



Episode 80: Thinking Successfully

Featuring: Mingo Palacios & Jose Rodriguez

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Transcript:

Mingo Palacios: [00:11](#) Hey everybody, thanks for tuning into the PD podcast. You know, from time to time, we get the luxury of traveling around the country and actually bringing our podcast to conferences and events that are happening all over the country. This conversation took place at Urban Youth Workers Institute conference. It was a collaboration podcast where we combined both our efforts and Urban Youth Workers efforts to bring one cohesive podcast. I hope you enjoy.

Mingo Palacios: [00:38](#) Welcome everybody to the PD Cast/Urban Youth Workers Podcast, the ultimate mashup as we're here at the Urban Youth Workers Institute Conference. I'm sitting across the table from Jose Rodriguez. An

incredible story as we've been kind of unpacking it this morning about how the Lord used you, personally lead you as a pastor, to rethink the way we engaged youth in their own schools. And you've been leading several conversations here by way of breakout, one in particular, meeting the Needs of a City. Unpack for our audience what you are doing in order to reach youth. Unbelievable.

Jose Rodriguez: [01:18](#)

Yes. So, we kind of got a little innovative. I started helping out on school campuses with Christian clubs and I found out that there were like eight kids in a Christian club and then the youth pastors that were helping out were super territorial so they thought I was going to steal these eight kids. So, I got a little frustrated. I said, "Well, you guys can have the eight kids. I want the school. We want to go after the ones that are not in this little circle." And so I met with a principal from a school that I didn't think anybody was on and I said, "Hey, I'm a youth pastor here. I want to come and just serve. I want to just come in and help however I can. I'll pick up trash at lunch time. Whatever." And she was like, "Well, because you're a pastor, we're not interested."

Jose Rodriguez: [01:51](#)

Yeah, pretty much. So you know, I'm just too thuggish to just let a no happen.

Mingo Palacios: [01:57](#)

[laughing]

Jose Rodriguez: [01:59](#)

So I went back. I've had some business mentors along my journey and people that kind of poured into

me and so I wrote a curriculum teaching success principles. I realized that if you could change the way a student thinks, particularly in urban environments, you could change their entire life. And so our whole curriculum is based around thinking successfully. What does that really look like? And so we wrote the curriculum. I had one teacher say, "Hey, we want you to come in. I have a leadership class." It was really just like these kids that are struggling. They just called it a leadership class, right?

Mingo Palacios: [02:24](#)

Right.

Jose Rodriguez: [02:25](#)

So, we do the thing and she started giving me kind of the wisdom of the school district.

Mingo Palacios: [02:30](#)

You said teaching you the language of the district itself because it's like a whole ecosystem, right?

Jose Rodriguez: [02:36](#)

It's own thing, literally. And so what she told me was that particularly our district was adopting a positive behavior intervention specialist. Okay. So here's kind of the nuts and bolts of why. There was a law passed in our district that said when you were a middle schooler, you can get a citation just for loitering, just for hanging out. So they were citing these kids, but they did it because when the kids would get in trouble, the parents wouldn't respond. So they said, "If we give a kid a citation, the parent would have to go to court." Well parents still aren't responding. They're not taking their kids to court. So now a kid is applying for college and you've got to explain why you got a

warrant for your arrest because you didn't go to court because her mom never took you. So the way we're disciplining these kids is contributing to our prison system. It's literally leading them right to the jailhouse.

Mingo Palacios: [03:20](#) It's like a prerequisite or like pre-exposure to what that future ultimately leads them to.

Jose Rodriguez: [03:25](#) Exactly. So I'm a part of this whole conversation and then I'm talking to the teacher and the teacher gives me her perspective. The teacher's like, "Well, that sucks for us because now they're kind of telling us we can't discipline these kids. There's nothing that we can do to correct them."

Mingo Palacios: [03:36](#) Right.

Jose Rodriguez: [03:37](#) And she told me, she was like, "Kids know this before we do." So, kids will act out.

Mingo Palacios: [03:45](#) They don't even care.

Jose Rodriguez: [03:45](#) They really don't care.

Mingo Palacios: [03:45](#) Because there's no consequences then. Right?

Jose Rodriguez: [03:47](#) None. And so now teachers are afraid, teachers are trying to figure out what to do. And so then the district overall was adopting a positive behavior intervention system. And so she told me they tier the students. A tier one is a good kid. A tier two is like a repeat offender suspension referrals. And there are other factors like poverty and stuff that goes into it. And

then a tier three, you're on your way to continuation school. You're kind of done with that.

