

The Nonprofit Founder's Club Podcast Transcript

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Nonprofit Founder's Club, where Founders who have said, I have my 501(c)3! Now what?!? Begins building the nonprofit they [00:00:15] envisioned and helping the people they are called to serve. All, without being the sole funder.

[00:00:28] **Alesha Mathis:** Hello and [00:00:30] welcome to this episode of the Nonprofit Founder's

[00:00:34] **Alesha Mathis:** Club. This episode is something that is completely different because I have a guest. Her name is Shakira Releford. She [00:00:45] is the host of Nonprofit Unplugged, which is a podcast. I was on this podcast a few weeks ago. We had such a good time. I had to figure out how we could spend more time together.

[00:00:57] **Alesha Mathis:** And so she is now [00:01:00] on this podcast with us today and a little bit about Shakira. She not only is a podcast host, but she is a founder of her own nonprofit. So that's why we have her [00:01:15] today to talk about being a founder and so welcome

[00:01:19] **Shakira Releford:** Shakira. Hey, thanks for having me. I'm glad to be here. Yeah. To connect again.

[00:01:25] **Shakira Releford:** This is fun.

[00:01:26] **Alesha Mathis:** I know we had such a good time the last time. I think we laughed through [00:01:30] the whole

[00:01:30] **Shakira Releford:** thing. So yes, it was great. It was great.

[00:01:33] **Alesha Mathis:** So let's talk about you though this time. Cause we talked a lot about me last time. So

[00:01:38] **Shakira Releford:** tell me about you. Ah, Shakira, if I had to sum myself up in one word, I would definitely [00:01:45] say that I'm well more than one word, but as a phrase, I would say I'm a creative soul.

[00:01:50] **Shakira Releford:** I have, even as a kid, always been so passionate about everything and I put my heart into everything. [00:02:00] And so I definitely am one who I always got called weird a lot when I was in elementary school and even middle school too. And I wasn't. Weird as in like the weird kid to be around, but more so, like, you have the weirdest ideas, you know what I [00:02:15] mean?

[00:02:15] **Shakira Releford:** Are you come up with the weirdest stuff, you know? And I'm like, well, yeah. And I run with it, you know? And so I have learned in my twenties at least, like, I don't know if this is what I'm feeling, I'm going to just go for it kind of deal, you know, and see what happens. And so, yeah, I [00:02:30] had a lot of failures out of that, but had a lot more successes than failures.

[00:02:33] **Shakira Releford:** And so definitely my creative side. Kicks in and takes over. And I mean, I have done everything you can think of like dance for a professional dance company. I had [00:02:45] five majors in my undergraduate program and I was getting my bachelor's degree. I was like borderline 6 year student, you know, like I had so many interest in everything, but everything boiled down to

[00:02:59] **Shakira Releford:** the [00:03:00] public health and humanities service based stuff. So I honestly now looking back, I'm like, oh, everything led me here. You know? So I'm excited.

[00:03:10] **Alesha Mathis:** Yeah. And I totally get that. All those experiences lead you [00:03:15] somewhere. I totally understand that. And I also get the weird kid thing. I was the smart kid, so totally understand where you're coming from.

[00:03:25] **Alesha Mathis:** That might be why we gel so well. [00:03:30] So now you are a founder of a nonprofit. So tell us about your

[00:03:34] **Shakira Releford:** nonprofit. Yes. So my nonprofit, this is like the first of probably six that's in my head right now, but this is the first baby. Like I actually got to. Put off the [00:03:45] press and it's called connecting youth achievement center and consulting.

[00:03:49] **Shakira Releford:** Where did this come from? So it all started as my work, as a behavior analysts, or really it started when I was a behavior therapist that was working for a handful of [00:04:00] different, not at the same time. Over the years working for a few different autism clinics and different types of schools

like within the school district, providing those different services for special needs, especially education.

[00:04:14] **Shakira Releford:** [00:04:15] And I was really sick and tired of being sick and tired of the children of color. Right. Just getting that lack of care, lack of service. That they needed compared to their white counterparts. And so not being biased, but just like, [00:04:30] I feel everyone deserves, you know what I mean? When you're already at a disadvantage, right.

[00:04:34] **Shakira Releford:** And you have to be in special education compared to general education, you already have that barrier, even if they don't even know, but that's that one barrier that. And then not only that it's like, okay, well [00:04:45] the school district doesn't want to make you a priority for occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech, or anything else that you can get within the school district.

[00:04:54] **Shakira Releford:** You know? And so it was like, this is getting old and I want every child to [00:05:00] have the opportunity to really excel in life regardless of where they are, what's going on. And so at this point, this is maybe like six years ago. So the therapy role was just an idea, then it was [00:05:15] just an idea. Mind you. So this is at year six, and we're in now.

