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PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Annestasis Podcast Episode 7 – Relocation to a New Town Produces Advocacy

Podcast Description: Carolyn and Stacey unpack the journey that brought her from the "Boogie Bronx" to Memphis via Philadelphia. Not only did she put down roots, but a business was also born that informs and educates. Her African American Perspective Tour of Memphis, TN is improving the community at large.

Podcast Transcript:

Stacey Sade: Hello, my friends. I am so excited, I'm giggling.

Carolyn Banks: Excuse me.

Stacey Sade: I know. And if we sound giddy, it's because this is the greatest thing in the world. I get to have conversations with people I love and good friends. And may I say, if good friends and dear people were money, I would be a gajillionaire by now. So. Hello, everybody. I digress. I'm Stacey Saed and you are listening to the Annestasis podcast. And today we have the dear and great pleasure of talking to Carolyn Michael Banks. She is the founder, the owner, the proprietor, and most importantly, the queen of A Tour of Possibilities. And today we get to find out how did you make your way to Memphis? And what does that look like? So we're at the Annestasis podcast where we talk about transformations that happen through relocation. so glad you're here with us today, Carolyn.

Carolyn Banks: Well, thank you, thank you, thank you. I am. And if I giggle a lot, it's just because that's who we are. We giggle. Life's too short not to giggle enough.

Stacey Sade: It is so true. Well, we're excited to be here today and we are going to talk about, some of the information I have, some of the information I don't have. But Carolyn,

knowing your story, you are creating and continuing to give and expand a tour of possibilities, which is a tour of Memphis, Tennessee through the african american perspective. Am I correct?

Carolyn Banks: Absolutely correct, yes.

Stacey Sade: And what I think is beautiful being a native Memphian, is this is not where you were born.

Carolyn Banks: I was born in the boogie down Bronx, 174th University Avenue. But you. Yeah. So a couple miles away.

Stacey Sade: Yes. And you have created a product and a business and really, I'm gonna call it a mission and a ministry. M. Around this city. Can you tell me and tell our listeners what made you leave Philly? Tell me what brought you to Memphis and what you were doing in Philadelphia? That kind of was the backdrop for what you're doing now.

Carolyn Banks: So the short answer is it was a man. Yes. It was a man that got me to Memphis.

Stacey Sade: Yes, ma'am.

Carolyn Banks: The backstory is I was working for a national Sightseeing tour company.

Carolyn Banks: And I actually started with them in Washington, DC. I was then relocated. Since we're talking about relocation, I was then relocated to Savannah, Georgia to open up an operation for them there. Then they relocated me to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where I opened up an operation for them there. And then things happened. M. You know how life has things that you had not planned on happening? It happened. And what happened was I was downsized and in real life, that means fired. So here I am, in plain English. Yes. In the city of Philadelphia. City of brotherly love and sisterly affection, as we used to say. I was there knowing no one but the people I worked with.

Carolyn Banks: And it was scary. It was scary because, number one, I didn't know what I was gonna do.

Carolyn Banks: I was living relatively large, which in real terms means I was living not the way I should have. I wasn't saving, but I was living large. I mean, I was living down on South street. And if you're familiar with Philadelphia, I mean, that is like the hotspot. I had this incredible apartment, and then all of it had to go. I was no longer the title that I was, and I had to figure out who I was. And what I remember most is once I was fired and I had to find a job, I ended up working in the mall, the Galleria, mall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as an information person.

Carolyn Banks: And I got my first check. And the check getting. Thinking about it, the check was as much, actually less than what the taxes were on. My real check, my former check. So, I mean, I had to do a whole lot of coming to grips with life, not as a general manager, life without a bank account, life without the company car. All of that stuff had to go. I had to leave my wonderful apartment on South street and start life over. And it was, as I mentioned, scary as heck. But I had been doing tourism for quite some time, and part of my prayer that I had forgotten I had prayed was, you know, God. Well, actually, I call God g, because we're real close. I said, g, you know, if I had an opportunity, I'd start my own tour company, because part of what was happening working for this national sightseeing tour company was when I added african american history to the script. The CEO was not pleased. M. And he was not pleased because he said he was getting calls and letters that people were too uncomfortable with this information that we were now sharing.

