

# WTC 'Interview' with Patriece Thompson\_mixdown

[00:00:00] **Christi Powell:** Hey, podcast listeners, this is Christy Powell with Women Taught Construction, and we are so happy to be here today. Angela, how are you doing this morning?

[00:00:11] **Angela Gardner:** I'm great, Christi. How are you?

[00:00:12] **Christi Powell:** Good, good. Angela Gardner, our co host, is here today with us. And also Patriece Thompson from turner construction. Hi Patriece. How are you doing?

**Patriece Thompson:** I'm good. How are you ladies?

**Christi Powell:** Good So thank you so much for joining us today.

We are really excited to learn more about turner construction and all of the great things that you're doing In the community with turner among so many other things not just in the community. It is a wide Variety of job roles that we take on in those roles and I've watched you and I've seen all the work that you're doing So we can't wait to dive in to um, just learn more about you and what you're doing But in the meantime, I want to talk about something that's always been on my mind.

Several years ago, somebody asked me how it made me feel personally to serve the community. And ever since that question was asked at that particular moment, all I could think of was it made my heart happy, but I really wanted to come up with an answer. And I've often thought about that question, right?

And it really is what makes me want to get up in the morning. So you know, I go to bed with a smile on my face and I get to wake up. with a smile on my face. And that's what, you know, serving the community. That's how it makes me feel. So I would love to hear what you two think about that. I think it's really important because when you're so focused on your work and you're not serving the community, you're missing a part of you that I didn't even know existed within myself when I was in the field.

So Patriece, what do you think about that?

[00:01:46] **Patriece Thompson:** So I truly love Pittsburgh, and when I think of Pittsburgh, I think of my family, and I think with Pittsburgh, it's community, so I think of my family, and then I think of Pittsburgh as a whole, the community is my family, so when I am serving the community or providing access or resources to people in Pittsburgh, that's what makes me smile, to know that someone can have a sustainable career, to know that, you know, someone can upliftment and make an impact, so that's what gets me up, and that's what makes me keep going.

[00:02:14] **Christi Powell:** Love it. Love it. How about you, Angela? I know that that makes you happy as well.

[00:02:18] **Angela Gardner:** You know, I was lucky enough that I entered the workforce and I just, I just watched my mom and grandmother do it. And so I just did it. And then my mentors also guided me to do it. I mean, it just, it brings you joy to see someone else excel in whatever it is that you're helping with.

So, it brightens my day.

[00:02:39] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. I think it's really important for us to, to share that when with other women to write if they're struggling, um, sometimes just taking the focus off yourself and putting your focus on others is a really good way to get yourself out of a slump or, you know, maybe you're stuck in your job or... or whatever that happens to be, but thanks for sharing that. So Patriece Thompson is the Community and Citizenship Director for Turner Construction. And Patrice, we're so honored that you wanted to be with us today and talk to our audience. We're hoping that the young girls that are listening and the ladies that are listening that maybe wouldn't consider a career in construction that they might be considering a career after today's conversation with Patrice.

So, um, 1 of the questions that we wanted to ask you, Patrice is, can you share an example of a successful project? Where construction and community engagement intersected and how it positively impacted the area.

[00:03:40] **Patriece Thompson:** So I'm going to kind of speak on a project that we're currently doing, because communities, what started it and then the development came after.

And it was really the conversation, the community was like, we need sustainable wages, we need to have careers, we need to have folks that are in this community able to give back to their community. And I think that's really

when we came in, Turner came in, we decided how can we help? And one thing that we can do, we can build, but we also can provide access into union trades.

We can, you know, provide access with our resources to start building programs. And that's what we did. And we sat down and had a conversation with what else can we do? And we know how to partner. So, we partnered and so now it's bringing in resources from other organizations and local organizations to showcase and uplift them to being able to provide those resources to the community.

So. Really, I think it's just being the convener and being able to have that, you know, that monetary aid and just getting the community on board. And it just takes one, you know, that's all it, that's all it really was. So that specific project, we're still kind of moving into it, but you know, UBEs and we're getting our minority businesses and our women owned businesses, you know, a piece of the pie.

And that's, what's important, you know, just making sure that everyone in the community Gets to reap that benefit of that development.

[00:04:57] **Christi Powell:** So for those that are listening that don't know what UBEs are, will you explain what that is?

[00:05:01] **Patricee Thompson:** Yeah. So UBE is for, we use that phrase in Turner, but that is a underrepresented business enterprise, which would be your MWBE minority women business enterprise or WBE women business enterprise.

But it's one way to just showcase when we're talking around needing the diversity of our. Um, subcontractors, that's the word we use UB. Thank you for asking. A lot of people know that. Yeah. You're welcome.

[00:05:26] **Christi Powell:** There's not, there's a lot of people out there that don't know what that means. I didn't know that.

