

UNMASKING AUTISM: MY JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY THROUGH ANTIDEPRESSANTS AND ACCEPTANCE

Versiti Podcast: Season 3 - Episode 4 (Part 2)

Host: Edgar Daggett

Guest: Carmen Santiago-Keenon

INTRO CLIP

CARMEN: I got, my body is covered from head to toe in war wounds, you know, from life. I got stories beyond stories, and I don't dwell on it because you keep moving forward, you can cry. I have my moments, I'm human, right, but you pull yourself up once you do that and you figure it out and you keep moving forward.

BUMPER

EDGAR: All righty. Welcome back to another Stand Out From the Inside Podcast presented by Versiti. Once again, I'm your host, Edgar Daggett. We are gonna continue with the second part of our conversation with Carmen. You know, hearing, we heard on the last episode a little bit about her, uh, past her history, and kind of we're gonna dive a little bit deeper in about what she's doing, uh, in today's, uh, time and where she's gonna be headed in the future. Let's continue the conversation with Carmen. Welcome...

EDGAR: And what's been with that? Cause you know, you come from maybe the inner city or the suburbs. Has there been a positive reaction, especially from the minority group, or have there been a little bit of, you know, am I able to do this or, you know, I don't see enough people like me that are doing it now. Should I be getting into that field? You know, is that, is there a little bit of like that, you know, are they scared? Kind of what, what's have been your original reaction?

CARMEN: No, that's a great question. So, I think there's a lot of different layers to this onion, if you'll, Right. Because when we're talking about really, I, the way I see it is when we're talking about D and I really at the core of that conversation, I think needs to be mindset and which communities we're doing

outreach and working with, right. So, you know, and some speaking engagements. When I went to one high school in particular, I'll never forget, one of the young girls was like, you know, miss Carmen, I'd love to get involved in an extra curricular activity. You know, there's things I'm interested in. I wanna learn marketing, I wanna learn this. But I'm the eldest child. My parents, you know, she was a young Latina lady, young lady, her parents are both in the restaurant industry and are working nights. And the expectation is you're at home helping, you know, with the siblings and that doesn't give her room or space to be able to do anything else. So, and it broke my heart because you see like, hey, I want to do something more. I don't want to be stuck in the situation I'm in. Not that it's a bad situation that no, I mean, I was a single mom. Trust me. That's why I'm so passionate about technology. I was given the opportunity at the age of 30, you know with this companys enough. So they're no longer they sold a foresight and now they're doing a whole bunch of other things. But if it wasn't for them giving me this opportunity, we wanna be sitting here right now. Or maybe we wouldn't, I dunno, but, you know it shifted my life and it shifted my children's life in such a dramatic way that I was like, once I was given the opportunity to help others, that's what I wanted to do. So again, everything that I'm doing is, you know, if I'm able to do it, I'm gonna help you. Whether, you know, let me help connect you to get trained up or upskilled, or let me connect you to this company that's hiring or you know, whatever school system or whatever, you know, I just feel like almost like it's my duty because it just shifted and changed my life. I have no business doing half the things that I do. You know, bottom, honestly, bottom line, like I don't have a college degree per se. Like I don't have a big to-do like piece of paper that says Carmen's awesome and she spent, you know, a hundred years learning a bunch of stuff. I have certificates, you know, and I technical things and that's great. But, you know, and I, that's another thing though, you know, when I go and I speak to these kids in the high schools, there was a lack in that, you know that I had to learn later on in life. I'm still speaking, right? Things that you learn when you go to school, not necessarily, you know, that you have to go to school. I have a daughter. I have a kid that went to NIU and I have a daughter that's currently she's getting her certifications and she's a welder. So I have two kids, one that went to college and one that's in the trades, you know, and I think they're both smart for making the choices that they made. Yeah. You know, and, you know, but we need to train them up. We need to fill them up with knowledge and life and hope to see, yes, there's a trajectory to this career path. Right. But anything I can do to train anybody up and just share, like, you know, I'm very honest. That's just the way that I'm wired. I'm, I'm told it's part of the spectrum thing as well. Like, I just kind of say things. I'm actually gonna be working with a new therapist that's special in helping adults with these things because there were things that I didn't even know, you know, that I'm learning like at 38 to be told like, Hey, did anybody say that? Has anybody mentioned this? And I'm like,

nope. Out of all the hundreds of things, that I've been told that I'm, everything's short of needed, needing an exorcism at times. Like nobody has mentioned this, but what I'm telling you, the struggle has been real, you know, I mean, pharmaceuticals, yeah, me, something to treat depression or anxiety. It was giving me a reaction of like bipolar hands. And so it was just a hot mess. But here we are in the flip, flip side of it, and again, I'm not anti-meds. I know that there's a place and time to work for many people. It's just my personal experience. You know, but anyhow. [00:06:00]