[00:05:19] **Shakira Releford:** You're 11 this year. So five years now later. So that was just an idea, you know, and here we go. I continue job after job. I went to grad school by [00:05:30] this point and graduated, got my bachelor's was in grad school, just graduated. And I had gotten a job. I was transitioning roles from one job to the next and out of that.

[00:05:40] **Shakira Releford:** So when I moved to Iowa, Yeah, because I was in Iowa. Oh my God. This timeline is like, [00:05:45] I know there was a lot of happening in my life. Right. Cause I was living in Indiana and I lived in St. Louis and here I'm in Iowa, you know, I moved like the military. You know, so I got to here to Iowa. I started and finished grad school.

[00:05:59] **Shakira Releford:** So it's two [00:06:00] years that I've been here out of the five years from the idea to now. And so it's year four into the idea and I'm like, all right, enough is enough. Same thing was happening. Only this time. There was only like one [00:06:15] main autism center here within the really to cover east central Iowa.

[00:06:21] **Shakira Releford:** Difference over 120 miles north, south, and in the far east, right? Like that's a lot of people for one center to [00:06:30] service. So many people, kids, at least. And I was like, this isn't going to work. I like them. Don't get me wrong. I love their mission. I love their passion. Don't get me wrong. But they had like at the time they had a two and a half year wait.

[00:06:41] **Shakira Releford:** And I was like, okay, so you have all these kids who are needing [00:06:45] services, can't get services. There's a two year wait list. So this is where I come in. I said, okay, this is the time. And then the pandemic hit. So now I've been planning for this because the original name was [00:07:00] balanced kids achievement center.

[00:07:02] **Shakira Releford:** Right. So I changed the name. It was an LLC. I changed the name. I got everything together. And then when I changed the name to connecting youth, I was like, oh crap. Now I gotta undo all this stuff. It's okay. It's the [00:07:15] nature of the beast. But we really wanted to make it a nonprofit because I really wanted to target the marginalized and underserved communities.

[00:07:24] **Shakira Releford:** What happens is that okay, so you have this large population of kids who obviously need services, behavioral management [00:07:30] services, maybe can't even get a diagnosis, right? There's a lack of insurance, a lack of care, lack of. There's a lot of health disparities that's embedded in all of this. Right. And so I was like, okay, I need to help target this health disparity.

[00:07:43] **Shakira Releford:** And I guess more than [00:07:45] just being able to provide, apply behavioral analytics services. It's about really the whole child, mind, body spirit, the whole nine at the same time, because I'm passionate. I just finished my certification in social and emotional learning. [00:08:00] Right. Goodness. I know. I said, well, this is perfect.

[00:08:06] **Shakira Releford:** Let's blend it. Because not only are these kids not getting the help they need, they are coming from very high intensity or [00:08:15] heavy trauma backgrounds. Let me just leave it there. So I was like, my God, this is perfect. That is where connecting youth and really out of the name, I want my services or really my organization to be the connecting [00:08:30] piece for the youth to achieve all of their dreams.

[00:08:33] **Shakira Releford:** Right. Like a mission statement. There you go. There you go. I know. And then, so it's easy to explain the name that way. Now the mission statement is similar but different, you know, [00:08:45] but that was really

when people ask about the name, like what? And I'm like, yeah, Here's the name, cause I want it to grow into, because mind you I'm a certified yoga instructor too.

[00:08:54] **Shakira Releford**: So I was growing it into let's have adaptive therapy. Let's have like everything that the [00:09:00] child could need or could want, or the services that you have to outsource and pay all this different money for just let's have a one-stop shop and just come here and get it all done. So that's really how. It started.

[00:09:14] **Shakira Releford**: I mean, literally it happened [00:09:15] overnight. We'll be two years in now. And September, that

[00:09:20] **Alesha Mathis**: is a lot to digest. Yes.

[00:09:24] **Alesha Mathis**: I think that's where I'm at. It might've felt like it was overnight, but you [00:09:30] had what? Six years where you were formulating this.

[00:09:34] **Shakira Releford**: Yes, that's true.

[00:09:36] **Alesha Mathis**: So it's kinda like, you know, an overnight success. They're usually not overnight successes that they've been doing the drudgery work for [00:09:45] years before they finally get noticed.

[00:09:47] **Alesha Mathis**: So that's cool. And it sounds like everything that you've been doing up until this was leading you to your nonprofit. So that is really cool. So, and all this time, what [00:10:00] challenges did you face and how did you overcome them

[00:10:03] **Shakira Releford**: during your time? I think what really helped once I started the challenge is not saying it just magically went away, but

[00:10:12] **Shakira Releford**: 'cause I've had like this five, [00:10:15] six years before incorporating. I had a lot of those were the challenging years. I like the preliminary, the prequel, if you will, there's a lot of opposition of people like this. Isn't going to work. You're not qualified. You're [00:10:30] not certified yet in technicality. I had to wait for that.

