. And my ethics were called into question. I was told I didn't have integrity, with no evidence. It was just very vague, the reasons why I didn't have ethics and the reason why I didn't have integrity.

And what I know to be true is that I was being held to a standard that the white men in that community are not held to. And that's the thing that I want you to watch because sometimes, yes, we make mistakes as women of color, as entrepreneurs, as business owners. We all do, just like white men do when they're in business. They also make mistakes. But those mistakes are not held against them. But if we make a mistake, it is held against us.

So I just want to point out that, through no doing of my own that I am aware of – this is my perspective of the story, so take it with a grain of salt if you will. This particular mentor turned on me but continued to – like, we had lunch together, smiled in my face, never said a word to me that, behind the scenes, there was all kinds of conversation, he was talking to people saying that I lacked integrity and had no ethics.

So, forget about that story, right, like who even gives a shit? I have moved on with my life. I honestly initially was hurt and disappointed, but also, that was quickly replaced by, “Why are we surprised?” Why should we be surprised about things like this that happen, because they happen all the time. This is par for the course, as women, and especially as women of color, where we're thrown under a bus or held to a standard that our peers are not held to.

I mean, this is typical, and so it's not surprising. And who knows, let's say I did do something unethical. Let's say I did do something that lacked integrity. Even the way that it was handled was so high school and so not

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what I believe would have been done if I was a white man, maybe not what would have been done if I was a white woman. But because I'm a woman of color, it's so easy to distrust me as a woman of color.

And so, the reason I share this is because having this experience, here's what it opened my mind and my heart to. What it made me realize and what it woke me up to is that, you know, when I became a lawyer, I was looking at law firms that were offering me jobs, different communities, different companies, different organizations that I could work at as an attorney. And I found that they were all lacking women, they were all lacking people of color, and definitely all lacking women and people of color in the higher authoritative positions.

And so what I found is, listen, I do not want to be in an environment where an old white man is going to tell me what to do. And literally, this was my motivation to become an entrepreneur. That experience of, I've been told what to do and been supervised by mostly white men my entire life and my entire career thus far, and during law school, and I refuse to continue that. I'm going to do my own thing. I'm going to find another way. But what I'm not going to do is have my life and my career beholden to a group of people that historically have not shown me respect, have held me to a standard that they don't hold themselves to, withhold opportunities. I don't want to be in that environment.

I've worked very hard to become a lawyer, I've spent a lot of money to become a lawyer and I need to do it my way or I'm not fucking doing it at all. And that's kind of where I landed on that. Here's what I want to point out to you; that you may be a woman who left the accounting industry or a design agency or any number of spaces in the greater corporate America world where you didn't want to be controlled by white people or white men, and that is part of the reason why you left those spaces, to become an entrepreneur, to seek out your own wealth, to have more control and autonomy.

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But here's the thing that I want to point out to you; in the online business world, when you look for advanced business training, it is almost all provided by white men, or at least they are the ones most visible. And so we think, oh I need to join their program, I need to use this software, I need to be a part of this mastermind, I need to get in the room at this event in order to advance. So what the fuck is the difference?

Like, how is being an entrepreneur and the online business world any different from corporate America if we are still in a position where we're relying on white men to choose us, to let us in, in order to get to those next levels. I want you to think about that. I really want you to let that permeate and sink in, alright.

Let's stop leaving it up to white men to decide whether we are advancing or not. This becomes essentially no different than continuing to collect a paycheck at a law firm or an accounting firm or a consulting agency or whatever it is that you worked before where you had other people that got to decide when you would advance in your career or not. I want you to decide for yourself and I want you to stop relying on white men to choose you, because the reality is, a lot of times, they won't. They will choose each other every day before they start thinking about choosing you.

