



Season 3, Episode 16 - Transcript

Starting Over 3 TIMES!

Nicole:

So friends, this chat is going to be a good one. And I am so excited about it because you know, I rarely introduce you to someone if I don't think it's someone that you need to meet. And this week, you get to meet my dear, sweet, super talented friend, Tito Rey. Now, I will let him introduce himself. We're going to talk about all this good stuff. But this is not going to be your regular chat. It is so easy to get caught up in the usual questions but what we're talking about this time is success and sacrifice.

So a couple of things you need to know one, this is going to be the chat that might change everything for you, that might finally give you the fuel to your fire and a little bit of ease to some of the hardship that comes with the day to day life of chasing after your purpose. But also, this is the chat that you may want to grab your kids who are a little bit older and need to have a little fire under them to get it done. But I do want to issue a tiny disclaimer, there may be some language and I want to let you know that the language that's there is well placed because we have been through it and we're keeping it very, very real today. So use your headphones or turn the volume down, but do not miss this chat. We're gonna kick it off and we're starting right now.

Tito, I am so excited that you are here today.

Tito:

Me too!

Nicole:

Thank you so much for being here!

Tito:

Thank you. You know, this is my first podcast ever.

Nicole:

Are you kidding me? Well, it's an honor, because it's definitely not going to be your last and you've done plenty of interviews. I mean, yeah, let's not pretend like you're not some superstar who's done tons of stuff. And we'll get into that in a minute. But you guys I, you may not know, but you might be able to hear it, Tito's a singer. He's a fairly well known and frequently booked singer here in Los Angeles. And I've had the pleasure of meeting him through a lot of my friends who are here in the industry. And I'm excited to share him with you, if you haven't already heard of him. He's all over social media. Just Google Tito Rey and you'll find him.

But all that being said, Tito, can you just tell us a little bit about who you are, what you do here as a professional, and just some of the work that you've done?

Tito:

Well, my name is Tito Rey. I came here 10 years ago. And I was brought here by somebody that's maybe you know her?

Nicole:

I don't know. I've never heard of her.

Tito:

Okay. Jennifer Lopez brought me here.

Nicole:

Oh, Jennifer Lopez. Yeah! From where? From Chile?

Tito:

I am from Chile, South America. I have been on TV in Chile my whole life. I won my first TV show when I was 14 there. Then I was on the X Factor TV and that led me to an international casting call, that my manager at the time, told me to go where J.Lo was looking for talent in Latin America. And she chose certain people from Mexico, from all Latin America, to find the Latinos Cirque du Soleil in Vegas. Okay, I came I did the reality show. I was one of the winners. And I did a whole season in the Mandalay Bay Arena in Las Vegas at night.

Nicole:

At night, I was gonna say how old were you at this?

Tito:

I was 19.

Nicole:

Just a baby? Listen, that's crazy. Because I know you now you never should have been in Vegas at 19. I cannot imagine.

Tito:

It was the worst because I couldn't do anything. I couldn't do anything.

Nicole:

Maybe that was for the best.

Tito:

All of the other people was like drinking, having the time of their life. And the people at the lobby knew that I was 19. They would just kick me back out. They were like, Okay, you're 19 you can't be here. I'm like, what? It's 10pm. Yeah, it's 10pm. Exactly. You can't be here. So just go into my room and watch movies.

Nicole:

That's good. But that's good. Because one, especially in this industry, as we know, in Hollywood, it can get crazy.

Tito:

It can get crazy and Vegas is super crazy.

Nicole:

So we'll talk a little bit more about what has happened in the 10 years since that time. But the reason why I had to let you meet Tito is not so much just because he's one of my many talented, super cool, ultra famous fancy friends but because of his story. And his story is one that I think a lot of us can relate to. And you know, I always love looking at things from a different perspective. His story is one of sacrifice. And it's something that we don't often get to hear about, because we're so focused on the, you know, what are the bullet points of how you became successful? And what are the things you've you know, managed to accomplish that are worthy of being in People Magazine or Forbes? No, let's talk about what you're not sharing. You know what you actually had to go through.

