

ARLAN: I'm Arlan Hamilton. This is Your First Million. I'm a venture capitalist. I started my fund, Backstage Capital, from the ground up while I was on food stamps. I have now invested in more than 100 companies led by women, people of color, and LGBT founders. After having raised more than \$10 million, people often ask me how I did it. I created this podcast so I could tell you my story and so that together we could go on a journey and speak with some of the most successful people in the world from all backgrounds and walks of life to learn how they got their first million. Who knows, maybe I'll reach my first million in personal capital while I'm recording this series. There's only one way to find out. Let's go.

ARLAN: Hi, welcome back to your first million, it's Arlan. I'm so happy to have you here. Thank you for coming back every week and just caring. I just love getting to meet you all. Let's keep that going. I'm back in Los Angeles. I'm back home. I'm actually here for at least three weeks, which is crazy. I don't think I've been at home for three weeks for a long time, maybe since last Christmas and maybe even four or five weeks. We'll see what the New Year brings. I'm back. I'm in my podcast room at my home office recording this intro like I do when I can.

ARLAN: Well, last week if you listened to the last episode with Dana Chanel, I was just turning the corner on being in Atlanta and Miami. That same trip, I found my way to Washington, D.C. I went to Washington because the website, political.com, gave me an award. I know, it's really, really amazing. I was super, super surprised when they reached out and we did a video that they recorded in California, and then there was the event. The event was just an all-day annual summit that I heard a lot of people say was their favorite event of that kind of the year who were regular. I was there all day and it was really, really fun and interesting.

ARLAN: What a day to be there because it was the day that Nancy Pelosi and her team basically said, "Yeah, we are going to suggest that there are articles of impeachment and that, yes, we're going to move ahead with this," that same morning. Maybe two hours later, once that press conference ended, Nancy Pelosi was in the building on that stage and we were all a few feet away listening to her talk about making history that day. It was a mixed crowd too because it was a political event. It wasn't like it was all people thinking the exact same thing. I think it was really, really interesting to be there.

ARLAN: One of my favorite panels was with three Black women who have major roles on three of the top democratic campaigns right now. There was Symone Sanders who is an advisor to Joe Biden. It was Aleesia Johnson, she's in public engagement for Elizabeth Warren, and then Nina Smith who is the traveling secretary for Pete Buttigieg. You might remember that I interviewed Pete earlier this year and I also interviewed Nina very briefly on that same day. It was off the cuff and an exciting episode for me to tape because I'm not a journalist. It wasn't like I was on the beach. I had been invited to moderate a town hall event in Oakland for Pete by his team. I was neutral.

ARLAN: I had not, and still have not endorsed anyone, but I was there to ask questions and to be transparent and to be honest in my questions about race relations and everything. Afterwards, I was able to interview them both. This panel of the three ladies

interviewed by Laura Barron-Lopez from POLITICO was really great. I learned and we all learn that they have these women at these different campaigns have this group chat and they talk about things to lift each other up and support each other even though they are competing against each other. They talk about things like when Kamala Harris left the race, how that made them feel, and what that meant to them.

ARLAN: I felt that the impression that there was a somberness to it that was really, really compelling. I love that panel. I want to say hi to everyone from that panel. If you're listening, I know that we were able to talk afterwards. If you're listening to this episode as your first episode, thank you for tuning in and continued success on the road ahead. We all have the same mission. I think that we, meaning I'm going to speak for myself and those ladies, we all have the same mission of getting our candidate, whoever that maybe, into the office. Very cool. I have to get into this episode because, oh my goodness, if you're here, you've seen most likely the title of this episode.

ARLAN: You know who I'm interviewing. I don't even know how to start with this because it's Ellen freaking Pompeo. I think I might title the episode that because that's who it is. She plays Meredith Grey on Grey's Anatomy. No matter what country you're in, what age you are, what background you have, you've at least heard of Grey's Anatomy, which is in itself ... I mean, maybe there are a few people who have not, but most of the people listening to this I think would have at least heard of it. That in itself is such a testament to what a phenomenon it has become over the past 15 or so years, 16 seasons, doing the 16th season now. Ellen has been ... She's the title character.

ARLAN: I remember watching in real time the pilot episode 15 or so years ago and she's been on almost every episode, if not all, and just an incredible body of work. That longevity is so impressive to me. Let me tell you how it happened. A few months ago, I can't remember exactly when because I probably fainted at the time, I noticed that Ellen liked something on Instagram that I posted. I can't remember exactly what it was, but she liked something that I posted. I was like, what? How does she even know who I am to even look in my direction? I went to her page and I did the thing where you search to see who's following you. She was following me.