Stacey Sade: May I ask a piece of information? What year was this?

Carolyn Banks: 1989. Okay, so here we had a conversation in 1989 that we're still having in 2023 about people not being comfortable with history. It's not as if I was just making these stories up out of my left cheek, as they say. But it was truth. It was well researched truth. And our tagline used to be, we relive history. So I was just trying to relive it in its totality. And, it wasn't working for him. And now I had an opportunity because I had no job, really. I was working at the mall and started doing the research to have african american history

as my focus. Added it in the Tor script. I had added it in the Tor script in Savannah. I had added it in the Tor script of DC. But now I had an opportunity to tell the story through an african american historical lens and make it inclusive. So that when I'm talking about the Liberty Bell, yes, I'm talking about something that people know, but who knew that there was a connection between that and abolitionists? I mean, I just, there's just things that could have been told and what I use now when I tell my story or the story of Memphis. One more sentence could have made all the difference. M. In how we were taught history. Often, one more sentence would have made it clear.

Stacey Sade: Absolutely. Gosh, that is so powerful and so important. we're going to take a break real quick. And Carolyn, when we come back, I want to hear about what the logistical process was. You've come from Philly, you're working in the mall, you have had a life event and what, that felt like as far as logistics and your path to Memphis. So when we come back, we're going to be talking to Carolyn Michael Banks, the founder of a tour of possibilities and an amazing human being. Stay with us.

Stacey Sade: Hey, everybody, this is Stacey from the Anestasis podcast. Do you want to start your own podcast show, but you really don't know where to start? Well, not too long ago, I was in your shoes and the podcast club changed the game for me. I'm here because I want you to join me in being a part of Kazuchian's podcast club. They offer affordable packages with studio space, audio and video gear, plus expert support. Unleash your creativity with Kudzuchian. Visit kudzuchian.com, kudzukian.com. and let's turn your podcast dreams into reality. I did, and you can too. Okay, we're back. So Carolyn, talk to me about the process where we left your story was you're in the mall.

Stacey Sade: And you are crafting this, intentional tour, toward the african american historical perspective, taking what is known and adding the rest of the story in, as Steve Harvey used to say. So tell me about the logistical, what that looked like as far as you are transitioning to Memphis.

Carolyn Banks: Well, so much, I truly believe was divinely ordered in all things. Because while I was at the mall, there was one person I had met when I first started working in

philly, and he happened to work for the Philadelphia Convention and visitors Bureau. So I contacted him, and long story short, he said, listen, we have a phone operating job at the convention center. I said, visitor center, rather. I said, I can do that. I answer phones really well, I can do that. And so I started working there. In the meantime, I was completing my process of developing this tour. Who would have known that that would have led me to a place where I would be so connected to tourism that it was such a blessing because my boss said, do what you have to do. If you want to take a tour in the middle of the day, you got time. So we figured it all out. So I was in the space where people were coming to asking for information about the city, and I was able to tell them, well, let me tell you, you got another option now. So I started doing that. So I had my company a tour of possibilities for five years. Then I met the man in my dream. So you never know how things work. So there I am at the Philadelphia convention and Visitors bureau behind my little desk. Woman comes in and she says, I've got a pee. excuse me, I have to go to the bathroom. I'm like, you gotta do what you gotta do. She goes, can you take my spot in the front? I said, sure. I go up in the front and in walks this mandy. And he said, I need some posters of, ah, Philly. And in my most professional manner, I said, why? And he said, well, you know, Philly is my home, but I don't live here anymore. And I'm just a little homesick. And I'm like two and a half years later we were married and he lived in Memphis. So when things were getting to a point. Cause, you know, we were older then and it's like, I'm not doing this dating thing for 5000 years. So I said, well, I know you're gonna move back to Philly. I wasn't even thinking about coming to Memphis. And he goes, well, you know, I'm in the police department and I don't think I can do that switch. I said, I know people. I got connections. I called all my connections. They said, you have to come and live in Philly for a year before you can get your residency, then start as a rookie officer. Well, he had been on the Memphis police department for 13 years at that point, so that wasn't going to happen, long story short. So I said, well, I guess I'm coming to Memphis. And how that process worked was difficult because I now have a business that I loved even though I was still working at the convention and visitors bureau. I had somebody who wanted to buy my business. What a dream come true that was. And I said, well, all I need for you to do is to give me a tour. He gave me a tour, Stacy. It was one of the worst experiences I had ever had. Now I had no children, so this business was my baby, and I could not give my