So, Tito, let's just dive right in. What is the hardest thing you've ever had to do to make money out here while trying to still work and be a working musician?

Tito:

Well, everything started beautifully with Jennifer Lopez in Vegas and all that. I didn't know English. I went to a friend of a friend of a friend of a friend that I met in Vegas that spoke Spanish. And I'm like, I need to extend my artists visa. It's expiring at the end of May. And I need to go back but I don't want to go back. I just sang for 1000s of people and I wanted this for the rest of my life.

Nicole:

You were ready to work.

Tito:

I was ready to work. Yes. So I saved money. I went to a lawyer. I got a sponsor. And I told them...

Nicole:

So you're trying to do everything the right way. I always like to say that for the record.

Tito:

Yes.

Nicole:

A lot of people will hear about immigration and they'll think oh, no, you know, everyone's just trying to kind of cut corners or sneak around back alleys. But just like, I'm a child of immigrants and you know, and I've been to Ghana many times I take a lot of pride in being a Ghanaian American. You know, both sides of it being both American and Ghanaian and people don't realize a lot of people are like you were you've come here very legally, you've seen a sponsor and you've done all the paperwork, but sometimes things go wrong. So what happened and went wrong?

Tito:

So I paid the money up front, and he said, Okay, well we got it from now go back to your work and then you can move to LA like you plan, you'll get your visa in the mail, give us an address. Wonderful. And I'm like okay, good. A month goes by, my visa expired already. I'm like, okay, good. I'm gonna get my own one. I call the number and the number didn't exist. I email my sponsor, and he never heard back from these people.

Nicole:

Wait, so wait, what you're telling me is you were 100% legal. You were doing all of your paperwork. You tried to go through all the right formats to do everything right, including paying extra money, yes to acquire the legal help that you needed, at 19. You're a baby, by the way. And all of a sudden, your whole team ghosted you. Yes, yes, I would have been in tears as a mama right now. I'm just like my poor baby. What happened?

Tito:

Oh, my mom wanted to kill that lawyer.

Nicole:

Oh, I bet.

Tito:

He wasn't even a lawyer. He was a broker which I found out years later.

Nicole:

Oh my gosh, of course. So fast forward, now you're in the country and your status is questionable.

Tito:

I was undocumented, undocumented. And if I went back, it will be 10 years of not coming back to the States or people are not able ever to come back to the states.

Nicole:

Right. So I mean, you could have totally lost all opportunities.

Tito:

So that was the crucial moment when I said, Listen, I just sang in the Mandalay Bay for months. I need to get back there, right, somehow.

Nicole:

So I just want to pause here for a moment. How many of us have had this moment where we have tasted a little bit of success? And we said to ourselves, we want to be able to keep going, we want to be able to continue to chase this. But the moment is calling for us to sacrifice? How many of us are in that moment right now? Are you ready and willing to make the sacrifice to keep going?

So Tito? What was the moment of sacrifice here for you?

Tito:

Well, I went from singing for 1000s of people in an arena every night to washing dishes, making \$10 an hour and cleaning toilets for almost six years. I wasn't able to get, I would audition for TV shows, I will get to the final stage, because I felt like I had the talent. And everybody will tell me you have the talent. And I could not get booked because I didn't have papers. I'm talking about Americans got talent, the Voice, everyone wanted me, but they couldn't have me because...

Nicole:

You couldn't because of the paperwork.

Tito:

Yeah, that's what it was. Exactly.

Nicole:

So for six years, even after you were hearing Nos nonstop, for six years, in a country that wasn't your own, in a place where you didn't speak the language, you just kept scrubbing toilets and showing up.