ARLAN: I was like, oh my goodness, when did that happen? That was cool. Over the course of a few months, I got the nerve and I said, "Hey, would you like to be on the podcast, this new podcast that I'm doing, Your First Million?" When she was able to do it, she was like, "Yeah, I'd love to, sure. Let's make it happen." Easy as that. It was like an instinct I think from her that she knew that I wasn't crazy, hopefully, and that it might be interesting. I don't know if she's heard any episodes. That's how it happened. We planned it out. I've known that we were going to do this for about two months.

ARLAN: I've just been so giddy and excited to tell everybody, tell you all who are loyal listeners or even new listeners that this was happening because I just couldn't wait to dig into this conversation. Let me tell you, the adrenaline and even the calmness from this conversation that washed over me is still with me. It was recorded at her house. It was just me and a couple of my traveling mics that I use with all of my interviews that are not in the podcast room. It was just one-on-one. Ellen, as you'll hear, I'm going to get

right to it. I'm not going to let you all wait too much longer. As you'll hear, she is honest. She is transparent. She is reflective.

ARLAN: It's an interesting study, a constant study of character, of her own character. At one point in this interview, she talks about how ... She knows that she's really good at studying character for her art, for her acting. That's what she can do with her eyes closed. I think what I got from this is that she's constantly doing that for herself. At least from what I was able to see, she's constantly reflecting on who she is, what does she stand for, what does she learned, and what can be tweaked, and et cetera. For someone like me who's so incredibly curious about people, it was just like a playground because we got to talk about a lot of different subjects.

ARLAN: She was so giving in her answers. I'm not going to stretch this out too much longer. Just listen in. Just listen in. I cannot wait for you all to hear this. As always, I will see you on the other side. I'm not even going to interrupt this episode with an ad. It's just going to go all the way through and then I'll tell you about my book or something just as cool on the other side of that. Oh my goodness, here we go.

Ellen: Hi, I'm Ellen Pompeo. I am an actor, a producer. I direct occasionally, and my most important job is I'm a mama to three beautiful babies.

ARLAN: I'm over here fainting all over the place. . Can I say that I'm at your home?

Ellen: Of course.

ARLAN: I'm at Ellen's home right now. If you don't hear from me, this is my last missive because I am deceased. I just really appreciate you allowing this interview, and being so wonderful, and setting it up. I have a million questions, I won't ask them all. I'll tell you the reason I wanted you on this particular show, Your First Million, is because two years ago almost, I read your Hollywood reporter piece. If you haven't read that, please go back now, stop this recording, go read it, January 2018, where you are just so blatantly honest about how you negotiated your way to being the highest paid dramatic actress on television. Have you always been that outspoken and that upfront? Or did something happen that turned that light on for you?

Ellen: Absolutely not. I guess I've always had a big personality. I think I've said this before that as a young woman, probably due to my circumstances growing up, I didn't have a lot of confidence. The idea of speaking up for myself, no, it was not something that I've done since the beginning of time, certainly not. I think that's a learned skill. It takes maturity. It takes confidence. It probably takes some encouragement from some other women before you feel that you have the power and that that's okay to do that.

ARLAN: I don't know if there's an answer to this, but I do wonder if you're able to see how much of a ripple effect that would have had just on so many people feeling empowered.

Ellen: I think I definitely see obviously a piece of it. I don't know if I'm seeing the whole picture. From my perspective and my point of view, it's very interesting, the fallout from

that article, because I did feel the enormity of it. I received so many pats on the back from people outside my circle. Complete strangers would come up to me in restaurants, servers, and farmers, and women from all different walks of life would come up to me crying and hugging me and thanking me for the article and say it empowered them and it changed their point of view. I was obviously so grateful for that kind of reception.

Ellen: Then I had people who I admire in business or you could say high profile people who are admired for their strength and their business acumen from Billie Jean King to Jay Z reached out and tell me how power for the article was. I should be so grateful for that kind of credit as well because those people have a completely different perspective. They're not necessarily actors on television shows. It appeared to me that it hit all different groups of people. What was remarkable about it and probably not surprising to a lot of people is people in my close, close circle were really very quiet about it. People who I work with didn't say a thing about it.

Ellen: I think that ... I don't know, I can't speak for how other people feel about or felt about reading that article. It just occurred to me that people who aren't in my everyday circle in my life found it really empowering and really loved it. Then I guess you could say I felt, for lack of a better word, the haters come out in my immediate circle.