[00:10:33] **Shakira Releford**: That's why I went back and got my master's degree because I was like, I don't want to just be the therapist coming in and out of the homes. I want to be the change maker, the policy change maker. Right. I want to write the interventions, [00:10:45] see the data come to life. Kind of deal. So that

was my passion of even going back and getting a master's degree in this, in the first place.

[00:10:53] **Shakira Releford:** And so I did it. And so I'm like, all right. Wow. And I just had a baby and I got married and we moved two [00:11:00] states and, you know, there was a lot of those life challenges that happen, but had it not been for my husband in the background, like. What are you doing? Don't stop, you know, keep going, don't do this

[00:11:12] **Shakira Releford:** your plan is to be retired by 40. [00:11:15] And I still, I got seven years guys, so I got some time, but for now don't deviate from that, you know, and at the time I had 12 years, so I'm getting closer and closer to retirement. But retirement for me means that I'm working [00:11:30] solely for myself and not necessarily collecting a pay, check a standard.

[00:11:35] **Shakira Releford:** Kind of deal. So you're not working for

[00:11:37] **Alesha Mathis:** someone else you're working for yourself and

[00:11:40] **Shakira Releford:** I'm working for myself, whatever passion you have. Right. And [00:11:45] so that was the driving force, but I wanted to do something that didn't feel like work, even if I didn't make a dollar out of. It wasn't going to be worked for me kind of deal because I actually do love what I'm doing.

[00:11:56] **Shakira Releford:** And I think the biggest challenge, like I said, was hearing the [00:12:00] opposition, not allowing life to get in the way, because I mean, we all have a life. Get it, things happen, family positive and negative stressors can get in the way of the vision, but not actually. Allowing that to be the reason why you not fulfill that [00:12:15] vision.

[00:12:16] **Shakira Releford:** You know, now I'm like, okay, we can't have this.

[00:12:19] **Alesha Mathis:** And there's a lot of founders out there who are trying to get this nonprofit started on nights and weekends because they have a full-time job because you got to pay the [00:12:30] bills and there's family involved. And I know some that are actually having to take care of parents and kids.

[00:12:39] **Alesha Mathis:** There's just a lot of life going on. And so they're stealing [00:12:45] whatever moments they can to make this dream happen. And it sounds like you were

[00:12:49] **Shakira Releford:** no different. No. Oh no. I been a lot of the, you know how some people say they have mom guilt, you know, or like even wife guilt, or they just [00:13:00] feel like. So working so hard and then neglecting their family.

[00:13:03] **Shakira Releford:** Well, you kind of are then that's all I, you know, but you have to do these unsexy things first, so you can reap the true harvest and the true benefit. Right. Because what happens is this, [00:13:15] and I see this sometimes with clients that I work with and they're like, I have an idea and I want this idea to be a nonprofit.

[00:13:22] **Shakira Releford:** And I'm like, all right. And which was why I created the workbook that I did. And I'm like, okay, Let's do all this un-sexy stuff [00:13:30] before you even incorporate. Cause I'm gonna tell you right now, you're going to smooth out a crap ton of speed bumps. Once you get started, if you do ABC XYZ first. You can have a [00:13:45] thriving, nonprofit, and, or at least the start of a thriving nonprofit within a few months versus several years.

[00:13:52] **Shakira Releford:** It just depends on how much work you're going to have to do or even want to do before you even incorporate, let the incorporation be the [00:14:00] reward, not getting the 501(c)(3) status. Like let's let the actual state filing be. The game-changer like, and I mean, change the narrative, change the mindset and that it will work.

[00:14:11] **Shakira Releford:** You will do it. We can get into that, but it really helps to [00:14:15] narrow in exactly what your mission is going to be and the people you serve and how you are the problem solver now, because I already knew who I was serving, how I was going to be the problem solver. It was a no brainer. I'm like, all right, I know legally.

[00:14:29] **Shakira Releford:** There was [00:14:30] some things I had to get done, you know? So otherwise, before I even incorporated, I knew I had to do X, Y, and Z. Cause I wanted this process to be seamless, essentially like real seamless. And so there were a lot of 24 hour days, right? Like [00:14:45] days I would work a full eight to 10 hours. I come home. I think I had maybe had time to grab some cheese and crackers or maybe just cheese.

[00:14:53] **Shakira Releford:** It, it really, it was cheese. It's a sweet tea. And I sat down at the company. I had two or three monitors going, I was doing this, this [00:15:00] and this and this, this and this and this, this and this. And so I, you know, like to me, it was well worth it. And my husband, God bless his soul. He was really

helpful because at the time our daughter, I mean, we had a newborn and then she turned one and then she was crawling and getting into everything.