Mingo Palacios: [04:09](#) That's where John was, our producer. That's where he went.

Jose Rodriguez: [04:10](#) I love it. I was on the verge. I got kicked out of a couple of schools when I was in high school too. I said, "Okay." She said, "We're really looking for help with the tier two students" because they felt like the tier two students, it's still salvageable, you can still-

Mingo Palacios: [04:25](#) There's still potential there.

Jose Rodriguez: [04:25](#) Yeah, with the right amount of somebody speaking life into them. So they let me come in and there's one that they literally gave me like 12, like young guys and said, "Hey, come on, just walk with them." Right? So I spent six weeks with these 12 guys and they didn't even really let me do my curriculum. So they were like, "We just want to come in and just hang out with you guys." So six weeks with 12 guys who are all struggling grades, behavior. So at the end of it I asked like "What were the grades? Did the grades come up?" And she was like, "No, we don't really see an increase in grades." So I'm like, "Okay, well what am I doing?" Well, the truth was my grades were never my thing because I had to realize that it wasn't a tutoring program. We're not in study hall.

Mingo Palacios: [05:00](#) Of course. We're not trying to teach you algebra.

Jose Rodriguez: [05:02](#) Right. But behavior was. And we saw an increase in their attendance. So the principal asked one of the kids, he said, "What have you learned from this six weeks? I mean, this intervention thing." And he said, "Don't be late."

Mingo Palacios: [05:12](#) That's awesome.

Jose Rodriguez: [05:12](#) If that's all you learned-

Mingo Palacios: [05:16](#) Life principle.

Jose Rodriguez: [05:16](#) Exactly right. Yeah. And it'll get you a long ways. This was like two years ago. Today, they're all still in school. They haven't dropped out. Their behavior is better. Grades, maybe not, I don't know. That's, you know, they got to put the work in.

Mingo Palacios: [05:30](#) That's for the teacher.

Jose Rodriguez: [05:30](#) You're right, but their behavior and stuff is better. So what we do is we learn their language. So now we sit down with principals and school districts and say, "Hey, you need what we have to offer." And they contract us to come in once a week and get a chance to really life coach students back to behavioral health.

Mingo Palacios: [05:46](#) It's funny because your original aim was ministry to the student. Their ecosystem was their school, coming in as a pastor, you met huge roadblocks, right? The state sets it up so that you can't enter as a religious organization or person. So the entrepreneurial approach, I'm telling you over and

over and over again that has become like a common thread amongst urban ministry is like to have my bible in my back pocket as I give you my business card because that's the avenue that's giving me more access to more people in this moment.

Jose Rodriguez: [06:22](#)

Yeah.

Mingo Palacios: [06:23](#)

So I love that. That's not a theory that you are thinking about. That's an avenue by which you're actually ministering to students. So tell me this, if you have somebody who you is listening, somebody who maybe sat inside of your breakout session that's now digging deeper, what's like step one for somebody who wants to maybe emulate, not carbon copy but emulate with what they've got by way of skill set their own hustle, what would you give them as advice?

Jose Rodriguez: [06:58](#)

Yeah. So one of the misconceptions of purpose is that purpose is only confined to what you're passionate about. It's probably the most false thing you could ever hear. Purpose is more defined by what you're burdened by. Right? And so I always tell people, "Find a need. What's the need that makes you pound the table? What's the thing that just frustrates you, that you just, you won't be able to sleep at night because this is not right." Right? So for me, that need is poverty. At the end of it all is poverty. Okay. The effects of poverty leads to the education, the prison pipeline. The effects of poverty lead to violence. The effect of poverty leads to all of these things. But because I was born in poverty, I'm a first generation

college graduate. I was a gang member when I was 12 years old, so I did all of this stuff, but I can't sleep at night unless I'm dealing with poverty. So I found a need and then I found my skill set, what I already did. So I had a success curriculum and then I became a certified life coach. Now I could go do this for businesses across America and make really a whole lot of money. But I was like, "My passion is young people." That's my passion, young people. My burden is poverty. How can I mix the two?

Mingo Palacios: [08:04](#)

How do you merge them?