ARLAN: We all experience life from our point of view. That's what we're able to do. Do you think that some people might have thought that you are not accurate in your portrayal of what happened or ...

Ellen: I don't think that people felt that I was not accurate. I think that possibly, and again, I don't want to speak for other people, I don't know, but in thinking about this and why people come at you or don't give you credit for your success or whatever it is, is people may take things personally. If we're emotionally attached to something, we may take it personally. I think that that article maybe to some people, I don't know, but it's run through my head that maybe they took that as I was claiming credit for the whole show or that I deserve this and no one else deserves this and that this show is all about me, which certainly isn't the case. Obviously, it's a huge ensemble show and there's been so many people in and out of the show throughout the years who have contributed to it beyond measure.

Ellen: Again, maybe they're too close to it and they couldn't take the article for what it was, and maybe some people did. It's unfair to say everybody close to me didn't take it in a positive way. It's just my experience. That article specifically was speaking to the relationship between me and the studio who's paying me and the tactics that they used to devalue me, whether it was on paper or emotionally to make me feel like I was delusional for asking for this amount of money, regardless of how much money the show has generated.

ARLAN: Like gaslighting basically.

Ellen: Yes.

ARLAN: Again, I'm going to assume, but it doesn't seem like you think this is ... Even in saying that what you just said is an act of bravery, but I think it is. I think it's very interesting. Because it's associated with the leverage and the power that you do have. You undoubtedly have it because it's not all about you and nothing ever hopefully is, your name is on it and it's enough about you that obviously because you got the deal, at least from where I'm standing, they had to make the deal. It's enough about you that it is important to keep you on. It's really admirable to protect how everyone else is feeling about it. You do get to have your feelings about it and you do get to not brag. You can brag if you want, but you get to say, "This is how it happened in my world and this is what I did."

Ellen: Yeah. It was very in the moment. I had no idea what that article would become. It was a very innocent we want to come and interview you about this history making deal. My goal in every situation is just to try to be as present as possible and to try to be candid and have a genuine connection with whoever is interviewing me. I guess depending on the skill of the interviewer, they're able to get what they get and anyone else who responded or didn't respond to that article was on those phone calls with me when the studio was saying what they were saying to me, devaluing me. No one knows similarly how I don't know how they view it.

Ellen: No one else was there and no one else knows my experience and how I was made to feel. Really, the tactic of the studio the whole entire time was that we have this male lead of the show and so we don't need to pay you because even though your character, and this is really what it all boiled down to in a nutshell is, even though your character is the name of the show, if you want to walk, you can walk because we have him. The man is more valuable than you and we don't need you because we have him. That was like the bully in the schoolyard. Then the second he was gone, I was like, "Oh, so ... "

ARLAN: What are you going to say now?

Ellen: What are you going to say now? That's that whole article in a nutshell was all about that. They'd been telling me for years, we don't need you, we have him. We don't need you and ...

ARLAN: What does that relationship like? Because you work there now, you are in contract. I don't need details day to day, but I mean I would imagine that there are some ... I will stop by saying I'm bringing all this up, you didn't bring all this up. I'm bringing it all up so it's not like you're sitting around fuming about all of it.

Ellen: Right, right, right. Thank you for that. I will say that the studio, despite our ... Listen, every negotiation is tough. That's their job. Their job is to save money. They do it by whatever means necessary. I don't necessarily think I think to the credit of Time's Up and Me Too, these are very complex topics. I don't know that now, that things that were said to me could be said ...

ARLAN: Could be said.

Ellen: ... anymore. Thank you for that. Also, I had a team. Obviously, I wasn't in the negotiating room. I have this incredible team of people, women and men. One of my lawyers is a woman and the rest of my team are men. Obviously, I didn't do that alone. Then I had the encouragement of Shonda Rhimes. It really took two women to really champion me and say, "This is okay, this is what we're going for." It takes a village, for sure. I don't claim to do anything by myself ever.

ARLAN: There's a couple of places I want to go with this interview. One is to go back to talk about your first million, because that's where it all started. I was also curious about now. You've said in the past that it's a strategy for you to be on the show, and also I read that you said before those negotiations you're looking, hey, I'm making great money, and you don't have children, and this is what I'm going to do. Are you able to enjoy any of the craft of it? I know acting to you isn't as fun. What part of the craft do you really enjoy?

Ellen: Well, I love to really have fun and play. I love when new people come on the show and obviously getting to act with new people. That's not to say anything negative about people who I've been on the show, because I have a fondness and affection for them obviously because we're like a family. I think it's quite normal and natural. That's why people don't stay on shows for so long because they want to have different experiences and interact with different energies.