Tito:

Yeah, in what really kept this flame going, was going to open mics in LA. And my shift will ended at seven. And by 8pm I will go back home shower to my warm ups. And open mics is at 9:30, 10 and I will go prepared and I'm like, Okay, I need to show myself that I still got it. Wow. So I will do it. And people will react to it. And I'm like, Yes, you know what, like, I'm, I'm freaking I'm cleaning toilets, and not getting tips and like, all this thing. But I still got it. And I know somebody's gonna see it. And I know I'm gonna get somewhere.

Nicole:

Oh, so, this is another great place to pause because I know anyway, I am. It's funny, because I know this, we've talked about this story. And even now hearing it this way is making me move. I know, I'm trying not to tear up. Because how many of us have been doing this difficult work? I mean, there's nothing more humbling than knowing that you are cleaning toilets, but you have this gift from God that you are using every single day. I mean, it's like a movie, you know, and the only thing that's fueling you is just getting up on stage, sometimes in front of a huge audience, sometimes not in front of an audience, totally unfamiliar in a new city, you don't know. But you keep showing up. And I hope that's what we're hearing for all of you who might be saying I am in a cubicle, or I am scrubbing dishes right now, or I am doing work that I know is frankly, not my calling or my purpose. But at night, I'm waking up to chase the thing that I love.

So turning point because you know, we're not going to fast forward to the end, y'all are gonna stick for the story but Tito's not scrubbing toilets anymore. So we know that much. Okay, so I mean, I want to ask you, you know, when you were getting on these stages was that rewarding? I know that it felt good to know you still had it but that had to be hard too? Finding these gigs and going into new spaces and learning English at the same time. Like I can't imagine how scary that was.

Tito:

Yes, it was hard. Actually, during this time I get cystic acne from all the stress. And I couldn't get treated for years because I didn't have the money. I didn't have insurance. I couldn't afford a dermatologist.

Nicole:

And you're a performer.

Tito:

Yes and I would just cover it up with a lot of makeup, which made it worse. But you know what? I am proud of what I am and when I look at these scars, I'm like I'm a fighter.

Nicole:

Yes. Yes.

Tito:

Yeah and I've been through a lot. And this reminds me that I'm winning.

Nicole:

Yes, yes, yes. But also, what's beautiful about what you're sharing here is you had to lose in order to win.

Tito:

Yes.

Nicole:

And that is something I think a lot of us forget, when we're in the moment and in the season of the loss, we can't understand that that loss may be part of what's building us up to win on the other side. And it's something I really relate to right now because as you guys all know, I'm going through a divorce and doing that paperwork is not easy. Building a whole life having everything, it's a house, the kids, the car, the money, family, the plan, and frankly, I loved my husband, you know, and to find out, you know, that that's not going to be your future. It's a loss that is unimaginable.

But when I tell you, I am in a winning season now, and you know, I can't share all the good things that are happening yet, but you guys will find out more later. But there's joy on the other side of darkness and Tito and his story is an example of that.

So tell me more about sort of that transition. There had to be a moment where you realized I don't have to do these toilets anymore. I'm figuring this out.

Tito:

Well what happened... Okay, well, we're gonna talk about this now. Haha. Okay. So one of these days that I was singing after my shift, somebody called me to do, they were paying me in cash to sing in a hotel, a fancy hotel in Hollywood. And I went and sang and then the team for a famous famous singer called Andra Day was there that day...

Nicole:

Yes, Andra Day, we love her. She's so talented.

Tito:

So talented.

Nicole:

Oh, my gosh.

Tito:

And they saw me and they were like, we want to work with you.

Nicole:

Wait, freeze. You were just singing in a hotel lobby. And they were walking through and they're like...

Tito:

Yes, she was trying on dresses for the Oscars. And she was taking forever because she was going dress by dress.

Nicole:

Of course.

Tito:

And they were like we're gonna have a drink at the lobby. And I was singing in the lobby.