Jose Rodriguez: [08:05](#)

Yeah. And then begin to really meet a need in our community. And so, what I realized was the I'm meeting in my community is really a nationwide need. So we turned our curriculum into a video curriculum because I could put my paper curriculum in the hands of anybody. And if you're not a good communicator, it may not go over the same way.

Mingo Palacios: [08:20](#)

Right, but the video allows you to be the voice to any circle.

Jose Rodriguez: [08:23](#)

Because we speak the language of the culture.

Mingo Palacios: [08:25](#)

You're the Ryan Seacrest of life, bro.

Jose Rodriguez: [08:27](#)

Yeah, absolutely. So we did that and our hope, honestly, is to be able to get that into the hands of youth pastors who are bi-vocational or need a side hustle.

Mingo Palacios: [08:39](#) Totally.

Jose Rodriguez: [08:39](#) We'll negotiate contracts with schools because we're getting pretty good at that.

Mingo Palacios: [08:43](#) You're already versed in that approach.

Jose Rodriguez: [08:45](#) Exactly. And then we stipend youth pastors. So we're literally paying you to do what you already should be doing anyways. So that's kind of the entrepreneurial side of it, of what we want to do futuristically. But honestly, you've got to find a need. When I found out how big the need was, I realized that I'd never go without a job. I'll never be jobless.

Mingo Palacios: [09:01](#) I just want to recap because somebody probably their cap just got blown off listening to that. You have to really search for what upsets you, what is the injustice that like keeps you from sleeping?

Jose Rodriguez: [09:18](#) Yeah, absolutely.

Mingo Palacios: [09:19](#) And once you figure out what that is, and it doesn't have to be poverty, that's your unique story, whatever that is, then you examine your own gift, set your own shape, right? That which the Lord has crafted you and it's not just your spiritual gifts, it's your experience, it's your talent, it's your history, it's all of it combined. Shuffle that deck together and then figure out where the Lord might open a door for you to dig in and don't wait for it to come to you. We had mad conversations yesterday about people were saying, "If I would have waited for it to come to me, I would have never

actually got started." So you've got to go just start knocking on doors. And getting a lot of no's before you get a few yes's along the way. Right?

Jose Rodriguez: [10:07](#) Yeah.

Mingo Palacios: [10:07](#) So don't be discouraged if you figure what the first part out in the second part out and you start going and knocking on doors. You're going to hit, I'm going to say the ratio is probably like 15 to one.

Jose Rodriguez: [10:17](#) Yeah.

Mingo Palacios: [10:17](#) You're going to get a lot of no's before you get somebody to roll the dice and say, "I'll come in." And your story in particular, you said you didn't even get to deploy the tactic, right? They said just come hang with students. So you didn't even get to run that which you had built.

Jose Rodriguez: [10:17](#) Right.

Mingo Palacios: [10:17](#) So a lot of times your first shot isn't going to be the full expression of what you've been building in the lab.

Jose Rodriguez: [10:17](#) Right.

Mingo Palacios: [10:17](#) Right?

Jose Rodriguez: [10:17](#) And it was for free. I didn't pay me nothing and it was literally just come in for six weeks and just hang out with these kids. Well, it's already what I want to do. And I realized that if I could do that really well, I could build rapport with this teacher. So I'm being coached

right now by a guy and I've been ridiculed for being a home run hitter. What he told me was, he said, "You wait for the right pitch and swing for the fences." And so what I did even with that, and it's kind of how I avoided a lot of no's in the beginning because I didn't get a lot of no's at first, but it's because I looked for the right relationship that can kind of get me in the back door to set the meeting up and then put their stamp of approval on me.

Mingo Palacios: [11:16](#)

That's really good.

Jose Rodriguez: [11:16](#)

So that's kind of how I went at first. So now we're probably seeing a lot more no's because now I'm no longer just waiting for the right pitch, we're just going after it.

Mingo Palacios: [11:23](#)

Swing, swing, swing.

Jose Rodriguez: [11:24](#)

So yeah.

Mingo Palacios: [11:24](#)

That's good. So tell me, for the Urban Youth Worker Conference, what is it about this gathering that excites you?

Jose Rodriguez: [11:31](#)

Man, this is like a family reunion. As I was studying youth ministry at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, it was a very kind of suburban focus on youth ministry and I was already, we were bussing in 200 urban kids to this youth ministry I was a part of. And I remember sitting in this class and thinking, "They're not talking my language, you're talking about a parent engagement. Half my parents are worse than these

students." Like it's just, you're not talking the same language. And so literally my youth ministry professor told me about UIWI and I became a fan, didn't see them because they stopped doing the conference like in 2008 when I first heard about them. So, I went to a conference, I met Larry. Some other conference, met Larry.