EDGAR: Which is good to share because everybody has their own experiences with it as well. But before consulting, before this whole consultant tech, why tech, why healthcare, tech? What got you interested in, in that? You said you didn't, you don't have the school. you were in. What got you in that realm?

CARMEN: Honestly, so one of my really good friends Manny one of the CEO of the company was like, hey, I know, you know, a lot of people have a big network. I'm looking for somebody, I'm starting this new tech company. Do you know anyone? They don't need to necessarily have the experience. I prefer to train them in this solution specific, you know, to do it a certain way, right? Yeah. And so he was like, I think I've got someone that would be perfect for this. And you know, he called me and he was like, yo, yo, what are you doing? You know? And I was like, yeah, I'm not a whole lot, a lot, you know. And so he is like, I think this would be great for you. And I was obviously, I mean, I was very nervous. I'm like, yeah, scared. You know, I'm very scared. You know, when it's so inexperienced. And again, you know, I think one thing that I was able to learn very well early on to kind of just get through life as a neurodivergent, again, tying the piece of being like is the skill of acting, right? And so I, you know, had to put on my brave face. And this is, you know, and, but also I'm really great at building and I'm just naturally, like, I just love people, you know? And I don't know, during the interview process, I guess they thought they wanted me on the team. And so I was offered, you know, the position a few weeks later. And again, you know, it was the first time that I was like salaried and mm-hmm had good insurance for my children and was able to really, really be on my own. Not that I wasn't on my own before, you know, I was divorced and had, you know, but. Be at a different financial place. Right. Okay. And once I was given an opportunity, I didn't wanna let it go. And once again, I'm able to help other women get the certifications and the training no matter where you come. And technology is something that you don't always need to have a college degree score. Right. You can get your certifications very, you know? [00:08:40]

EDGAR: Especially nowadays, their certificate everywhere in some of the bigger companies like Amazon, Microsoft, all over Google.

CARMEN: Yep, absolutely. And, and that's such a huge advantage. And I encourage anybody that's listening to this, that's thinking about it and a lot of 'em offer it for free or initially for free. It's such a great investment. You're investing in yourself, you're investing in knowledge. Technology isn't going anywhere. It's getting more robust, you know, invest. Learning more about AI technologies, automation processes, and automation, especially in the healthcare space, there's a huge gap. But I before that I was in process payments, so credit card processing and I really became fascinated by the backend, like what makes it work, right? And we didn't have all the robust technology that we do now. I mean, when I got into the tech space, SFO was I was a VMware company around virtualization, and my first certifications work was Citrix. And VMware was like, when VD, you know, was becoming a thing. What is the cloud, right? Mm-hmm. Was the first conversation. So to see where we are now, but we didn't have all of, you know, the ability to do this back then. So I was, you know, I'm old school. I was on the phones early on we discovered I had a great ability to sell. You know, I had a great phone voice and just personable and I get, I'm very excitable about products I truly do in and very quickly that went from being client facing. But I tell you what, if I wasn't getting cussed at every day, at least 20 times a day, every time I pulled a door saying, Hey, I'm Carmen, lemme show you what I got, you know I wasn't doing my job. And at 43 what allowed me to be where I'm at in my career, you know, and it's what allows me to have that tenacity to come back and do the cold calling when I, you know, and do the, be the squeaky annoying wheel sometimes if I have to be to get my product in front of you, if I believe in it that much, that you definitely need to see this solution cause it's gonna change your enter. I'm gonna do what it takes to get in front of you, you know? But. It was those experiences early on. Also sharing that with Kate. I think, to be honest, these kids are way too baby. You know? They need to wake up over here. Like life is not gonna be handed to you, nor should it be. If life was handed to me, I wouldn't be Carmen, who I am today. I wouldn't have survived for bullets to the back. I got a metal elbow. I got, my body is covered from head to toe in war wounds, you know, from life. I got stories beyond stories, and I don't dwell on it because you keep moving forward, you can cry. I have my moments, I'm human, right, but you pull yourself up once you do that and you figure it out and you keep moving forward. Even if keep moving forward means like tapping into whatever resources you have, family, friends, community, you know your faith strength. For me it's Jesus. You know, whatever you need to tap into, you know, if it's an 800 number, you know, you find that strength as much as you can and try and tap into it. You know, and just keep moving forward. [00:12:05]

