



The Daily Brief Podcast: Career Stories with BET CMO Jeanine Liburd

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Like so many young people, when Jeanine Liburd started her career she wanted to change the world.

She thought the best way to do that was at the local level. After graduating from Vassar College and getting her masters degree in urban policy at the New School for Social Research, she went to work on the New York City mayoral campaign for David Dinkins.

As historians will recall, Dinkins lost that election to an up-and-coming Rudy Giuliani, and Liburd was left rethinking her career path.

"Like any good Democrat, I packed my bags and moved to Washington, D.C.," Liburd said. Bill Clinton was president of the United States, and she found work in his administration working in the Department of Health and Human Services under Secretary Donna Shalala.

She did that for a few years until she ultimately found herself working on initiatives at the White House, starting with Vice President Al Gore and his work on issues surrounding fatherhood.

While at the White House, she ended up working with the media team. She quickly realized she liked trying to shape the way issues were covered.

"I began to understand that you have to have the actual policy, then you have the politics and then you have to what is going to make it into the press," Liburd said. "That's where I learned about how to get information out to the public, and how you could frame people's minds about things based on the information that you put out.

"I couldn't decide if I wanted to be on the media side or the PR side, but I knew I wanted to do one of the two. I also wanted to move back to New York, so I started taking meetings and trying to figure out what I wanted to do next."

Liburd's next stop was at New York City-based strategic communications firm Robinson, Lerer and Montgomery, where she began to work with media clients such as Oxygen, CNBC, AOL and Showtime. She became so deeply embedded in Oxygen while working on that network's launch campaign that she almost felt she worked there.

"That was where I got into media and understanding brands and what it means to create one," she said. "And obviously, the digital evolution was in full swing at the same time."

From there, Liburd made the jump to Viacom-owned MTV Networks where she served as vice president of communications. She worked as senior vice president of corporate communications for Viacom and then made the move to BET as chief marketing and communications officer.

Throughout that journey, Liburd has considered issues of gender, being a woman, and race, being black, although how she approaches both as BET's head of marketing remains complex. This is where the conversation gets juicy.

"When I made the move to BET, I felt my black womanhood more so because it's like, well, if this issue is happening in the world, how should we as a network be focused on it?" she said. "You can take Black Lives Matter, you can take a Ferguson, you could take any of these issues that affect you as a black person and, certainly, as a black woman. And then the question is how should we take action as a community and as a network that represents that community."

In this new podcast series called Career Stories, supported by Promax's People and Culture Council, Daily Brief talks with television marketing executives who have grown their careers while navigating such cultural issues as gender and race. The PCC's mission is to not only foster a community of diverse talent but to celebrate the unique perspectives within our industry and develop a greater sense of community and belonging.

Ideally, these stories will help provide insight into how others can successfully navigate their own career paths and these types of issues along the way. For

more information about Promax's People and Culture Council, contact Rachel Wyatt at rachel.wyatt@promaxbda.org.

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