business over. So I just shut it down and left and came to Memphis and took some tours because that's what I did. And as soon as I took tours here, I said, there's a missing here as well. The rest of the story isn't being told here either. But then I had to like, work, you know, I had to do jobs. And so I started working for the New Horizons computer learning center. And then I started working for a PR company, trust marketing. Then I started working for the Tennessee lottery. That's another conversation. But what I can tell you was all of that was leading to me being able to do what I do now. And part of what happened was I'm in a convenience store. Cause Tennessee lottery, that's where my people were. And I had gotten home, and when I watched tv, someone had been killed there. And I'm like, that's a little too close.

Carolyn Banks: And I was like, God, geeze, huh? I said, I really don't want to go out this way. I really believe there's something else I have to do. Long story short, again, that's when I decided I'm going back into tourism, something that I truly loved. And that's how a top was born in Memphis.

Stacey Sade: That is so amazing. What year is that?

Carolyn Banks: So I started in 2014.

Stacey Sade: I love that. Wonderful. Okay. I could listen to Carol and Michael Banks talk all day long, but we're going to take a little bit of a pause right here, to take a break. But when we come back with Carol and Michael Banks, we're gonna find out what happened from 2014 into now. What has that journey been like? The relocation was physically, a move, a marriage, for all the right reasons. And it seemed, I would assume, pretty functional. But we're gonna find out that actually very divinely inspired and produced such a blessing for all of us. So we'll be back in a minute with Carol and Michael Banks.

Speaker C: Every week, hosts Larry Robinson and Howard Robertson give a classically fresh look at the biggest stories in sports. Plus give perspective on what's happening on and off the court and fields. Plus, hall of famers, industry giants, and goats stop by and give an in depth dialogue only on r and r on sports episodes. Wherever you listen to podcasts and get exclusives@kazookian.com or on the Kazookian app r.

Stacey Sade: And R on sports. Welcome back to the Anestasis podcast, where we talk about life transformation through relocation. And we are blessed to be able to be talking to Carolyn Michael Banks, the queen of America tour America. The queen of America. That was a Freudian of A Tour of Possibilities. So, Carolyn, where you are is 2014. You have had another significant life event, which is you were standing in a store and someone, passed away. And you realized, hey, this life thing is not guaranteed. What is my purpose? Where am I supposed to be going? catch me up from there.

Carolyn Banks: It was part that, and then the other part of it was in 2009, my sister passed in 20, 13, my dad passed. And in 2014, my mom passed. So you put that along with seeing people dying in my space. I was like, okay, mortality is like, right in my face. And I was like, what have I done in my past that gave me what I need? Because it's more than just getting a check. You gotta have this thing. This life thing needs to be real, at least for me. I need to have a purpose to get up, not just because the alarm clock goes off. And I remember tourism did that for me. Being able to tell stories that I knew most people didn't know did that for me. Knowing that after I finished sharing something with people at the end of the tour, they would be like, this was, first of all, not what I expected. and I had a chance to give what my parents taught me, the thing of excellence. And so this was such an opportunity that hadn't really been seen in Memphis completely. And I had a chance to tell this magnificent story, story that needed to be heard by more than just a few people. And so the journey from 2014 to where I am now, we started out. I started out, we started out as focus, on individual travelers coming from and from all over the world. That was great. We did family reunions. We did all this great stuff. We're now expanding what we're doing, primarily because what people are missing in their lives, if you will, is knowledge. It's amazing how little we know. We now have access to more information than we ever did, and we still don't know stuff.