[00:15:14] **Shakira Releford:** And [00:15:15] so it was like, Yeah, just put the pipe in right here and we'll keep her in here. And so she can jump out and that didn't take long six months, you know, so, but I just say all that to say, I learned how to make it work and the quicker I got it done, the easier it was for me [00:15:30] to breathe. Right. And to enjoy the process.

[00:15:32] **Shakira Releford:** Now I can enjoy my business. I don't have to think about what's going to happen next. If that makes sense. You know what I mean? Well, you have staff now. Yes. Yes.

[00:15:43] **Alesha Mathis:** So that's [00:15:45] huge when you're not the only person doing it or you actually have a board that's helping. Cause I know that's awesome. So that leads us into what challenges are you still wrestling with or are [00:16:00] currently wrestling with and what are you learning from those experiences?

[00:16:04] **Shakira Releford:** Oh, my gosh, finding people who actually want to work right now is, I mean, our board is small but [00:16:15] productive. Right. And I guess it's just founder to founder, real talk like. We don't mean to be micromanagers. Right. But we can be really picky with who we want to bring in or introduce our baby to. And I'll just think about [00:16:30] your nonprofit is your baby, right?

[00:16:32] **Shakira Releford:** It is something that you have conceived as far as the idea or the. Okay. You've given birth to it, especially once you've incorporated. And you've gotten those bylaws together, honey, do the bylaws before you [00:16:45] incorporate, but it helps, right. It does help to have everything in order. And now the baby is starting to go to daycare or maybe kindergarten and the whole world.

[00:16:56] **Shakira Releford:** It's going to be exposed to your baby and you know what you've put into [00:17:00] the, you know, and if any of you founders have children or Dodd children or step-children, or nieces, nephews, you know, or been around kids, you know, okay. I've spent my time raising this child, instilling some morals and values. Right.

[00:17:14] **Shakira Releford:** [00:17:15] And think of that as your policies, you've instilled these things into that baby. And someone can walk by and push that baby down. And then. You know what I mean? You have to trust that what you're

instilling [00:17:30] into your organization can withstand the people that's out there that comes with having a strong mission and a strong vision.

[00:17:38] **Shakira Releford:** Now, for me, my challenge is. Not the mission, not the vision, not the board. [00:17:45] The board found me. I didn't have to go search for them. I was literally talking about my organization and my plan and okay. And X amount of months or weeks or whatever. And even though it may not have come to pass, I had the [00:18:00] goal in mind.

[00:18:00] **Shakira Releford:** Right. I was just talking, talking, talking, talking, talking, talking, talking, and the individuals who are now my board members were like, I want to invest in. I want to be a part of this and I'm like, you do. [00:18:15]

[00:18:16] **Shakira Releford:** I know I was like, really? And they haven't left me since they hate that. I guess their biggest complaint with me is like, you're too orderly. Like I get that a lot. Organized like, this is good, but I [00:18:30] wasn't expecting that. And I'm like, if you know,

[00:18:32] **Alesha Mathis:** How is that ever a bad thing,

[00:18:34] **Shakira Releford:** I'm like, I just paid a lot of attention to detail, you know, but nonetheless, we're now at the point where we finally got a building, you know, the board chipped in their [00:18:45] finances and was like, Hey, we got it.

[00:18:46] **Shakira Releford:** Let's go. And I'm like, so that's our new up and coming. For the summer, we're ready to launch in person. Cause I've only been doing telehealth for now. And so now we're at the point where I'm like, okay, I got the job [00:19:00] descriptions ready to go. And I actually put it out there and no one took the bait or no one qualified took the bait.

[00:19:05] **Shakira Releford:** Cause I'm now I'm looking for therapists like one-on-one therapist and I'm like, wait, wait, wait, wait. And I did all this work. And [00:19:15] you know how this goes, you plan for a fundraiser, right? You plan for some event and you feel so good about it. And like five people show up or you make barely 10% of what you were expecting out of that fundraising.

[00:19:29] **Shakira Releford:** What, [00:19:30] what I would all this work into it. And then what, and I just want to encourage you. It's not, you, you know,

[00:19:39] **Shakira Releford:** it's the nature of the beast. I don't mean I'm going to shut down because I don't have employees yet. And we're planning to open in June [00:19:45] if I gotta be the employee and the boss, I'm okay with that because I

need to have help. And so it's going to work out and I'm not worried about it, but I don't want anyone to feel like.

[00:19:58] **Shakira Releford:** I can't do this or [00:20:00] I have, and I hear this a lot. I have an idea for the, my nonprofit to have a building because I want to end homelessness. I hear it all the time. I've heard that too several times. Yeah. You know what I mean? Like they really want the grandiose in game [00:20:15] and I'm like, okay. Let's hustle.

