

Halleemah Nash

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A passionate entrepreneur and business leader, Halleemah Nash has been a tireless advocate for underserved populations throughout the entirety of her career. From working in sports philanthropy to expanding her portfolio to public housing with the Chicago Housing Authority where she was a director of youth opportunities, to leading a youth mentoring organization, Halleemah always ensures that she uses her wide array of skills for the benefit of others, particularly those from disadvantaged communities. In her current role, Halleemah creates opportunities for young people in Chicago to gain exposure to social capital and careers that have the potential to create pathways to wealth generation. Knowing the importance of exposure herself, Halleemah guarantees that groups of students who may not have seen themselves as likely candidates for lucrative careers in investment banking and similar occupations are able to see a different narrative for themselves and combat a Belief Gap that traditionally has boxed them into a more narrow range of expectations. Halleemah understands this because she herself once felt boxed in by these narrow expectations.



Untraditional Pathway to Success

While upon a quick encounter with Halleemah, one might be rather wowed by a clearly strong and passionate leader and assume that she was always destined for success, having grown up in Compton, CA, which she attributes to building her grit and ability to hustle and motivate, she admits that if it weren't for her dedicated mentors, she may have taken a different path. When asked how she is now different than the person she hoped to be at twelve, her response is telling. "At twelve, I had a very limited view of what was possible for me. My dreams were so limited because I had limited exposure. I knew how to hustle, but I knew little about what to do with that skill. Today, I believe in limitless possibilities, and I am working to unlock that same belief in the young people I serve. Reminding them that they enter the world as full agents and they have so much of what they need to be successful as long as they can see themselves as powerful and limitless beings." Today, Halleemah is always pushing for advancement and fulfillment. She is not driven by titles or finance, but by a need to be challenged and to know that she is contributing meaningfully to her purpose and to communities where her voice matters. She knows that her pathway to success is unique because whether it has been working with athletes to use their influence for good, or helping public housing students get summer jobs and internships, or working with schools to make sure young people have mentors, she is always driven by community impact.

Making a Leader

“I believe that authenticity is key to being a great leader,” Halleemah says about leadership. “Being true to yourself and your goals, while also being collaborative, having cultural fluency, and the ability to manage different kinds of people to make sure all of them can thrive regardless of where they come from and how they enter into the team is what makes someone successful. A true leader can get the best out of every person on their team.” Halleemah most appreciates that being a leader allows her to help others grow by understanding their goals and how to get them there. She believes in providing guidance and inspiration, and as someone whose mentors were critical to her own growth, takes the role of mentoring very seriously in her own work. She knows that being a strong mentor can also influence her team to become mentors and leaders themselves.

Leading isn't Always Easy

“If I am the only woman in the room, or the only person from the inner city, then I am uniquely positioned to provide a perspective that no one else can. Those views give me a competitive advantage despite some of the challenges associated with being ‘different.’”

“Leaders always have to make sacrifices. I wish I could say it becomes easy, but that’s not the case. At any level of an organization you have to make tough choices,” she shares. “It is easier or more manageable to achieve balance if you keep humanity in mind, which we don’t often do at work.” Halleemah believes that in society, we tend to find it more attractive to be busy or working constantly as opposed to sharing that you’ve spent time in meditation or on vacation or with your family. But she also knows that caring for yourself is a sacrifice that is crucial to make to avoid burning out. Additionally, she finds value in some of the challenges surrounding being different from others she might be working with. “In many places I have worked, I might be the only woman, or the only person of color. But I am very thankful that in my work I get to stay connected to the people I am serving. That I can help people who look like me and position myself to add value to their lives. That feels like a gift.”

Advice for Future Leaders

“Define for yourself what authentic living and authentic leadership is. It’s easy to define what your job should be and how you should show up based on industry standards or cultural expectations. But defining it for yourself—what makes sense for you in terms of your values—can set you up for early success. I think you do your best work when you are authentically yourself.” Halleemah admits that her own advice isn’t always easy to follow, even for herself. But she manages to turn challenges and her own experiences into her greatest strengths as a leader. “It’s taken a long time in my career to finally understand that I don’t always have to be perfect. In fact, it’s often in the mistakes I have made that I have learned the most valuable lessons in leadership.”