ARLAN: Absolutely, absolutely.

Ellen: Anytime there's new energy on the show, that's when I'm having the most fun.

ARLAN: Well, your face lit up when you said it. It's very genuine. Again, please do not think that she's saying she likes new people. It doesn't mean she likes ... I mean, the minefield you have to walk in order to just talk to people, and interview, and go, and do your job, do you ever get just exhausted by that?

Ellen: No. I think with great privilege comes great responsibility. You can't lose sight of that ever. If that's the downside of me having all these amazing privileges is to having to be careful about my words, it's okay. Because I think especially for someone like me who's so passionate and off the cuff and truthful to a fault on the Scorpio, I think ...

ARLAN: Yes, a fellow Scorpio.

Ellen: ... having to measure my words is probably a good thing.

ARLAN: It's that new energy. Do you think of it at all it being this long running play or that ...

Ellen: Well, it's interesting that you say that to me, Arlan, because probably season, I don't know, five or six, it was before I had my daughter but I was getting very close to being up for my first negotiation. I had dinner with Al Pacino and I said ...

ARLAN: As you do, as one does.

Ellen: As one does. It was my first time meeting him, I was friends with his girlfriend at the time, and obviously who isn't a fan of Al.

ARLAN: Absolutely.

Ellen: A fellow Italian-American. I said to him, "Al, I really don't know what to do. I'm making great money, people love this show. I'm approaching 40. I'm scared to go out thereafter having been typecast on this show as this character. Being 40 years old and being typecast, I'm terrified. I don't know what to do, but I can imagine continuing on this show and playing this same character. It really just makes me feel like not an artist, like a sellout as the age old trope goes." He said to me, "Ellen, I've been playing Salome my whole life and that's what theater actors used to do. That's what the Roman theater actors did, the Greek theater actors did from the beginning of time. Theater actors went on stage every single night, night after night, year after year. That's the history of acting. To give that same performance over and over and over is where the skill lies."

ARLAN: I have goosebumps right now. I imagine when he said that to you, it really resonated.

Ellen: Yes, of course. That always stuck with me. I was so grateful for that piece of wisdom. These are like angels on earth who come by and drop in pieces of wisdom for us to take and we should always take those nuggets with us and hold them in our pocket as gifts because that's really what they are. He gave me the freedom to not feel bad about what I was doing coming from obviously one of the greats of all time. Had anyone else said that to me, I would've said, "Eh," but one of my acting idol says it to me and here I am 16 years later.

ARLAN: Yes. You probably don't know this, there's no reason you would. Aside from Grey's Anatomy, and for all of my life, my favorite show has been General Hospital, which I know you all film next to.

Ellen: We do.

ARLAN: It's very nostalgic for my mom and I and it's just this whole thing. I talk to some of their actors and I just think about this five days a week, so much they have to do, and it's just over, and over, and over, and over, and over again. One of them, he said it on tape so I can say it, Steve Burton who has been on the show for 20 years or something ...

Ellen: Who does he play?

ARLAN: He plays Jason Morgan. He's the motorcycle riding hitman.

Ellen: I don't watch it, but I used to watch it when I was little. I used to race home from school.

ARLAN: He left the show for four or five years and I asked him about it. I was like, "You left us," because I was being silly. He was like, "It was every day and I couldn't separate ... "

Ellen: They're doing 80 pages a day.

ARLAN: Yeah. He's like, "I couldn't separate myself from the character. I had a life to live." It's that. Then you think about this legacy, you're also leaving this 16 seasons, I guess it's 15 years technically. I think about two things. I think about all of the actors, you've made their life by just saying hi to them and then don't even know it, day players, actors, all of the technical people on the show over the years who had that kind of business that they've gotten, and just this legacy. Then I think about you talk about these negotiations in my mind's eye, the vision that I get when you're talking about having these phone calls is every man in business.

ARLAN: Every high stake business, their guys are probably calling each other all these crazy names, they're probably doing these dirty deeds and tricks and everything else. It just happens. They don't have to atone for it publicly. It happens across television, film, but also in other industries, and especially in the world that I am in, in the financial world, investing world. It's just so much. It's so intriguing to me as someone who is on the outside looking in, looking at all these pieces come together. I think ultimately, 99% of the people listening and people out in the world are going to remember, okay, how did you make me feel when I watch that episode, or when you touched on this topic, or when you made me laugh, or when you made me cry. I wonder, is that enough? Is that the salve that makes everything okay or is it ... I guess 20 million a year doesn't hurt. Let's be real.