Nicole:

But God. I just want to tell you, y'all if you can't tell Tito's life is blessed. It's one of the reasons why I am so drawn to him. And if you guys, you must follow him on social. He's everywhere. Tito Rey Music. You have to follow him. He is someone you want to win. I mean, he is a light in this world. And actually you know what, now's a great time, Tito can you sing something?

Tito:

Yes!

Nicole:

I realized, like, we're talking and hyping up all this stuff. You guys, once you hear this, you will know, get ready for chills.

Tito:

Alright, so this is my first single, actually talks about my experience being undocumented. I wrote it in 2019 and it's called, Nobody's Illegal. Okay, it goes like this.

<singing> My grandfather told me to never give up. Because if you get lucky, you get to the top. So I left my country. I packed my bags. My dreams and my passport, and never looked back.

Nicole:

I'm like, you guys, you guys aren't here. And of course, you can always watch the footage of this on YouTube. We've got the YouTube channel that, y'all we are looking at each other with tears in our eyes. I love you so much Tito. How incredible is he? I mean chills, chills and those words, especially after hearing your story. I mean, unbelievable. So you guys understand now, full picture, why they stopped in the middle of their drinks in that hotel lobby having a full on LA magic moment to say, Who is this kid?

Tito:

Yeah. And that was great. They really develop me. You know, they did artists development.

Nicole:

And that was your break?

Tito:

Basically, yeah, at the same time I was in the process of getting my green card. You know, I met my husband, oh, my God. And we married and at the same time that we were going through that, I met these people and I'm like, actually now it could work.

Nicole:

So things are really starting to come together. So how many years were you struggling before this?

Tito:

So a little over six years, or six and a half.

Nicole:

Six and a half years before? I mean, literally in the middle of the struggle, in the middle of the sacrifice, in a hotel lobby and God changed everything just like that.

Tito:

But I also feel like I manifested it. I will pray on my knees. I'm very Latino and dramatic. On my feet, in the bed. I'm like, Just take me to the right people. Yeah, that can fix my situation so what I came to do in this world, which I think it's inspiring.

Nicole:

Oh, yes. And so let's talk about that because a lot of times, you know, I have a Christian audience. I'm a Christian, you know, people talk all the time about oh, yeah, well, I really, you know, I've just been praying for it and I'm just praying that it happens. But with your prayer, you were working.

Tito:

Action!

Nicole:

Action.

Tito:

You can pray, pray, pray, but you need to go and get that blessing too.

Nicole:

Listen, we can preach on that today! Go get that blessing! Absolutely. And that's true, because you were also showing up, paying your bills, scrubbing toilets, taking gigs, where you could take

gigs, working when you're tired. And you were doing all those things coupled with praying and hoping and believing that change was going to come. So you get developed, they find you, you know, and then what?

Tito:

So everything ready to launch. I'm talking CNN, MTV. I had an hour special on spectrum news and if you go online, you'll get it. It's an hour interview on Spectrum news about my life and my story being there. The day, that a week we were going to release Nobody's Illegal, the Coronavirus hit. I was going to open the tour of the most successful LGBTQ artists in Latin America, in Canada and America. My first year ever. I was going to open, it was so many dates. I had an agent, I had everything ready. I had my papers.

Nicole:

You were certain this was your moment, seven years in the making.

Tito:

Of course, seven in the making, and then everything shuts down.

Nicole:

Ah, so I think this is a great place to call out that. Even if you're thinking that you're going to, everything's together, sometimes you have to get very good at starting over.

Tito:

And that was hard. That's been one of the hardest things. Devastating because, for a minute, I'm like, I am this close.

Nicole:

You could taste it.

Tito:

I mean, I could taste it, I could taste it.

Nicole:

But that was also a lot of artists. I mean, like I have a lot of friends in industry. I mean, a lot of artists in LA. I mean, a lot of people quit, you know, they just stopped performing. They just stopped the depression.

