Michele Joseph [00:00:04] Well, good morning, my name is Michele Joseph and I am delighted to introduce you to Gary Gadson. Gary is a graduate from Georgetown University. And we are gathered today to really talk about how we can add to we Are Georgetown: Celebrating our Black History oral history project. Today happens to be the 28th of March in 2024. And Gary, welcome. We definitely appreciate you taking the time today to speak to us and to share your experience at Georgetown. I thought it would be important to kick off, to just give us some overview of what first of all your background is, what you did at Georgetown and just your overall experience?

Gary Gadson [00:01:07] Thank you. Michele. It's a, it's a pleasure to be here. I actually grew up in the Washington, D.C. area. Well, first, I should say thank you for having me. It's a pleasure and honor to be here and spend time with you. I grew up in the Washington, D.C. area, pretty much in my high school year, teenage years, high school years. It was in the 80s. So, actually, I was a big Georgetown Hoyas fan growing up in the D.C. area. We had affinity to Georgetown. And so I think that's how Georgetown originally got on my radar. But actually, Georgetown was a school that felt out of reach for me at the time. And, if I knew much about Ivy League at the time, Georgetown felt Ivy League, obviously it felt like a prestigious institution to me at the time. So, knew I was aware of Georgetown, knew of its existence mainly through sports and being familiar with the area. But at the same time, it felt a little off limits or beyond my reach at the time. So I grew up in the, growing up in area, I ended up picking an HBCU, Historically Black College and University to attend. So I did my undergrad at at Bowie State University in mathematics. And actually I continued my education and actually did a master's in electrical and computer engineering because I wanted to pursue engineering. And then during my career, I made a decision that I wanted to be an executive; I call it go vertical within the company and, and made the decision that an MBA would be important to me. And so I had considered top MBA programs at the time. I won't mention the other schools, but Georgetown was definitely in my top three for a number of reasons because of its ranking, because of some things that we'll get into later in terms of fit. But it was a great opportunity for me to consider Georgetown. And I actually ended up going to Georgetown to get my, my MBA, executive MBA, to be specific. And it really has been a tremendous benefit, in many different ways, which I'm sure we'll get into.

Michele Joseph [00:03:41] Absolutely. Thank you for sharing, Gary. And I wanted to also ask you, you know, were there any memorable experiences while at Georgetown attending the executive MBA program, perhaps a professor or class?

Gary Gadson [00:03:57] Yeah, absolutely. There are a number and probably too many to, to mention. But two things stand out to me was the quality of the cohort. I was very impressed with my colleagues. The people were coming in and they were both intelligent, smart, ambitious, accomplished, but they were actually down to earth and approachable. That was one thing that was very striking to me and that I appreciated. Another thing I really enjoyed was the the quality and accessibility of the professors. One professor continues to be a friend to this day, Bardia Kamrad. He's a professor in the business school. He, I consider him a mentor, a friend, a sponsor, and, people like him. Dean Almeida, now is the dean of the business school, was one of my professors at the time, you know, still have personal relationships with both of them to this day. And I can mention other professors as well. But the the quality of the cohort on many different levels and as well as the teaching and the professors and the accessibility was particularly memorable and one that I enjoy access to to this day.
Michele Joseph [00:05:19] Excellent. I remember Bardia Kamrad, too, so he definitely touched a lot of people at Georgetown.

Gary Gadson [00:05:27] Very good.

Michele Joseph [00:05:28] I wanted to ask you, you know, now that you have obviously graduated with your executive MBA, you know, what have you done with your Georgetown experience and how has that impacted you first up professionally as well as personally?

Gary Gadson [00:05:51] So professionally, I need to go back in time. I was, when I came to Georgetown, I was already a manager. I would consider myself a middle manager, and I wanted to be an executive in the technology space. Not only that, I wanted to expose myself not to just the corporate world, but at the time, it was a growing area of private equity, which companies were taking investment dollars, taking funds and actually finding companies to purchase and then, in their own way, making them better, scaling them up, growing them and then selling those businesses. And it was an exciting time. I was motivated, actually, by, someone I didn't know, but a book that I read a long time ago, it was called Why Should White Guys Have All the Fun. It was a book about Reginald Lewis that gave me my first exposure to that whole industry, and so that always stuck in the back of my mind. And when I got in corporate America, I thought, hey, why don't I use my talents to move beyond just the corporate world and do something in the private equity space. so I actually came to Georgetown with the intent of getting my MBA and moving into the private equity space. So went, got my MBA and really pursued moving from a company which was AT&T at that time to moving to private equity. But just so happens, after I finished my MBA, I felt like I had tools, the network, the skills; I felt ready. But turns out there was a turn in the marketplace around that time. I finished my MBA in 2005, and there are some things going on in the marketplace around 2008. The internet, I mean, some some things were happening around the internet, but not at the internet, but on the housing market.