[00:20:18] **Alesha Mathis:** There's nothing wrong with having that kind of goal, but that kind of gets into your five-year strategic plan. Right? Let's plan this out for five years down the road. And then what do we need to have happen in [00:20:30] between now and then? Well, we need mega donations. So how are we going to get

[00:20:35] **Shakira Releford:** there? How are we going to do that?

[00:20:37] **Alesha Mathis:** I see it in the Facebook groups we're in all the time where it's like we're brand new. We need a building and. [00:20:45]

[00:20:45] **Shakira Releford:** That's a capital campaign. Right? Right. I've even told someone. So before I even got into nonprofit consulting, I was doing this pro bono. And again, I am a creative person. So [00:21:00] these ideas would come in my slate and I'm like, oh, we should do this, this, this, this, and this.

[00:21:05] **Shakira Releford:** It'll work and everyone would be like, oh my God, that was so good. I was like, you're welcome. But the dance company that I used to dance for a professional dance company, I used to dance [00:21:15] for. She went through a rebranding period. And at this point I'm a full grown adult now, and I'm not 12. Right. So I'm like, you know, she's been in business now almost 30 years.

[00:21:25] **Shakira Releford:** Wow. So, you know, she went through a rebranding period, [00:21:30] right. And so I said, well, how about this? Again? The building we had, we lost kind of deal. So we're starting over. And I said, hit up the local park districts, go book a room before COVID mind you go put the room at the library, go like you don't have to have a [00:21:45] building of your own to use some space to get started.

[00:21:49] **Shakira Releford:** Like, you know what I mean? Or.

[00:21:52] **Alesha Mathis:** Okay. To start small, there is absolutely nothing wrong, starting small, right. Your funding is going [00:22:00] to start small. So you might as well start

[00:22:03] **Shakira Releford:** just yeah. Getting that habit, getting that habit. And so I'm a stickler of, it's not impossible to start. It's just actually going to start it.

[00:22:11] **Shakira Releford:** Your start. A little unconventional [00:22:15] compared to, because I think what happens is people look at girl Scouts, right? Girls and boy Scouts. They look at boys and girls club of America. They look at, I don't know, St. Jude. They look at all of these bigger Goodwill. They look at all the bigger corporations and they're like, look at what they're doing.

[00:22:29] **Shakira Releford:** [00:22:30] And I'm like, yeah, I can guarantee you. They didn't just sit up and say, you know what, let's start this and wish for all of the grant funding to just comment on. And

[00:22:39] **Alesha Mathis:** I worked for a nonprofit who I think this year is celebrating their hundred and 50th [00:22:45] year. What is this? I think it was like 140 years at the time I was working for them and people in the community would compare themselves to organizations, but they have spent 140 years.

[00:22:59] **Alesha Mathis:** Building [00:23:00] their donor base. They've spent 140 years getting those outcomes and making the impact and being known in the community for their things that doesn't happen overnight. It's not something that you can just get on [00:23:15] social media and go viral. And all of a sudden, there you are, it doesn't happen that way.

[00:23:20] **Alesha Mathis:** It's a slow process. Building a nonprofit. Is a slow process and anyone who tells you that it [00:23:30] is get funding quick and get going quick is trying to sell you

[00:23:35] **Shakira Releford:** something. Yeah. So you scam, that's it. I'm trying to sell you a scam. Yeah. And I even wrote, I put it in my workbook how to [00:23:45] start and scale your nonprofit within like 45 days or whatever, which is not a lie.

[00:23:49] **Shakira Releford:** You can start it and start the scaling process. Right. But at your starting, I never promised anyone that they're going to, you're not going to be thriving. Right. Cause when [00:24:00] I started, I mean, I've been doing all of the work myself. I mean, we've been in business for two years and when I was

doing, I do a lot of affiliate mark used to cause I don't know, I completely cut all that off.

[00:24:11] **Shakira Releford:** As of once I started the nonprofit, I was like, I don't want anything [00:24:15] else taken up my time. Right? Well, so podcasting, but I was doing network marketing and affiliate marketing programs and all of the money I made out of that went straight to the non. All of it. Just to sit, I wasn't spending it on anything.

[00:24:29] **Shakira Releford:** I wasn't [00:24:30] looking at. Like just to sit right. Then I started getting contracts to do the services that I'm, non-profit says that I do. Cause right now I can't afford to hire staff. I know it's a lot of work, but I can't afford to do it. So I'm [00:24:45] going to work like a Jamaican essentially. And so there I was.