EDGAR: And I, no, and I agree with that statement. I, that's one of the things that I talk a lot about on this podcast as well, is like, keep moving forward. Like no matter what it is, keep fighting, keep doing what you do. It'll get better. And I express it. And they've heard everybody who's watching and listening, who's listen from season one, season two. I've said that multiple times cuz I believe in it a hundred percent. Now for me, what I wanted to know is that jump, you know, you finally were like, okay, you got this opportunity that was offered, no idea how to do it. You know, you could be good at it, bad at it, but you had kids at the, at the same time. So that was something that you were thinking of in the back of your mind. Like, okay, what's gonna happen? Will I be making you know enough? What if it doesn't go well? You know, you, but you still made that jump. And what was that process of finally being able to be like, okay, I'm gonna take that step, it's gonna be a better step for hopefully for, for the future. Mm-hmm, obviously it worked out, but what was that mindset going into taking that next step?

CARMEN: Honestly, I had to push through a lot of my stuff, right? And my negative self-talk, right? It was, who do I even think I am? I've never gone for something, you know, at this caliber before, mm-hmm... And at the end of the day, what I kept coming to was, remember who you are and who you are is very, very smart. I have a very, what we've now have found out is because I'm neurodiverse, I have this very technical brain, so I'm not. Anybody that I've sold anything to, I'm not a seller. I don't sell people anything. You know, I've got, if you, I will present you with options because I truly believe those are the options for you after spending time with you and, you know, hearing more of what your needs are for your enterprise and what we're trying to accomplish. Right. I'm going to absolutely present to you what I think would be best solutions for you, but that's, I'm not gonna hound you for it. Right. And I think people have respected that and that's been a lot of the ways that I've been able to build this. But honestly, I knew enough of myself and like I said, my first interview in life was to be a foster kid. Like I knew if I didn't land this, if I didn't land this interview to be in this house, it was either gonna be shipped off to another state, to like some group home. Yeah. There were some other crazy options and I was not about it. So

EDGAR: Which is a scary moment as a kid too.

CARMEN: It's, but if you can overcome that, I just knew myself enough to know that, A. I always push through my fear. That's just how I'm built. Like, nobody's gonna, even myself, I'm not gonna tell myself, no, I can't do this, you know, and my go, and I'm, you know, there's plenty of times I've given a pitch and not gotten it, or gone for an inter, you know, gone for this, that, or the other.

Right? We're all human. It's not like I knock it out of the park every freaking time, right? Yeah. No, I'm not gonna sit here and blow sunshine up, you know, anywhere. But I knew enough to know that I had the confidence to at least give myself the opportunity to show up to it, show up as myself. I'm very honest about my gaps, right? Like, hey, this is, if you decide to hire me, this is gonna be. for both of us, but especially for me, however, I'm highly trainable and teachable. And that's another thing that I am learning about myself, is that I had to become more you, or I've always been teachable, but I've learned that I'm really disciplined and that, you know, I, I also have a way of allowing myself to be disciplined, if you would. Right? Like, yeah, I wanna learn all the time. I'm one of those people super nerdy, wanna learn all the time, you know? So for me, any opportunity that I can learn is great for me. I will always ask someone, you know, Hey, can I, you know, put eyes on this project, show me what you're doing. If it's a new skill that I wanna learn mm-hmm. So being able to have that opportunity was important to me, but also letting them know that. If you invest in me, not only am I teachable, but I will not make you regret it. I will. I always come above and beyond. You know, I was very intentional with my own brand, my own company, IT Girl Solutions, or IT girl Solutions with solutions, because I am so tired of people complaining about problems. Right. That's the easy part. The easy part is bring awareness to all the problem, problem problems. I'm done. Let's come to bat with solutions, right? Yeah. And that's what about technology? When I was, you know, selling credit card processing, it was great. I was great at it. I, you know, went in the whole shebang, sold, smelled on the rates, downloaded the computer, you know, the system. But I was like, what am I downloading? I allowed myself to follow my path of curiosity. Had I stopped that there and been like, oh, not my problem, and just kept doing this. Who knows we're, you know, I obviously probably wouldn't be here, right? Because I didn't follow my path of curiosity. And I'm so grateful that I followed that path of curiosity of like, huh, I wonder what makes this work? Like, how does this class platform interact? And what is technology and what is this? You know? And it really just allowed me to continue to have these doors. [00:17:45]