Ellen: Well, it certainly should be enough because as actors, you're a storyteller, right? What are you telling those stories for? I guess that's up to the individual. Are you telling the stories to get attention or are you telling the stories to touch people? Because you've been touched by other people who have told stories and you know whatever movie is your favorite or ... My daughter loves Titanic and she loves Stranger Things and those things bring her so much joy, and make her scared, and happy, and feel all of those emotions. At the end of the day, our vessel is an emotional one. We could only hope. As human beings, there's a lot of anger in the world and there's a lot of hate.

Ellen: Clearly, we're seeing that now. At the core, I think people want to feel. Even if they make the emotionally wrong choice to feel hatred and anger, as human beings, our vessel still desires the need to feel. I think that entertainment allows people to feel that. Anger isn't always a bad thing. It's a necessary emotion. To make people feel, should absolutely be enough, that should definitely be satisfying. Then you have to balance that with challenging yourself and knowing when it's time to move on and challenge yourself more. There's a balancing act between it all.

Ellen: We're pretty lucky on Grey's because not only is the show still wildly successful, like people that I know who I think are very cool and hip still love the show. I'm like, "Really? You still love it?" We have that. Also, we have the benefit of having this platform and being able to do some good with it, to bring up topics like the medical industry and

what's happening in medicine, and what's happening with pharmaceuticals and social justice, and what happens to women with respect to sexual assault. We have this amazing platform to get a little political. That's been quite fulfilling as well.

ARLAN: One day, whatever that day maybe, when Grey's is over and ...

Ellen: Dan, dan, dan!

ARLAN: Choooo! Everyone calm down. I know everyone clutched their pearls right now. It's okay.

Ellen: Take off the pearls. I don't know if pearls are chic, except when Pharrell wears them and they're Chanel pearls.

ARLAN: Does he wear pearls?

Ellen: Well, they're Chanel pearls with its double C's. It's a different vibe.

ARLAN: Yeah, I got you. When that day comes, whenever it is, what will you miss the most?

Ellen: Probably that routine, that steadiness in my life. I'm incredibly spoiled. Most actors never know what their next job is. I will say that emotionally I'm very spoiled because that is one emotion that I do remember from my early days as an actor as like, oh my God, this movie is over. What am I going to do next? I hated that feeling of uncertainty. I don't know what that is in me. I think I grew up without a mother and every day felt uncertain. The ground underneath my feet felt incredibly shaky every minute because you don't have that stabilizing force. I had other stabilizing forces. I know sisters, and aunts, and uncles, and incredibly wonderful people, my grandmother, but that normal foundation that most people have, I did not have.

Ellen: That uncertainty I think was a foundation of my life. Then when I grew up in my professional life, that being uncertain didn't sit well with me. I grew to love as much as I may have fought it in the beginning. The repetitiveness, you want to be an actor and you want to be an artist and you want to move on to different things. I grew to love the stability of knowing that I had that job to go to. I've been incredibly lucky and that I have not faced what other actors faced, which is not knowing if the show will get picked up, really worrying about the ratings, and oh my goodness, are we going to get picked up, are we not going to get picked up, am I going to have a job, am I going to be able to pay my mortgage? This show was always been extremely wildly successful. We've never had to worry. Every season it's like, we're definitely getting picked up. That's been a privilege that ...

ARLAN: Pretty rare.

Ellen: That's very rare, and then I'm at least aware of. I can't take that for granted. It's just not in my nature to be a spoiled brat about it. There's the flipside to just appreciating that

maybe the grass isn't always greener, maybe you have an incredible platform here, and you make a lot of people happy, and being part of something that generates over \$4 billion for a giant company. That's its own kind of power and it's moving the needle in a different way.

ARLAN: Speaking of that and thinking back to when you were an actor before Grey's, one of the first things I ever saw you do outside of Grey's was a Punk'd episode. Do you remember this?

Ellen: Yes, of course. How could I forget it?

ARLAN: The Punk'd episode, I don't know how many years ago it was, but you were outside of the restaurant. I can't remember it all, but someone was trying to punk you and tell you that the waitress was flirting with your husband. The thing that got me, that got my attention, that made you more than that woman who's on that show over there, because I watch the show, was when you called her a broad. You're like, I can't believe this broad thing. She can talk to you like that. I remember thinking like, wow, she has this accent that's not Grey's accent, first of all. She's really acting. She's bossy. It was really cool.

ARLAN: That accent and all of that, that takes me back to you growing up in the northeast. I've been to your home. You've made public your salary. Millions of people watch you every week. At 18, did you think that you would be doing anything close to this? Were you like, I want to be an actor from the time you could think about it?