[00:24:48] **Shakira Releford:** All right. So in multiple school districts doing professional development the whole night and everything, keynote speaking, all this stuff and all that money straight to then the [00:25:00] nonprofit itself got secured a contract, right. For ongoing services for the school year. And I was like, hell yes. So we finally got our first.

[00:25:08] **Shakira Releford:** You know, 30,000, right? Right. There was a lot of hustle. That's just for the contract. That's not [00:25:15] including the fundraising. That's not including anything else that I've added into that revenue stream, but it's okay to think outside the box and be totally unconventional. Right. That can get you results just as easy as a grant.[00:25:30]

[00:25:30] **Shakira Releford:** And for me as a grant writer or grant reviewer, I mainly do federal grants, but they want to see what you've been doing. Right. Like, right. Yeah. They want to know what your revenue in your expenses look like and

[00:25:44] **Alesha Mathis:** yeah. And how [00:25:45] long your community has into your organization and that you are getting funding from sources other than you, or.

[00:25:54] **Shakira Releford:** That's right. Right, right. And so now we're at the point this year, we were able to join a [00:26:00] coalition. And join a professional association and another non-profit right. And so, and really get into walking out the mission. Right. And now I can have other people, I would call them minions, [00:26:15] but like, I couldn't have other people like help fulfill that mission.

[00:26:19] **Shakira Releford:** So I can focus on being that executive director and just solely doing that and not 17 other jobs. But if you start with 17, other, if you [00:26:30] got to do 17 other jobs, chunk it up one day, I'm an exec next day, I'm going to add me. I'm going to be a volunteer next week. I'm going to do, you know, just chunk it up.

[00:26:41] **Shakira Releford:** Don't do everything in one day, every day. And that's [00:26:45] one thing I had to learn.

[00:26:46] **Alesha Mathis:** Yeah. And that's a great tip. It doesn't matter what you're doing. That that's a great tip because if you've put together activities that are the same kind of thinking, the same kind of [00:27:00] doing, you can get it done so much quicker and so much faster than if you try and be all things in one day.

[00:27:09] **Alesha Mathis:** Cause you'll find your mind has to switch to. Yeah,

[00:27:14] **Shakira Releford:** and things [00:27:15] get messy, right. Things get messy and unorganized. And I literally wrote out tasks like a task analysis checklist, and I'm like, I need to get four targets done today and that's it. And that target can take me five minutes. It can take me 20 minutes.

[00:27:29] **Shakira Releford:** It can take me [00:27:30] two hours. It can take me six hours, but once I hit that target, I'm shutting it off, going to bed. That's it. But that was again, that wasn't until after I incorporated. So like that four or five here, I was really slaving [00:27:45] and trying to do research, research, research, and research my market, my competition.

[00:27:50] **Shakira Releford:** And. Also think of ways to collaborate with them because we don't compete. We complete, right. It's always a good thing to complete each other, not compete with each other. [00:28:00] There's going to be some competition because they are your competition. There's a healthy range of competition, but you can always find that one common denominator.

[00:28:08] **Shakira Releford:** You'll be surprised because you're tapping into their network and their network is like, Hey, how are you? You liked them. I liked them too. [00:28:15] It happens all the time, so, right.

[00:28:19] **Alesha Mathis:** Yeah. And I find in nonprofit work, there is a large segment out there of people that work in nonprofits who have that [00:28:30] scarcity mindset.

[00:28:32] **Alesha Mathis:** It's everyone's competition. There's only so much funds. There's only so much of this and so much of that. And so I have two. Silo and hoard everything I have because there's such [00:28:45] scarcity in the world, but I have found those founders and those organizations that saw the abundance out there that said, you know, there's enough for all of us.

[00:28:56] **Alesha Mathis:** If we use it

[00:28:56] **Shakira Releford:** wisely, right.

[00:28:58] **Alesha Mathis:** They have [00:29:00] just completely gone above and beyond in their nonprofit. Growth and all of that. So I think that's another good point that you're bringing out that we should be looking at ways [00:29:15] to complete each other. And instead of really looking at the scarcity and what's, mine is mine and what's mine is mine.

[00:29:26] **Shakira Releford:** And that comes from I think, a survival mentality. You know, this is [00:29:30] just an anything, when it comes to my philosophy. When you are not meddling into everybody else's business, you know exactly how to mind your own and your grass will forever be greener than everyone else because you're not in everyone

[00:29:43] **Shakira Releford:** else's grass trying to figure [00:29:45] out how come you have weeds in instruction out over there. How come? What are you doing? It's like focus on you, focus on your organization, your mission, et cetera. And trust me, you'll look up. Time would've gone [00:30:00] by and you wouldn't have realized, whoa, everyone is looking at you now, and you're not in everyone, else's business, or that's only going to kill your organization.