EDGAR: It opened all these doors cuz you were so interested. You're like, oh, what's this? What's that? You know, it gave you that, those openings, those opportunities from that mindset.

CARMEN: And I ask questions and, which I know can be embarrassing, but I ask, I got really good at having to ask questions again because I have that learning dis, you know, I don't like, I'm very big into words and words, having energy, right? And speaking life or death on yourself and others. So, you know having that. Haven't overcome that. Learning curve of numbers you know, was very eye-opening and didn't find out until I was 17 years old and in high school,

almost done like about to graduate. It wasn't until a teacher and I was tears, so I'm like, I get it. Like I understand the problem, you know, logically I understand why are the numbers not computing? And she was like, huh, write that again. I was like, blah, blah, blah. 1, 2, 3, 4, you know, she was like, write it again. Then it'd be like, we're 31, you know, write it again. And every sweeter the number. But I wasn't seeing it. My brain wasn't catching. Yeah, yeah. The numbers, the numbers were changing, right. But you know, or like, you know, I'm old school, right? I'm 43. So we learned, you know, we had phones that you actually like a rotary phone or something that you had to press numbers on, but the way that I memorized. Phone numbers was through sound because every, every number had a different key and note. So that's how I would memorize people's numbers. I happen to also be musical, so I sing a percussion. So for me that was another way for my brain to learn, and I still do that now. Like I spent a lot of time singing and creating songs. That's how I learned technology. Like I, I'm like always turning something into a little jingle, you know? So that I can retain it. But yeah, so if I can gift it back, I'm all about it.

EDGAR: All right now that, that, that, and so you found out that you were doing the test, you were doing writing all the numbers, you know, what did they tell you? They were like, okay, we might have to do more tests. Like, and then what was your mindset? Like, what did you think you were? Wait, I was doing that wrong. What was your, what was that like?

CARMEN: Well, so two interactions when I was 17 and the teacher was like, okay, you know, your thing with numbers. That was one separate thing. Okay. And they did do testing. And, you know, some other things because I have been very, very smart with things and then things I struggled with that really I was struggling with them because of the way that my brain learns. But once I'm taught it in the way that my brain learns, I'm good, which is how I happen to be able to do the tech that I do and understand it the way that I do. And but two totally different interactions. I, at the age of 38 you know, through all of my life experiences I'm a firm believer that our traumas manifest in our bodies. As. Illnesses. You know, we're both in the healthcare space. I do think that a lot of the illnesses that we see are, because we're coming from trauma or environments that are traumatic or don't have the same resources, right. To give us the proper healthcare or accessibility to healthy foods or, you know, medications or what, whatever, right? Yeah. But with that you know, I developed an autoimmune condition and so for a very long time I was spending my life in and outta the hospital. Through that I had, you know, heart conditions and all these things, and finally came, you know, with the diagnosis of having an autoimmune condition. And then at the same time I was getting really, really sick and having huge, huge adversities and reactions to the form, to the medicine that I was on. So thankful the tech they. Had this test that came out