Ellen: I definitely always knew I wanted to be an actor. Yes, I did. I also did grow up like Ray Liotta in Goodfellas. I grew up in the main streets of Boston. Everybody I knew was either a criminal or a gangster. I was definitely enamored at a very young age with the glamour of these people who had money and power. Like I said, in my environment, the people who had money and power were not doctors or lawyers, they were gangsters and very much like the gangster movies you've seen. They were our heroes. We didn't see the bad things they did.

Ellen: We only saw the bags of money they gave us, and the beautiful clothes they wore, the big cars they drove, and how they helped all the old women on the street with Christmas gifts at Christmas time. They really were our heroes. We never saw any of the bad things. I definitely grew up wanting to be an actor, but I also grew up wanting to have the power of wealth.

ARLAN: Once you got there, because this is really that intersection that I love so much about this show, where do you think that ... First, can you remember your first million? I guess if it happened all at once or over time, but can you remember that time?

Ellen: Well, I'm going to sound like an asshole, but I really don't.

ARLAN: I don't think you do.

Ellen: No, I probably don't. Also, I guess in my defense, in the beginning of the show, I worked so many hours, that the first five years is honestly just a blur. Because you're so tired, because we're filming 24 episodes and you're literally working 16-hour days every single day. You're just literally crawling home, getting into bed. The alarm goes off, waking up and going doing all over again. It's a pretty brutal schedule one-hour drama.

ARLAN: \$1 million is really \$300,000 to \$400,000 at the end of the day.

Ellen: Yes, absolutely, and 20 million's only 10.

ARLAN: Yeah, absolutely.

Ellen: Peoples, yes.

ARLAN: Yeah, it is. Once you got there, you're thinking this way as you're growing up, you're seeing what you're seeing, you're wanting what you want. Do you remember the first time you felt you were powerful or that you had leverage?

Ellen: I don't know. I think feeling powerful comes in different stages.

ARLAN: If you felt that way at any point, does that mirror what you thought it was going to be when you're younger or teenager? Because you said before ...

Ellen: Yes, yes.

ARLAN: You did?

Ellen: Yes, for sure. I think that that's a very tricky statement to make, do you remember feeling powerful. Because at the end of the day, we want to maintain our humility, right?

ARLAN: Absolutely.

Ellen: If we think of ourselves as powerful, there's a balance. I have two daughters and a son, and every minute is teaching moment for me with them. There's a real balance of feeling powerful enough to do good, but not feeling so powerful that you take advantage of that.

ARLAN: You know where I draw that, at a much different level than you, but when I started feeling ... Because I felt powerless for 35 years, no money, no leverage. When I started feeling powerful is when I could be powerful for other people, when I could pick up a phone and say, this person wants a meeting with you, and it happened, or this person needs this amount of money, make sure they get it so they can do the thing that they want to do. That was powerful. It's never me or I'm sure you walk into a room and everyone stand up because I'm here. It's never that.

Ellen: It's like I think what makes you feel powerful or makes me feel powerful is specifically that is hearing how ... Last week, there was I think an article in JAMA, Journal of American Medicine, and there was a graph in there that said the calls to the sexual assault hotline after a certain episode of Grey's Anatomy spiked. I forget what the number is now. I tweeted that article out, and I wasn't even really in that episode. That was a standalone episode directed brilliantly by Debbie Allen, our American treasure. It's things like that. It's every time I walk down the street and moms come up to me and hug me and say, "My daughter is a surgeon because of you."

ARLAN: That's it, in ways.

Ellen: That's the power. The other downside to power that really drives me nuts is if I'm, let's say, on set and I say something, people scatter like ants.

ARLAN: The weight of it.

Ellen: It's like all I said was, "I want a piece of pizza." I didn't ask for 16 boxes to show up, now I'm demanding pizza.

ARLAN: I have to say that is so interesting because ...

Ellen: There's a flipside to the perception of power that makes me crazy where I literally have to watch what I say. Because then all of a sudden, if I say, "Oh, wouldn't you love a piece of pizza right now?" I think about pizza sometimes. I think about ice cream sometimes. All of a sudden ...

ARLAN: You got 20 pizzas rolling up.

Ellen: Yeah. I'm using that analogy, it could be more serious things. I make a comment about something or someone and all of a sudden it gets taken to this nth degree that it didn't need to be taken to. It's just like, guys, I just said, stop freaking out when I talk.

ARLAN: You're like Dottie Hinson, make it their own.

Ellen: It's like if I cough, four bottles of water show up. I don't know.