And so we need to be the authors of our own success, right? We need to choose ourselves and make it possible for ourselves. And let me address something, because this may be uncomfortable, the idea of, like, oh if I were to let go of all of my white male mentors, what would I have left? And I'm not saying they're all horrible people. This is not, to use my former mentor's phrase, a witch-hunt against white men. What it's about is empowering us as women to see the possibilities and to see what it is that we are capable of.

And the thing is, you might think that, okay, there's no woman who can teach me what this white guy can teach me. There are no women who can

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open doors that this white guy can open. And the reality is that that is not true, okay. I promise you that that is bullshit. It's just that it's a habit.

We've gotten very, very comfortable with putting white men in positions of power. And you can see it when they do big affiliate launches, when they're talking, you know, they're all on each other's podcasts. They're all supporting each other in business and putting themselves in a position of authority and we all accept that authority and say, well, that person is better than me or they're more elevated than me or they're more successful than me and I need to learn from them.

Yes, you know, we should learn from people who are more successful than us, but we need to think about what does it cost us to be in those environments, because I will tell you, it definitely cost me in ways that I didn't even realize. And I think the biggest way that it cost me is not believing in myself as much as I could, not recognizing my own power, not recognizing what I'm capable of, not recognizing that they recognize my power and that's why they try to, even if it's subconscious, even if it's not in a conscious active way. Essentially, a lot of the actions that they take will put you down and say, "No, you are less than. You can be great, but not as great as me. You can grow to this extent, but not more than that."

And it's when you try to move to that next level that you often will get shut down. And there are actually studies done that show that as women grow in their career positions, that they become less likable. Like, there's an inverse relationship between I get more and more successful and therefore I become less and less likable. That is often what happens.

And so, even somebody who was on your team, you felt for a time, may suddenly stop being on your team as you continue to grow in success. So, I'm not saying throw out all your white male friends. You don't have to do that. I have white male friends. I have white male friends who are great people and have shown me nothing but being great people so far. But I am

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choosing something different. I am choosing to opt out of getting all of my advanced business training, of getting all of my masterminding in white male spaces, because I have found that it is actually quite toxic to my being as a woman of color and as somebody who has the ability to build a 10, 20, 100-million-dollar business.

I think that those spaces, they do just as much harm as they do good. So while I may learn a lot of things, there's a lot of harm that is done by being in those spaces as well. And so, I wanted to bring that to your attention because, you know, for some of you – I may be late on this. I think there are a lot of you who already are awake to this, and mostly black women for sure have been known that these spaces are not comfortable and that these spaces are not places that we need to spend our time. But I want you to be aware of that.

And if choose to be a part of a mastermind or a coaching community or whatever, even if you choose to read the books of mostly white men, I just want you to be conscious of it as you consume that material and really just be conscious and mindful of how it can affect you. Because when we are constantly exposing ourselves to leaders and people in positions of power who are all white males, it sometimes can do damage to what we think is possible for ourselves and we make ourselves, like, smaller than them in a lot of ways.

And I don't even know all of the ways that it could possibly be affecting me, and I'm really actually excited because I have a guest coming up – actually, I'm interviewing her tomorrow – that is an expert on this kind of topic. And we'll get into it a little bit. I'm not going to tell you who she is. I'll just surprise you when that episode drops in a couple of weeks.

But the main thing that I want you to know is that you do not need a white man to get ahead. You can get ahead by yourself. And I promise you, at every level, there are women and there are women of color that are waiting

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to be mentors to you. There are women and women of color that know their shit, that will open incredible doors for you, that will teach you incredible things. We have to start looking to diversify where we're getting our information, where we're learning how to get media, where we're learning how to hire people.

Just imagine, if you learn all of your hiring strategies from white males who hire mostly white males, guess what you're going to wind up with on your team. So we really need to think through where we're getting the information that we're getting and that we're acting on. We need to think through where do these strategies come from and how do we need to – maybe we can keep those strategies, but maybe they need to be tailored to make sense for us as women and as women of color.