new on the market where they could swab my cheek and look at my DNA. Granted it took a month, but hey, cool. And then they could send back to the doctor, you know the data points on what I'm allergic to. And that shifted my life. The Dr. Lulu was like, never seen anything like this. You're allergic to like all the things and, and really, and then it breaks down like the variances, right? So if you take this, like how it's gonna affect you now, I was 13 when they started giving me antidepressants, things for anxiety, things to help me manage Okay. The crazy environment that I was in. Right. Do you think it helped? No, because I was, then it brought out all these other symptoms because I'm allergic to them, but they didn't know that at the time. And then, at the age of 38, I had a therapist, the first therapist ever to be like, hey, has anybody brought up this fact that maybe you might be autistic? We should get you tested too, then I really shut down and didn't have the best reaction because I was getting a lot of information and yeah, I understand what that meant. Right. And I was just like, great, one more thing that's, you know, right, to say it this way, but at the time, what it felt like, if I'm being honest, was, oh my God, there's something else wrong with me. Hard. No, no. I'm, you know, I was told I was this, I was told I was that. Let me tell you why, you know, and you're like, listen, the fact that you can tell us these things, it's like you're not, you know, however, women are very much misdiagnosed especially around autism because our symptoms can present like bipolar or like personality disorders because again, a lot of the ways that we create our personalities is through watching and mimicking. because we don't always know social cues and certain things. And that's something that I still, that I struggle with still, although, which is funny and ironic. I think it's really my quirkiness and my honesty that I guess is endearing to people. Why am able to build these relationships? Cause honestly, sometimes I say things that I'm like, oh, that was probably not, I should have said that. You're right. I mean, and especially when I first started out in business, I was very rough around the edges. Right. And why at 43 I'm gonna be working with a therapist that specifically works with adults on the spectrum so I can learn different skill sets that I didn't even know that I needed to learn. And also help my son, my eight-year-old is going through it right now and having a very difficult time. Okay. So helping both of us learn these skill sets so he doesn't have to struggle how I'm struggling, right? At 43, I didn't have this information until I was 38. Another reason why I'm intentional in going into. Diverse com communities and making sure that I can, you know, talk, we can educate around, you know, neurodiversity, autism, other illnesses in different languages so that everybody has awareness and education around what all these things mean. Yeah. You know, the Spanish community, when I learned as I was going through my healing journey, you know, when I was presented with the data, I could have made a choice. I could have said, hey, I could take on the loop, I can take on that over myself. And rightfully so, people would be like, you know what, she's been living her life in and outta the hospital for years. Yep. She's sick. Let her

be sick. Hmm. That's one mindset. Or I can do what I just do Anyway, I looked at the data, I'm a data-driven person, and I was like, okay, well the hard thing is gonna be to take accountability for my health and. the medical system that I love, I'm in it right now. You know, right now is not the system necessarily that can help me in the way that I need to be helped with this autoimmune condition. It's more gut related. You know, I have to now detox myself from all these medications that I've been on for almost 20 years, you know? And that was a whole other thing, you know? But I looked at it and I said, okay, even though this is gonna be the harder path forward, I'm gonna do that. But once I opened myself up to that, God brought me so many resources and different doctors and practitioners that, you know, did more, you know, that were more internists and focused on gut health and different things. But then the more that I learned about that, you know epigenetics and all these things, and gut health and regulating your breathing system, all these other things. I was like, oh my gosh, people in my Latin community, my Spanish community dunno anything about this and other communities. Let's bring this Yeah. To, I wanna teach this to communities. It's life changing information, you know? It's, and many don't have access to Yes, yes. Preventative care. I wanna get in front of it, right? I don't want, I wanna stop chasing the problem and creating solutions for the problem. Let's start creating solutions to be preventative, right? Mm-hmm. for feeding people with information and healthy food and healthy soil. And, you know, shows like this that showcase different resources that you can turn into that they might not necessarily have information or access to. I think what you guys do not only in providing blood with your blood, you know, makes sense, but being intentional about staying in the community and educating communities. about different resources. I think that's great. I know I mentioned that to you again. Oh, thank you. You know, before we hopped onto it. But I think what you guys are doing is so commendable because it's not just about chasing the dollars. And that's what that shows me honestly, is we're invested in community because the reality is there's a shortage of blood. The reality is we do need to get more minorities. Understanding what blood donation is, why it's important, you know, and right. Why we need it. You know, and for people like myself, because I'm allergic to things, you know, I also am, what I'm calling up, pure blood. You know, we talked, talked a little bit about that. I couldn't have the vaccination because I'm allergic to everything and I have a heart condition to our conditions. Actually I've had to wear heart monitors twice now. I've had heart. My heart on a good day works at about 50%. So when I get sick or I'm fighting an infection, It dips and gets dangerously low. So anyhow, you know, my doctor was like, we can't do the vaccine. Fine. Great. But I do think that when we talk about blood donation, I am hearing that people are wanting more of the blood That is not, you know, that is unvaccinated. I do think that we need to keep bringing awareness of the fact that there is a lack of blood donations, there is a lack of minority communities. And, you know, really bring light to

that because again, as humans, we need blood. Like it's one of the things, yeah.
[00:28:50]