Mingo Palacios: [12:11](#)

You got the wizard.

Jose Rodriguez: [12:11](#)

The wizard, literally. I had already done my homework. So literally Larry's about to get this big talk to like 5,000 guys. I walked right up to the stage as he's on the stage prepping, "Hey, you don't know who I am, but I don't know who you are. I'm Jose. I just want to like talk. Can we talk?" And you know, Larry's Larry, so Larry's like, "Dude, meet me on the side when I'm done with my talk." And I don't remember what the conference was about. I just remember I hung out with Larry the whole time. Then when I moved out here to San Bernardino, Larry was like, "If you're ever in the LA area, hit me up. And we got connected there and this conference has been literally not just like a family reunion but a launching pad for me and with my own skill set and my own expertise and what I have to bring to the table. And so, it's been a fun journey to be able to find a community that speaks our language, that they're in the trenches with us. And then you get here and you're like, "Man, I'm not crazy. There are others."

Mingo Palacios: [13:03](#) So good. For our listening audience, you know, there's all these emerging leaders that are right now scheming up what their ministry is going to be like and what their hustle is going to be and they're probably hoping that they can blend the two for like the perfect setup. What would you tell somebody who's in the development process right now? I'm going to say like the 10 year younger you who's listening right now? What do you tell that person?

Jose Rodriguez: [13:32](#) Be a constant learner. Ask a ton of questions. I was really naive in the beginning and I just kind of just jumped out and was like, "I'm just going to figure it out." But I thought I was the answer to all of this stuff and I realized I had to get knocked on my tail several times and realize, "Okay, that's not the route we need to go and then don't do it this way." And so literally, find the right mentors, get the right people in your life to speak into your life. I'm a believer in being submitted to the right leadership because I think it literally unlocks your future. Submission don't take away power, it actually gives you more power.

Mingo Palacios: [14:02](#) Wow, thank you for that.

Jose Rodriguez: [14:02](#) It's bad when millennials, because we're the worst at this entrepreneurial thing. "We're going to be our own boss and we don't want to answer to nobody." Well that's really dysfunctional.

Mingo Palacios: [14:15](#) That's like a great recipe for failure is actually what it is.

Jose Rodriguez: [14:17](#) Absolutely. And so I have literally, Larry, my pastor and my pastor, yeah he don't let me, you know, feel myself.

Mingo Palacios: [14:32](#) Your head has got to be small enough to get in the studio.

Jose Rodriguez: [14:32](#) [laughing] Exactly. And so, we got a group of people that are literally helping to speak into my life and the direction of what I feel like God is telling me. I always tell people, "If you feel like God is telling you something, get wisdom before you ever try to jump out because you have no idea. You could set yourself up for failure by doing it prematurely.

Mingo Palacios: [14:48](#) Yes!

Jose Rodriguez: [14:48](#) You'll be in a whole world of trouble.

Mingo Palacios: [14:49](#) That's a great word of advice. I really appreciate that Jose. So, if somebody wants to get connected to you, if somebody wants to get connected to your organization, if somebody is listening, they go, "Yo, I want to be that keen to get into a campus as a coach." How do they do that?

Jose Rodriguez: [15:05](#) Yeah. So we have a website rescueageneration.org. You can check it out. Some of our information is on there. You can contact us through there. I'm all over social media. My personal handle is Jay Rodriguez, number three J R are and then we have rescueageneration all over social media. Also, it's @rescueagen. And so feel free to contact us for

anything that we can help or support. I would definitely love to.

Mingo Palacios: [15:29](#)

That's great. Jose, I really appreciate your time. Thanks for being on the podcast with us. If you're listening to this and it encourages you or it brings to mind somebody who you know who ought to listen to this conversation, tag them or share it and yeah, be encouraged. There are more avenues by which God can use you then I think you even know exists out there. Jose, you're clearly one of those examples. So thanks for being on the show with us. Really appreciate it. We'll talk to you guys soon.

Mingo Palacios: [16:00](#)

We hope today's insights left you feeling inspired and propelled towards your greatest potential. Thanks again for joining us for another episode of the PD Podcast. Until next time.

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