Michele Joseph [00:07:55] The housing market, finance.

Gary Gadson [00:07:55] Investment banks. I was trying to get jobs and private equity, investment banks, and they were actually trying to get corporate jobs. So I was, I thought to myself this may not be the right time to move into private equity. So I ended up staying at AT&T. But the the great thing happened is I did get a chance to what I call go vertical. I got a chance to move into things like strategy, merger integration, divestitures. I got a chance to move from being a line manager and working in things like sales and marketing as well as operations. I got a chance to do corporate strategy, corporate planning, corporate development types of work. So although I didn't move into, into private equity immediately, I got some exposure to the types of things you would do in this space. Now you fast forward to where I am now. Over about four years ago, I actually left AT&T and went to work for what I would call to my friend. Not quite a startup, but a scale up. It was a more mature business that we were trying to grow, and I've actually spent the last three years working for either private equity firms or private investors who acquire companies in the telecom space and are attempting to grow them, which brings me to where I am today. I'm the CEO of ByVerTex, which is a fiber and infrastructure construction company. And basically what we do is build broadband networks for major service providers, like an AT&T, like a Cox, like a Verizon and that nature. And then we also do a for municipalities. Just one thing, when I talk about broadband infrastructure, it means it is driving everything
that we do today. I mean, if you think at the individual level, we work and learn from home now.

Michele Joseph [00:09:57] Yes.

Gary Gadson [00:09:57] you have internet of things, not just industrial internet of things in business, but even in our homes, that, you know, sometimes I can hear my wife when she turns on the stove because it pops up on my phone. So you get home and industrial ILT, you have video is pervasive now that increasingly is not going over an antenna, but over broadband networks. You have, you have video everywhere. You have so many things. And then on top of that, you have AI.

Michele Joseph [00:10:35] Al. Yes.

Gary Gadson [00:10:35] You have artificial intelligence. You have electric vehicles, you have cryptocurrency. You have hyperscalers like Amazon, Google. So you have all these demands for broadband. And so it's, I'm in a great space to to help a company grow. And hopefully, we're, we're positioned at the right time in the right place, in the right market.

Michele Joseph [00:10:58] Absolutely. Oh that's so true. And when you mentioned AI, there's so many applications for it and it's definitely, at least at this time, a hot topic. I'm going to shift a little bit for you, Gary, I'm going to talk to you specifically about, you know, what advice that you would have for students who are considering Georgetown, especially Black students. And please include with that your experience as a Black student at Georgetown.

Gary Gadson [00:11:29] So I will. Thank you, that's a good question. An interesting question. I, you know, what I'm learning is that for Black students, Black students come from a variety of backgrounds. So, you know, so much to consider in that question. But what I would say is that I have an opportunity to interview candidates who are interviewing for the business school. And I always say, you know, you pick Georgetown when you want. I believe you pick Georgetown when you want to shoot for the top, when you want to have access to the best teaching, to access to the best students, the best environment possible, you know. And so to me, when you want to do extraordinary, extraordinary things, you want to aim high in your career, you want to get the most out of an educational experience. To me, Georgetown is the type of institution that you select when you want to have access and opportunity to pursue your highest ambition in your career, in your personal life, and that kind of thing. And I would tell Black students specifically, don't shy away from that is so much richness and opportunity and just imagining what your dreams are. And really using Georgetown as a vehicle to manifest those dreams. Michele, I would say what I find is that people have big, I find over time that people have big dreams, big ambitions, and big goals. But when they start thinking about how do they reach that, those goals, the, the the lack of clarity about how to get to that end goal makes them compromise on what they really want to do. And so instead of picking what they really want to go after, they actually select something that they can actually see their way through. You mentioned being blessed to be here earlier. It's like not using faith, right? So you actually have to decide and then use faith to get there. Faith without works is dead, right? You have, is like where faith is where dreams and ambitions meet action. And so Georgetown is one of those things you can actively do to help pursue your goals. And that's what I would, I would encourage people to do. Think of Georgetown as that vehicle to help you reach your wildest dreams and ambitions. My experience was tremendous at Georgetown as I mentioned. I approached it as, no judgment, try to be totally present in
the moment and make the most of the experience. I was really keen on building new relationships and getting out of my comfort zone. Don’t, don’t just move to the people that you’re normally comfortable with. I knew that Georgetown was drawn from a rich diversity of people, talents and interests. And so that was my turn opportunity not to just learn in the classroom, but learn through others’ experiences. And, and that's one of the things I thought was great. And I took great advantage of that. And many of those friends in my cohort, people in my core cohort of friends to this day, I visit with them, I stay with them, I vacation with them. We still have things like fantasy football leagues together. We still eat dinner together.