EDGAR: Yeah, nothing can be, it can't be made in the lab. It comes from all of us. And the awareness and being able to have that information in front of you, you know, it's, it's on our job where we have to present that information, but it's also gonna be like, okay, there's an awareness you need, we need to provide the need. and show that the need is here and it's always here, and it's always gonna be here no matter what now. So we've done the tech, what are you up to today? I know we've done a little bit of consultant. You're helping out individuals that come from all different areas, whether from instability foster, from lack of resources at areas where there's lack of resources. What is Carmen doing today? Well,

CARMEN: thank you for that question. Well, right now they said I'm so grateful to be given the opportunity to consult and work with and partner with healthcare. I am so impressed with the organization. They've taken me under their wing. This was newer to me, you know in regards to working with certain specific healthcare systems, specifically around certain solutions. But being in automation I'm geeking out on all the things that I'm learning and workforce solutions and how it all works together, even beyond the healthcare space. Mm-hmm, but and being able to bring that, these resources again to my clients. Right. But again, just feeling so lucky to be able to work with them and help their clients and partner up with them at this bigger capacity. Because again, when we're talking about, you know, whether it's health equity, whether it's making sure that you are having, you know, the best experience on the job and off the job or onboarding a new, you know patient, which I've been a million times over the running joke at my local hospitals. I should have my own room at this point, you know, I mean, legit like I go, I know if I'm going to the emergency room that I'm probably gonna end up having to stay because my heart, they can't ever regulate me and my blood pressure dips and it's, you know, so they have to by law, like, put me in, you know, I come back, I have my laptop, I'm working, you're already prepared, you know? No. Oh yeah. And my family's also in the leadership team and in healthcare as well. So I'm very blessed and lucky in that way. But what I'm learning in this space, again, aligns with who I am, right? On the bigger scale, the health equity, the making sure we're client-centric, and we're also making sure that our doctors are supported. Healthcare ATT leaders also helps with staffing. So we have Locums choice, so we work with doctors and partner up with them. We really are through and through your partner in the healthcare space. So that was eye-opening to me. I'm very excited for the way that they're growing and what they're doing out in community around these big topics that we're gonna see and hear more of in 2023 moving forward. And learning again, you know, being able to learn and

make sure that I'm creating equitable spaces around healthcare. And also training up, you know, our next generation and more minority, the minority pipeline intentionally in the healthcare space. And being given that opportunity with healthcare IT leaders, like I said they've taken me under their wing these last five months and I'm very excited for that. With that as well, I have my own company and brand IT Girl Solutions. I T Girl Solutions. And that when it first started four years ago really started because I had clients that wanted to work with me directly around solutions and services and, which is great, a huge blessing. But I'm, I was just me. I didn't have a technical bench. So I found myself really consulting and giving, you know, the sales opportunities to other, you know, business partners that I've met in the IBM space. I'm an IBM gal that has been my space for a long time. Workflows my jam, RPA process improvement is what I love. And tying that into the workforce and how we can create inclusive spaces and AI and machine learning and how it all works together. That is my jam and I love it. And I wanna teach it to others and educate others and get them trained up so everybody can love it cause it's not going anywhere. But you know, through the IT girl brands. Now really finding myself becoming more of a public speaker and I'm gonna be launching the IT Girl Solutions podcast, the Solutions podcast, where I'm really gonna be interviewing some of the forefronts, most progressive, not only software solutions we're gonna develop in all of it, you know and really focusing on women led solutions, right? Yeah. It's an integral brand for a reason. I really wanna build up other women and their brands. I am so blessed to know, such amazing, I mean, when I tell you and amazing men as well, but such amazing, incredible, brilliant technologists, women at the forefront creating such amazing things and their thoughts around HR, workforce solutions, healthcare, how it all connects is just brilliant. So I'm gonna be having. You know, a lot of deep dives into all these conversations. You know, health, equity, what that looks like. You know, the teaching component, the upskilling component and really just geeking out on it. But also bringing the awareness and why it's important because as we know, again, it's not gonna go anywhere. Right. And really getting the next generation interested and invested in the future of technology. Again, with tech, with the trades, they work together. Yep. One or the other, you said, I have a son that went to college. I have a daughter that's in the trades right now. I'm in a welder and I'm proud of both of them because we need both. If things go down, I'm gonna need you to weld me something if I can get over so we can all drive over, you know, the river or whatever, you know, like we, it works together. Right. But so the Echo brand is really focusing on launching the podcast. And that's exciting. You know, getting that going and through that doing a DBA, which is really now turning into a whole other spin-out under the eco brand called American Agile Technologies and American Agile Technologies is going to be focusing on building our next generation of workforce. And I can't delve too much into that, but just know that we have a