ARLAN: Do you feel like you can fight with people? Because it's unbalanced.

Ellen: No, no, can't fight with people. No. No. No way.

ARLAN: You are ...

Ellen: Can't express any frustration or anger.

ARLAN: Because then your weight of your words will get them fired, or will get them sent away from the room, or you win, you win in every ...

Ellen: Well, no, no, no.

ARLAN: Is that not today?

Ellen: In this day and age ... No, no, no, mama.

ARLAN: How do you mean? What is it?

Ellen: You got to be careful. You got to be careful.

ARLAN: Mm-hmm (affirmative), because it'll be taken out of context. It'll be blown up.

Ellen: It'll be ...

ARLAN: It'll be used against you.

Ellen: Your advocacy can be used as a weapon against you. In this era of Time's Up and Me Too, we're not tolerating toxic workplaces. If I become a voice for other women, for standing up for people and I become very vocal about something, about toxic workplaces, then I have to be even more careful. Because anything I do will be perceived as doing that thing that you advocate against. Your advocacy becomes a weapon to be used against you is what I have found. I think it's really interesting. It's really interesting. That happened to me recently and the idea has been brought up to me that that your advocacy makes you a target. I thought, wow, that's an interesting concept that you don't think about when you just are advocating to help someone. People are dying to catch you doing the thing that you're so vocal about or something.

ARLAN: Well, it's almost a glasshouse thing taken to the nth degree. Because the thing is each person can be a complex being and you can be all at the same time, you can want something to be a certain way and think that something is morally correct, and you can also be at fault. You can also make a mistake or you can also do that. Then in some cases, your non-mistake can be taken.

Ellen: Because there's this perception. You talk about power, which is something you could talk about all day. I don't know if you've ever read the 47 Laws of Power.

ARLAN: I've listened to it. Yes, I have.

Ellen: It's interesting because real power and perception of power are two different things. When people perceive you as powerful, it changes the way they behave.

ARLAN: Yeah, it's a proximity. I did this poll on Twitter. It was just a random thing that I did because I was just curious about it. I asked people, I said, what do you think is the most powerful leverage thing? The four choices, if I can remember correctly, were having money, having proximity to someone who has money, having vision and creativity and talent, or being a good person basically. It was funny because half the people generally

said having the money, but the other half just by odds was a combination of all three of the others. If a person doesn't have the money themselves, they can combine being close to someone who does, hopefully having vision and creativity and being a good person and they can have as much power as the person who has all the money. If you don't have one of the three, you don't have as much power as the other one. That's what I got from that.

Ellen: There's also fame, which is a different kind of power. When you take the combination of my outspokenness and talking openly about money, combine that with fame, that is perceived in different ways depending on who's doing the perceiving. Fame is a different currency, but a relevant currency all the same because there's a perception about high profile people is just automatically people judge no matter whether you're a musician, an athlete, an actor, a politician.

ARLAN: In your experience, what can't fame and money buy you?

Ellen: Happiness or love.

ARLAN: Truly, truly. In your experience also, this is random, but do most actors want to be musicians and most musicians want to be actors? Have you seen that? I noticed that.

Ellen: I don't know. I think that artsy people are artsy people. I think it's generally an actor's nature or an entertainer's nature to want to try different mediums.

ARLAN: You think of yourself as an artist first? Aside from family, do you think you're so ... When you think of the different crafts that you ...

Ellen: I guess it's an interesting question to pose to me because I generally do think of myself as an artist first, but I'm really, really balanced with business. Because if I wasn't so business minded, I would have never stayed on a show. If I was 80% actor and 20% business, I would never have stayed on a show for 16 years. I clearly have an interest in business for me to want to keep having the benefit of my salary for my other pursuits. Houses are one of my things. I love decorating them. I love building houses.

ARLAN: Do you sell them?

Ellen: I do, yeah, yeah.

ARLAN: Wow.

Ellen: Not always at a profit. I've made some mistakes. I am passionate. That's actually funny where my husband and I get into arguments about my passion because I get a vibration when I go into a house and I get a vision for what it should be, what it could be, what I want it to be. That house may not be in the best neighborhood or whatever it is. You know what I mean. Financially, it may not make ...

ARLAN: The most sense.

Ellen: ... the most sense. Creatively, I'm like, but the room flow, the vibe, the light coming in the windows. I think, truly, I'm equal part artist and business person. I really don't think of myself as more one than the other. I love to cook, and I love to design houses, and I love to decorate at Christmas time, and those are really my mediums for art. Then I love the challenge of can I sell the house and can I ... Right now, I'm exploring more business opportunities than I ever have in my life just because financially I'm in a place now where I can do that. I'm learning more every day and investing and investing in startups. I'm growing my business mind. I think the acting piece of my mind, I have down, even though I've been doing the same job for so long. I know how to tap into my emotional intelligence and use that tool.