Michele Joseph [00:15:36] That's great!

Gary Gadson [00:15:37] On an annual basis.

Michele Joseph [00:15:38] Oh that's great!

Gary Gadson [00:15:39] So it has been a lifelong, benefited lifelong from that experience. And I wouldn't have gotten that much out of it if I didn't totally give myself to it and not just hang with certain people or move in certain circles, but take advantage of the full opportunities that's available at the university.

Michele Joseph [00:16:03] Oh, that’s a, first of all, thank you for sharing that, because just the fact that you’re still keeping in touch with each other, having those conversations, keeping up, you know, that's amazing. Just to dovetail and to add to what you're sharing, as a graduate, I didn't do the executive MBA, but I also did the MBA program. That's one of the things that I have to say it's a great takeaway because you develop those relationships and you remember those times and you feel like you've been in the trenches together, right? So thank you. Thank you. I appreciate hearing that.

Gary Gadson [00:16:42] I want to tell you one thing when you you said being in the trenches together. I had friends, my wife and I had dear friends before, they're still dear friends to this day. I mean, like that. But before I went to business school, we spent a lot of time with them. And you talk about being in the trenches. The program was about 20 months or so, 20, and I did not realize there I didn't see or do much but spend time with my cohort for two years, and I didn't realize it till after I finished the program. I looked around at my friends before business school and I was like, wow, I didn't realize we hadn't seen each other in approximately two years because of the program. It was a lot of work, but it was a lot of fun though, and we had a great time. And talking about being in the trenches, it felt like we were we right there together for, for the entire time.

Michele Joseph [00:17:32] Oh, excellent. Excellent. Well, while you were there, is there anything that you could say specifically that would be a memorable takeaway for our oral history. Something that perhaps we haven't touched on with your experience at Georgetown, or something that you could say, that you saved that you consider for possible inclusion in the archives?

Gary Gadson [00:18:04] Oh, wow. Yeah, I'm not sure. You know, one of the things that's, very interesting. I have to think about that a little more, is as far as an item that's interesting is that when I went to school in 2005 and I spent time on campus, I give back to, participate in supporting Georgetown communities is one of the things that I choose to spend my time on because it had an impact on me. And so sometimes I feel like I'm much older now. And, when we went to business school, we had literally a face book, which was
actually a paper book that had your name and some of the highlights of your career. So what people know to now at, today as Facebook, then, there was, and it came out, you know, when Zuckerberg made it, it came out of the Facebook that they did at Harvard.

Michele Joseph [00:19:11] Right.

Gary Gadson [00:19:12] He digitized that and made it into, you know, Facebook, which we know today. But there was a face book at the time with the, with your names and everything in it, and, and I actually don't, I haven't thrown mine away. Probably the people who are attending business school now wouldn't know what it was, but I think that was that interesting relic of the time.


Gary Gadson [00:19:39] But I would have to think, obviously we have pendants and things of that nature, but, that's the only thing that stands out to me at this time that I can put my hand on that I think would be very interesting in terms of what an old face book would actually look like.

Michele Joseph [00:19:54] It's really interesting. I'm intrigued too, I kind of want to see it, too.

Gary Gadson [00:20:01] Yes.

Michele Joseph [00:20:01] Well, first of all, thank you for your time. Thank you for an opportunity for us to be able to share your oral history. Thank you for sharing your own personal experience and your trajectory and your advice for the future of Georgetown. I think it is unique for any student who is choosing to go to Georgetown, but in particular, there's a unique story for those of us who are African American or from the African diaspora. So I appreciate your time, Gary, much success to you. Definitely keep in touch and keep doing what you're doing.

Gary Gadson [00:20:41] Thank you so much. This has been indeed an honor and a pleasure to spend time with you and share my story. Yeah. Thanks again. I really appreciate it. Take care.

Michele Joseph [00:20:52] You too.