Carolyn Banks: And then living in a state like Tennessee, where we now have legislation that says we're not going to teach anything that really has to do with african american history. And then I was like, geeze, gee, is this why I'm here? Is this why I started on this path? Because I knew the stories had to be told. So now, instead of just dealing with families and individual travelers, we're now looking to expand to businesses in Memphis.

And what we are looking to do is be part of their onboarding and orientation programs. Because I'm, of the true belief that if you're going to be servicing the citizens of Memphis, why not know more about the city where you work, live and play? So that's what we're doing now. We're really expanding our reach. And when we look at the whole DEI diversity, inclusion issues that we have now, why not have this as part of what businesses are looking at? Why not give people an opportunity to learn? I mean, learning is more than what you do every day at work. We need to be learning about what's happening around us, who's around us, how we got from there to here, because there's so much we can do. And I take that all the way back to why I named my company a tour of possibilities. Because I was raised to believe that all things were, in fact, possible. But there were things you needed to do to make that happen. To just wake up was not enough. And my mother's premise was, you're here to do more than breathe. So do that. You need to make a difference in some way. And so I believe that what I'm doing leads me to that, to giving people an opportunity to learn some things they had never learned. We often tell people, you need to remember history. You can't remember it if you never learned it. And there's just so many things that are hidden in plain sight in this incredible city. Yes, some of it was tough, some of it was horrible, some of it was horrific. But what I want people to get from what they hear and see is that out of all that, in spite of all that, all this has happened, I mean, the fact that Memphis now has an African American man getting ready to be mayor of the city very shortly, and you look back on the history of Memphis, this probably never should have happened, but it became. Because things moved and, yeah, the stuff we gotta do. Yeah, yeah, but every city has stuff they gotta do. But I'm about. What are you doing? We all can do something.

Stacey Sade: Hm.

Carolyn Banks: And what I've chosen to do is this, to share the history of Memphis in a way, perhaps people have not had a chance to experience it.

Stacey Sade: Wow. So powerful and so important. You know, that divinely inspired piece, I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that whatever someone calls God, whatever name someone uses, is intensely interested in stories. I'm intensely. And it is fascinating to

me how really it's just a call to tell the story. Share the story. Share. Because our stories are our heart m out there, and you are broadening, embellishing, blessing, making bigger, going deeper to the heart of Memphis, a city that, oh, my gosh, it is so strong, and it has got all the things that everyone talks about, and it has got a beauty that is born through tragedy.

Stacey Sade: And it is glorious.

Carolyn Banks: Yes.

Stacey Sade: You tell that story better than anyone, and I cannot sing your praises enough. This is an honor for me to be able to hear and witness and share with our listeners the transformation not only that you made personally, not only that your husband, got to be a part of and instigated with the kind of, the impetus of it, but also blessing a city through your transformation. And what I heard in all of it is that each step along the way, especially the ones where you thought it was all over with, all done, death of family members, death of a job, death of a lifestyle, death, all the things are what propelled you to this life transformation. I think that is amazing, and I am so grateful that you have taken time out. The, resource that we can never get back to spend with us at the Anestasis podcast. We're going to wrap it up here. Thank you, Carolyn. Michael Banks.

Carolyn Banks: Thank you, my friend.

Stacey Sade: You are, and always will be in my book, top shelf human being. And I'm so grateful to be able to, shed some light on your story. So, ladies and gentlemen, Carol and Michael banks. A tour of possibilities, hopefully one day coming to a city near you. We're in Memphis, but it could be bigger. So, with that, we'll close out the Anestasis podcast, where we uncover stories of transformation through relocation. Who'd have known it? You just came to Memphis, you found the guy. He was a police officer. Pretty benign stuff that has transformed, so many lives. So thank you.

Carolyn Banks: Thank you.

Stacey Sade: We will close it out here, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you. Being with us, friends, we will be back for more episodes, listening to the stories of people who have been relocated. Thank you.

Carolyn Banks: Thank you.