[00:30:09] **Shakira Releford:** You know what I mean? Like constantly looking and trying to figure out what everyone else is doing [00:30:15] or what they're not doing. I let it go. Just, just worry about you, what you have in your back pocket and perfect. That don't be perfect, but just work on getting better. You'll be fine.

[00:30:26] **Alesha Mathis:** And that's that? I stay in your lane kind of [00:30:30] mindset.

[00:30:32] **Alesha Mathis:** It's so true. If you start trying to compare yourself. To other organizations, especially the 140 year old organizations, right. Or the national organizations, [00:30:45] right? Yeah. You are going to come up short because you

are not at that level, but if you keep your head down. And you focused then? Yeah, you will definitely get there.

[00:30:56] **Alesha Mathis:** Alright. So in the nonprofit founders club, one [00:31:00] of our values is purpose. We believe that not only everything we do has purpose. Because otherwise it's called busy work, but we also have a purpose in this world. And for many founders, their life purpose is intertwined in [00:31:15] their nonprofit. So I'm going to ask you the question that I got from you.

[00:31:21] **Alesha Mathis:** What is your life purpose? And have you

[00:31:24] stepped

[00:31:24] **Shakira Releford:** into it? Yes. And yes. And then yes and no. And [00:31:30] here's why, so my mom used to say, she doesn't say it as much. I mean, cause she's much older than me now, but she used to say growing up, like no one ever dies or leaves this world without fulfilling their purpose.[00:31:45]

[00:31:45] **Shakira Releford:** You may not know what that purpose is, but you don't die until you can complete it. And sometimes it takes for you to pass for it to click, maybe not you because you've already gone on, but for other people to recognize truly what that [00:32:00] purpose is, you know, and I always live my life when I die. What are people going to say about me?

[00:32:04] **Shakira Releford:** What would I be known for? What would that legacy be? And honestly, I've always believed this, even though I was in high school, I have just a funny way. Getting into someone's like [00:32:15] passions and like, oh, turning it up a notch and like pushing them off the cliff. I'm that person who, if you want an accountability partner, I am going to say, oh great.

[00:32:24] **Shakira Releford:** I'll come alongside you and I'll rub your back. You're going to fly and you're going to soar and you're going to Excel. [00:32:30] My purpose is to inspire you and to inspire others, right? To live their purpose, live their life on purpose with purpose, right? Whatever that purpose may be. It could be basketball. It could be what we're doing in nonprofit world.[00:32:45]

[00:32:45] **Shakira Releford:** It can actually be like nursing or being a lawyer or whatever. If it brings you true joy, not just makes you feel happy. Joy is a feeling that can't nobody gives and can't nobody take it away. Girl, can't give it [00:33:00] and the world can't take it away. So if you can get that gut wrenching. That true fire that literally, no matter how old you are, or no matter what happens, it can never die.

[00:33:13] **Shakira Releford:** It may dim, but [00:33:15] it won't go away. You won't just blow out, run with that, regardless of your age, regardless of your socioeconomic status. It's this idea I was homeless, engaged, but homeless, you know, and I was like, [00:33:30] Hey, what are you going to do? I know there's greater out there for me. So what you're gonna do.

[00:33:35] **Shakira Releford:** And really stepping into the non-profit world. I was 21. That was my first job within college. Right. Not my first job ever, because I've been working since I was [00:33:45] 12. So by the time I was 21, I was ready to retire. So I got my first real job, right. Career wise, job working in a nonprofit. Substance abuse doing data.

[00:33:58] **Shakira Releford:** I was a data analyst for them. [00:34:00] I didn't think I was going to love numbers so much down now. I went from a data analyst to a behavior analyst, right? Ah, But the

[00:34:09] **Alesha Mathis:** analyst,

[00:34:13] **Shakira Releford:** I love to [00:34:15] explore, do the research and then present the Carfax. Right. But I stepped into this still with questions, right? What am I doing? And then I loved it. And then it was like, okay, how can I [00:34:30] span? And you've heard my story. What, tell us about your dot profit. Oh yeah. That whole story was transpiring during this time.

[00:34:39] **Shakira Releford:** I don't understand the vision all the time, but I know who's leading me [00:34:45] to where I'm going. Right. That the trust that, and trust that wherever I'm going. That's exactly. Where or who or what I'm meant to be doing, you know, the whole journey [00:35:00] as I'm down, I'm still inspiring others. I have never been able to see the glass half empty.

[00:35:05] **Shakira Releford:** I never had the ability to see the glass half empty. And to me that's a gift. Right. And I don't allow other people in my space to focus on their glass, half [00:35:15] empty, literally all, but one of my. I would almost consider them to be pessimist. I love them dearly. And if you listen to this, you know, I love you dealing.