pilot school and I'm so excited to be, you know, working on these things that God has placed in my heart. years ago that people said, you're not ever gonna happen. And you know what? It's all in God's timing. It's all with networking and people, and it wasn't ready yet back then, but God is giving the go ahead now. And I'll, you know, share that again with you later on once that's more scaled up. But you know, American Agile technologies is really focusing on our workforce, you know, and we need to I love America. I love diversity and I love grouping that conversation together because it is a conversation that belongs together. It's not one or the other. Whether we're a refugee here, whether we are born, you know this is a place that I'm proud of and I want to be able to give opportunity to everybody within that space, regardless of how you identify, how, you know, whatever, like this is truly focusing on school upskilling, you know, and bringing those solutions to market and building up other communities around technology. [00:37:15]

EDGAR: All about positive growth. I completely agree, and this has been amazing, Carmen. You are truly a leader, a fearless leader, an amazing soul of spirit, and I'm super excited. We've got you on podcast so that everybody can see, learn. And no matter where you come from you can get ahead. I think this has been amazing and I know we're coming up in time, but before we go, I got one question to ask you. How do you stand out from the inside?

CARMEN: Oh, well, besides all the gut health stuff that I do mm-hmm. that probably most people think it's gross. Besides drinking apple cider vinegar and things honestly for me it is absolutely I feel that I am the book God's story. God has saved my life over and over again and will continue to save my life. And I feel that I am choosing to be the change that I wanna see in the world. And the more that I'm able to walk in that integrity and alignment and gift that to others, the more that I'm going to continue to expand and elevate and grow. You know money will come, money comes, and money goes. That's not what makes you, what makes you is who you decide to be every day. And let me tell you, there are days that I have not been the greatest because I'm human, right? We all are. But we get to choose every day to wake up and walk it out differently. And that to me, is amazing. And I think that that's one of the things that makes me stand out is, one, I know that it's not of me. I know that it's my responsibility to step into it and own that power that is within me and to live that out, right? And sometimes I knock it out of the park, and like I said, I'm human. And sometimes I'm like, ugh. But after those times and those seasons, you know, I come back up and it's like, all right, let's do this. It's a brand new day, let's hit it, you know? And. I just, I don't know. I really hope that when people see me that what they see is God's light shining through me. That what they see is somebody that loves them no matter what. What they see is somebody that speaks out of just my own personal journey, and that whether it's their journey or not, whether we

believe the same things or not, doesn't matter. That I love and include them, and I'm open to hearing, you know, where they're from and their thoughts because that's growth. Right? And I think the last thing I'll leave you with is I've perfected the art of failing. I've embraced the art of failing if you will. So I think another thing that makes me different from the inside, or stand up from the inside, if you will, is the art of failing. I'm okay with failing. I fail a lot, and I fail gloriously. Sometimes in the most fashionably greatest ways. But it's through that falling and flailing that I've learned the best stuff. And now it's not only learning, it's applying the wisdom behind the learning. Right? And sometimes I got stuck in that. It's like, I'm learning, I'm learning, I'm learning. And now it's all right, let's keep applying, applying that wisdom. So anyway, I'll wrap it up, but that's what I got. [00:40:00]

EDGAR: All right guys. That wraps up the second part of our conversation with Carmen. Carmen, I wanna give you a big thanks and a round of applause for coming on the show. This has been truly amazing. I've learned a lot. I know our viewers and our listeners have learned a lot and it was super inspirational to hear from you, your story, where you came from, and where you're at now in life. Again I wanna tell everybody to donate. You know hearing a little bit about her story you know she didn't know where she was gonna be at. You know some things happen but you never know when people around you are in need of blood and a donation from one of you could help save a life. Again this is the Stand Out From the Inside podcast reminding you all to ask yourself how do you stand out from the inside. Once again, I'm your host Edgar Daggett. We'll see you all on the next episode.