Tito:

And you know, that happened to me. I went through almost suicidal depression.

Nicole:

Of course.

Tito:

And during the pandemic, and that's when I got my dog.

Nicole:

Oh my gosh.

Tito:

My dog saved my life.

Nicole:

Oh, my goodness, just joy, finding joy.

Tito:

Yes, yeah. And just looking into his eyes and be like, I am here, in this moment with this puppy.

Nicole:

Well, you also have a lot of great habits too. Because I've seen it you meditate. You work out religiously, you eat well, you take care of yourself. I mean, all those things help you.

Tito:

It's survival skills, girl, because without that, for all those years, I would have been a drug addict or I would have been who knows?

Nicole:

Listen, tell it, you know, and it's so funny, because, you know, and I hope that everyone listening understands this too, because a lot of people think that you come to LA and you get caught up in the life. You know, they see La they're like, oh, it's flash and it's drugs and it's you know, music and that the truth is, that's a choice a choice.

Tito:

It's a choice, a choice, you know, to get caught and now I'm not gonna lie, I had a few years of rock and roll.

Nicole:

You were also a baby.

Tito:

You know, when I was 21 in West Hollywood.

Nicole:

You know, we've all made choices at 21. You know, but like, I got married at 21.

Tito:

Oh!

Nicole:

We all made choices. Haha.

Tito:

But I lived that stage. And it's burned. And I don't need that anymore. So then during the pandemic, everything I had dissolved.

Nicole:

Wow.

Tito:

And we can even say marriage included.

Nicole:

Oh, wow.

Tito:

Everything went down south and I was not getting booked because we couldn't.

Nicole:

There was no place and no one knew what it was going to end.

Tito:

You know, so no one knew what the path forward was. So I couldn't go see my family because the border was closed. Yeah, it was it was a hard time and I just had to pull myself up again by myself and with my doggy and now I'm in transitioning. I moved out of my place. I am actually also getting divorced. First time that I said this live and I'm starting over.

I'm starting to book shows in Chile and LA. I just did a TV show in Chile that was very successful. I released a single with the number one rapper of my country right now that is doing so well over there.

Nicole:

Amazing.

Tito:

And I'm ready to release more music but the thing is that you this isn't, this isn't a choice. This is my purpose. And I cannot live without music, without me writing songs. That's why I feel I do what I do, is to inspire people and to show that you can come from the ghetto of the ghettos in South America, you know, go to a public school and all those things there.

But look at me now. I'm 29. I'm still trying to make it happen. I'm still making money and I'm full of dreams.

Nicole:

And you're full of dreams. Oh, I don't even know if there's much else I could add to that. Tito, you're wise beyond your years. I mean, I have to let you guys know, you know, part of what inspires me about Tito is, you know, you guys know I have a consulting firm I work with artists and musicians and clients and TV. And when I go backstage, if I'm at a show Tito is one of the few people I see, you know, doing warm ups and doing exercises and not partaking in drugs. And, you know, he's preparing himself to get on stage and he always shows up on time, if not early, in full makeup, hair and wardrobe.

That audience could have two people or it could have 2000 people, you would not know from how he performs on stage. And if there's anything you can take from some of our conversation here today, it's that it does not matter what the circumstances are, you still have to show up and do your very best and believe.

Tito:

And in my mind, something that you told me and it really resonated with me. It's like, how are you going to show up to your new life? And that's why I'm also like double disciplined on everything I do. Like today, I woke up and I was feeling down. I'm like, You know what, no and I went for an hour run in all Santa Monica, you know, and went back. So you just gotta pick up good habits. I feel like depression. It's real.

Nicole:

It is real.

Tito:

But you don't have a choice. If you don't eat right, exercise, meditate and take care of yourself, right? You just go down into hole, you're just gonna be there forever.