[00:35:24] **Shakira Releford:** You've already know I've told you this, but I don't ever let them focus [00:35:30] on what didn't work, what didn't happen, what isn't going. Right. If the glass was half. How can we fill it up and let's pour it into that. Literally

let's pour it into that. If that glass over there is half empty, how can you pour into and make it full?

[00:35:43] **Shakira Releford:** So, [00:35:45] yeah, I'm walking in that purpose, but I say no to, because I'm not doing. So I still have a lot more purpose left to give and left to live. And that's the beauty of it all.

[00:35:57] **Alesha Mathis:** And you don't know exactly what that purpose

[00:35:59] **Shakira Releford:** [00:36:00] completely is, right? Cause I'm only 33. Y'all like I'm young.

[00:36:12] **Shakira Releford:** Lord willing. If knock on wood, I have a [00:36:15] long way to go my dream. And I always say this. I said, Lord, Please, let me live to be a hundred. Like if I died the day after my birthday, my 100th birthday, I would be content. Like I want to see a 400 years of my life and what [00:36:30] happens within my a hundred years of life.

[00:36:33] **Shakira Releford:** And so far, I'm not the most impressed as far as worldly events goes. I'm not the most impressed, but I can say I lived through that. And just thinking about all the experiences that [00:36:45] can come. And how I can use those experiences even as a beacon of hope or inspiration. So I've thought about it. I said, Lord, what would I do with my non-profit?

[00:36:56] **Shakira Releford:** And that was another reason why I started a nonprofit, because I don't know how my daughter is going to [00:37:00] grow up. She might grow up to be a greedy little girl who knows, but I don't want her, I don't want to leave anything to her that she felt like she could get her hands on. And I'm like, Perfect because you're not going to be able to get there that he's right.

[00:37:13] **Shakira Releford:** You're

[00:37:14] **Alesha Mathis:** going to have to work for [00:37:15] it and you're going to be a

[00:37:17] **Shakira Releford:** millionaire. Right. So I was like, this is great to be honest, but no, I thought about like, what would I do when I die? Well, what happens to it? Right? It could be like, I don't know. I [00:37:30] could be as influential as, you know, Milton Hershey. You know, or Ikea even, you know, whatever, you know, and I think you can really live on, I don't know yet, but I'm glad I'm in this journey.

[00:37:44] **Shakira Releford**: I'm glad. [00:37:45] Activated right. Are starting to plant the seed because I only expect the best for my baby. And if my baby doesn't go no further than the ceiling, at least I started. Yeah. At least I started. [00:38:00] Yeah. Well,

[00:38:01] **Alesha Mathis**: to wrap this up, tell us how we can find out more about you. And you mentioned a workbooks. Tell us about how to get our hands on that workbook.

[00:38:14] **Alesha Mathis**: Cause I'm sure there's [00:38:15] people that whose ears perked up, it was like,

[00:38:17] **Shakira Releford**: Ooh. Yes. So you can find me on Facebook at . You can find me on clubhouse and secure elfort. You can find [00:38:30] non-profit and plug the podcasts on our podcast directories and the workbook. Is so much fun. I'm so proud of the colors. Like I really wanted to make this as cool.

[00:38:42] **Shakira Releford**: A color scheme, but the word book [00:38:45] definitely walks you through what to do before you actually file for the 5 0 1 C. Right because filing for the 5 0 1 C three is different than the articles of incorporation. And so before you even file anything, right? I walk you [00:39:00] through exactly. Step-by-step what to do.

[00:39:03] **Shakira Releford**: I think there's seven main steps, but each step has sub steps and it's an interactive workbook. So you can work on a digitally and of course, print it out and actually hand write it all in, but you can find the workbook for free, by the [00:39:15] way, at [www dot nonprofit, unplugged.com](http://www.dotnonprofit.unplugged.com). Forward slash work book. All

[00:39:22] **Alesha Mathis**: right.

[00:39:22] **Alesha Mathis**: And we'll make sure we get that in the show notes too. You can check the show notes out to get all that good [00:39:30] information. Yes. Shakira, thank you so much for being here and being my first interview guest. That is so.

[00:39:41] **Alesha Mathis**: And as usual, we had such a good [00:39:45] time.

[00:39:48] **Shakira Releford**: Oh, you're welcome. I absolutely love.

[00:39:51] **Alesha Mathis:** Listening to you and your experiences and just your joy and your encouragement. And you [00:40:00] just have that spirit about you. That when we get off this, I will feel so good for days.

[00:40:08] **Shakira Releford:** So thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. That's

[00:40:13] **Alesha Mathis:** it for the nonprofit [00:40:15] founders. Podcast hit subscribe.

[00:40:17] **Alesha Mathis:** So you won't miss the next episode in the meantime, keep building your nonprofit so you can help those. You are called to serve.[00:40:30]