ARLAN: It's a sixth sense at this point.

Ellen: Yeah, yeah, for sure.

ARLAN: Because you just said you're investing in startups now, I'm going to get 1,000 calls to make an introduction. I am now introducing you to Ellen for these investments. Because there's so many people who will be interested in how you were even able to see some of those deals, just out of curiosity, did you just look into that startup world and say, oh, I like that and I'll get in touch with them? Or there are things brought to you a deal flow wise?

Ellen: That's an interesting question. I love that question and this is going to sound, I don't know, a little bit kooky possibly especially the business minded people. I'm very, very spiritual. I've manifested my whole entire life and ...

ARLAN: It's working, so I'll take it.

Ellen: ... anything I ask the universe for, I've been lucky enough to be able to have it come to me.

ARLAN: It's summoned by your vision of it.

Ellen: Yeah. I had a conscious thought that I want to be more active in business, I want to learn business more. I want to invest in startups. This is a different piece of my brain that now I want to use. I'm grateful that I have the opportunity to still make the money on the show and be able to exercise this different piece of my brain. I just put it out in the universe. Obviously, I tell my team, but it's funny because all the opportunities aren't necessarily just coming from my business manager, although he's fantastic coming from all over.

ARLAN: They're finding you if it needs to happen.

Ellen: They're finding me, yeah. Because I put the vibration out there. It was a very interesting experiment for me.

ARLAN: That's interesting. I talk to all sorts of people with all sorts of thoughts on that. I'm going to forever been a journey of understanding that. I definitely talk about envisioning something for yourself and going after it. While I don't go with the secret type of thing, I definitely go for you have to see in your mind's eye. Like in 2015, I said I'm going to invest in 100 companies led by underrepresented people, I had \$12 in my bank account and I was sleeping on a blowup bed. People thought I was crazy, and then we reached that two years early. I saw it as clear as day. I promise you, I promise you, I saw it as clear as day that that was going to happen.

Ellen: Because it's part of its intuition. It's also talking about the artist in me or the artist in you, there has to be a creative mind behind you have to have a level of creativity in order to come up with this idea.

ARLAN: That's right.

Ellen: It's not all just like mathematics, and STEM, and is a different sort of ...

ARLAN: Yeah, and spreadsheets. I hear you, yeah.

Ellen: There's that creative piece of your mind is something that always has to be exercised. I have some great ideas for some businesses that I want to start because I'm so hungry creatively.

ARLAN: You recognize that in others. The startup founder is a very misunderstood person and someone who is very specific. It's interesting that you're able to see that, because a lot of people have a huge risk aversion to startups and all of that. It seems like you have that of interest side to you. I don't want to take up any more of your time. We've actually gone over my allotted time and I just want to thank you so much because this is just amazing. I really appreciate it. Thank you. I look forward to more and more and whatever you do for the next 50 years.

Ellen: Thank you so much. I appreciate you coming here. I appreciate you wanting to interview me and coming to my house. It's been fun to talk to you and you're equally inspiring.

ARLAN: Thank you.

Ellen: I think that people vibrate on the same frequency. They come together for a reason. This was definitely meant to be so we can inspire each other.

ARLAN: Hey, it's Arlan. Thanks for listening to this episode. I would love to keep up with you online. You can find me @arlanwashere on Instagram and on Twitter. That's A-R-L-A-N was here. I cannot wait to continue this conversation with you. You can also preorder my first book, it's called It's About Damn Time. You can preorder it at your local indie

bookstore. Please do that, feel free. Online books are sold where great books are sold. If you want to go to a specific link, you can go to prh.com/itsaboutdamntime, all together, no spaces, no slashes, nothing, prh.com/itsaboutdamntime. It'll give you a list of places you can preorder the book, and preordering is huge.

ARLAN: The more preorders the bookstores see, the more copies they will order and potentially more copies that will get sold, and exposed, and seen. If you're thinking about getting the book but you're going to wait until after it comes out, I encourage you to preorder it. May 5th, 2020 is the actual date. You have plenty of time to grab it, but try to do it between now and then. If you are interested in advertising on Your First Million, go to yfmpodcast.com and click on contact. You can have yours truly read your ad, which is, I know, lovely. Or you can send me your own ad. All right, thanks so much for listening. I'll see you next time.