Nicole:

Oh, so good. I mean, you're, again, so much wisdom, so much stuff. So I love all this. There's so many notes, everyone, take this in, absorb it, apply it. Recognize that so much change is within us and there are Tito's everywhere, not just here but all around us. Look for the people, look for the helpers, look for the inspiration. Because God is always sending you reminders that you deserve and you are capable. So Tito, now, where can people keep up with you? What do you have going on next? Because you always have, I mean, I literally can't keep up with you always have something going on. So tell us about any new music, where we can find you and all the things.

Tito:

So you can find me on Instagram. You can find me on Twitter, you can find me on Facebook, you know, Tito Rey Music. But right now I'm working on my next thing actually, my next single is done. And it's called Familia and you will connect with this because it talks about taking care of your family.

Nicole:

Yes.

Tito:

And there's my father, my father had a crazy story. Well, my father tried to kill me and my mom when I was 12. He was a drug addict. And at the same time he was drug dealing.

Nicole:

Oh, wow.

Tito:

He will come in and out of the house, he will get lost for months. And once in December, he came home at like 2am. I don't know why I was helping my mom at the liquor store at the time we had a liquor store. And he comes in, and he's completely coming down from something because his eyes were crazy.

Nicole:

How old are you?

Tito:

I was 12. And then he pulls a gun on my mom and he said, give me everything you made today and give me alcohol and cigarettes or I'll kill you right now. And then I went in front of my mom. And I said if you're gonna kill her, you gotta kill me first. We had another helper in the store. And she picked up cigarettes, all the cash, liquor, the most expensive liquor and she grabbed a bag. He's like, here you go.

Nicole:

I mean, you were robbed by your own father as a child.

Tito:

Whose name is Tito. My real name is Paulo. But his name is Tito. And he left, he had an accident after that. He fell from a bridge and broke a cervical and he was paraplegic for a week and then he died.

Nicole:

Oh my gosh.

Tito:

And since then I felt the pressure of taking care of my mom. My mom lost her house, lost a car, lost a family business. Everything, because she loved this man.

Nicole:

Of course, similar story, a common story amongst immigrants, first generation. We feel a lot of weight and responsibility to take care of our family.

Tito:

So in this song I tell the story of when, before that, when the cops came into my house. My father was dealing drugs. My mom wasn't aware of anything. And then like at 2am they come in, they knock on the door, break everything down, look for drugs, cash, whatever. I wake up at 2am and I hear my mom say please don't wake up leto, which is me. There's nothing in his room I swear is nothing. There's nothing in his room. And the song. Oh, I'm getting emotional.

Nicole:

It's beautiful.

Tito:

And in the chorus, I say, <sings in Spanish> which means Mama don't cry, Mama, don't cry. I'm gonna take care of the family. <voices breaks>

Nicole:

Yeah. Oh, oh, Tito. The truth is though, the truth is, you know, you are taking care of the family.

Tito:

I am.

Nicole:

And you're doing amazing work. And we are so proud of you. I think everyone listening right now can feel that we want you to win.

Tito:

I'm ruining my makeup, it's not worth it Nicole. <laughs>

Nicole:

I'm not going to lose an eyelash here today. You're not gonna have me out here looking a mess on YouTube. You're not gonna do it. Y'all, how incredible is he? How incredible is he?

Tito:

You're incredible. Thank you for having me today.

Nicole:

Amazing, it's a joy that you're here today and thank you so much for sharing so vulnerably, being so open and so honest with us. I mean, not only are you beyond inspiring, but I think your story is one that just so many of us can connect to and be inspired by just really take pieces of it and say like, wherever we are, there's merit to it. It matters. So I appreciate you giving of yourself that way to us here today. And how can we get back to you? Where can we download your single and hear more from you?

Tito:

Well, it's everywhere. And this single that I just talked about, Mi Familia, is coming out between the second and third week of August. You can find it anywhere. There's a very cool music video. And yes, I'm Tito Rey and this is who I am.

Nicole:

Oh, we love who you are.

Tito:

Thank you.