So, I want you to know that you are more powerful than you realize. You are capable, and you can do it for yourself. You do not need anybody else to choose you. You do not need them to open those doors for you because there are other people who are waiting to open doors for you. And there are doors that you can open yourself, okay.

So don't wait to be chosen, and really think through where you're getting your strategy and your information and what communities you're a part of and how it may be harmful to you. And just be mindful of that, okay. I'm not saying what happened to me is going to happen to you. And honestly, it's not the end of the world.

Yes, there's a whole world that I'm no longer choosing to be a part of as a result, but it's my choice. And at the end of the day, this is a blip. Like, I won't remember this in a couple of years. It really is, honestly, in the grand scheme of things, very insignificant in a lot of ways. But at the same time, the reason why I'm grateful for the experience is that it just woke me up. And I think sometimes we allow ourselves to be lulled to sleep because people smile in your face and say nice things.

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But you have to watch their actions. And if their actions show that there are very, very few women of color in their lives, women in their lives, women that they are mentoring, women whose lives they understand and actually give a shit about rather than just taking their money, then you've got to watch that and think about how, if they treat another woman shitty, I may be next, okay.

And I'm not going to share who this person is. Please don't try to guess. You probably won't be able to guess. I have not talked about this relationship very publicly at all ever, so you probably won't be able to guess, and it's completely irrelevant. That part of the story doesn't matter. What matters is how you move forward and the choices that you make and just being mindful and recognizing your own power, because I have to tell you that I promise you that right now you have white men in your life who can see the immense potential that you have and they're a little bit scared of it.

And you think, "I'm not good enough," when in reality, everybody else around you, and in particular even people in leadership positions around you see your immense potential and are probably nervous about how much potential you have when you're sitting there questioning it. So, stop questioning it. Trust your abilities. Trust what you are capable of. Know that you can do it, and frankly, you can do it on your own, okay.

A lot of times, you can go faster if you've got a mentor or somebody to help you, but sometimes, it comes with a cost and we need to really think about what is that cost and be conscious of that, whoever our mentor or coaching communities we choose are. So, I hope that this was helpful for you. I hope that this was inspiring for you.

And I want to give you homework to do. I want to give you some homework items. So, here's your homework for today. Take inventory. Ask yourself where in your life have you been waiting for a white man to choose you? I

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want you to analyze that, whether it's publishing a book deal, whether it's getting a media opportunity, whether it's getting somebody on your podcast, opening any particular door. Just think about where in your life have you been waiting for a white man to choose you.

Then two, I want you to think about what spaces are you regularly spending your time in that are not uplifting for women. It could be the coworking space that you attend, it could be a Facebook group that you are a part of. I want you to think about that and be conscious of it and make the choice that you feel is right for you.

If you feel like you want to continue to be a part of that community, I celebrate your right to choose. Make the choice that is right for you. I'm not saying that you have to remove yourself from all of these places. What I am saying is you should be mindful about, you know, the harm that could be done for you being in those spaces and not feeling celebrated as a woman; being in a space where you and who you are is not uplifted and where women are essentially put down, where you're dealing with sexist and racist comments on a regular basis, and just choosing to ignore it.

And that's the last question. Number three is, what are you tolerating? Always think about that. And that goes even beyond the topic that we're covering today. Ask yourself, what am I tolerating? And I hope that this helps you to just be more mindful as you move through the online business world, as you move through entrepreneurship. Be more mindful because I think it is important for us, as women, to stick together, to support each other, and to recognize our own power.

And I think, if you take nothing else from this podcast episode, what I want you to do more than anything else is to recognize your own power, what you are capable of, and that you can do it and you don't need anyone else to choose you to make it happen.

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As always go to [mdbshow.com](http://mdbshow.com) to get all of the show notes, and all of the links that we talked about in today's episode. And you can also opt-in, and grab my guide to 12 Creative Ways to Raise Capital Quickly. Bye, guys.