[00:05:29] **Angela Gardner:** No, I do.

[00:05:31] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. So we've been using, um, the term XBE. So it includes everyone because it's not just women and minorities that are getting certified now. Right. We have the veterans and we have LGBTQ community. There's so many BEs that, you know, we had been using the XBE, but I do like the UBE better actually. So, um, maybe we can take a shift on that.

[00:05:55] **Patricee Thompson:** I'm sure we're going to connect. You got, you got it. Whatever you need.

[00:05:58] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I love that. I love it. So thank you for what you're doing for the community. And I know that Turner's making a huge impact. All over the country. And I just want to say this really quickly. You're in Pittsburgh and our operation, our headquarters for 84 lumber is in 84.

Pennsylvania. And so I understand that that community is, because I've seen it for myself, is pretty amazing. Um, the entire community, like I fell in love with it when I first started working at our corporate office. I travel a lot, so I don't get to be there as often as I'd like to, but I do love it there and love that you're so involved in helping that community grow.

Yeah, we're, I always

[00:06:39] **Patricee Thompson:** say we are a scrappy city, but we're, you know, we'll do anything for each other. It might be a pain at 1 moment, but we're, we'll get it done and we'll connect. So, you know, Pittsburgh is we're very tight. Yeah, anyone. Oh, yeah.

[00:06:53] **Angela Gardner:** Okay. So I'm going to ask the next question. How do you approach building relationships?

And it sounds like you do an awesome job at that. And connecting with government officials, stakeholders, and community leaders to ensure construction projects are inclusive and beneficial for the entire community, including students, because that's a lot of people coming together. That's a lot of work.

And I think you mentioned your team is. What, 60 B or how many do you, cause that takes, that takes a lot of people power.

[00:07:29] **Patricee Thompson:** So in general, our business unit is about 80 plus, but then when you look at community and citizenship, it's two. So it's myself and I have to just mention her and give her a hand clap. Nia Sankofa, she is a coordinator within community and citizenship and she does a wonderful job, but both of us, I think it starts with listening, Angela.

That's the first thing you have to listen. You have to listen to your government stakeholders. You have to listen to your, your community leaders. You have to listen to your community. And then you also have to listen to students and your

youth of that community. And that's the start. And then it's figuring out what the need is.

I mean, what is that need? I think sometimes we will go into a community or. Just, you know, in your personal life, you assume an assumption is really what can, can dead a strategy from the very beginning. So I like to say we listen, then we sit down and we have a conversation and that, that, that starts at all.

The conversation is really going to get you to what the strategy is. And then you execute and you figure out who is good at executing that strategy. If it's something that needs to get done, that's more on the political. side of things, maybe with the development of the city, do we need to talk to that council member and have that conversation first?

But we also then need to make sure we sit down and have a conversation with community leaders and then in general, just the residents. At the end of the day, when we go into these communities, it's the residents that are going to keep our businesses that we build and these developments that are going up.

In constant, um, movement and, you know, building that revenue. So it's conversation, it's listening, and then it's getting aligned. And I've always told people, we're not always gonna like what that conversation might end up to be. You can't like one thing my grandma, my grandmother would always say is you cannot please everyone, but you can figure out a way to at least come to an agreement.

On how to get the main, the big picture done and the big picture is making sure what we're serving our communities and that, you know, there's affordable living and, you know, folks are able to thrive in their communities. And I think that's really the start of it all. You have to listen. You have to listen.

[00:09:37] **Christi Powell:** Yeah, I love that. Well, the residents are so blessed to be able to have somebody like Turner Wright and 84 Lumber that are really passionate about helping W's and M's grow in their business, but also providing a place for these citizens to live. Right. And where they work, where they play and where they go to school and I was just thinking like, from their standpoint, how awesome they feel Turner is because of what you do for them, you know, by reaching out to counsel and yeah, it's never easy and we can't make everybody happy.

But, you know, there are a lot of people out there that are sitting back going, wow, you know, this is a great thing that they're doing for us. Let

[00:10:16] **Angela Gardner:** me ask you both a question. So, do y'all find it? Maybe even you get employees. Like you build your workforce based on how you treat your communities.

[00:10:25] **Christi Powell:** Yes. It's a win

[00:10:27] **Patriece Thompson:** win.

Right? Yeah. And I think the community teaches us because you can, you can, like, I will walk in and think maybe I'm an expert at something and you know, a community would be like, Oh no, this is really how it, you know, it could move or this is how it could go. I think at the end of the day, it's a blessing to be in the position, but I'm learning from community residents and each community is different.

And that's, you know, prior to your question earlier, Angela, each community is different. You have to learn what those individuals and what those residents think and what they go through on a daily basis. So, you know, I appreciate it, Christy. It's a blessing to have us, but truly it's our residents and it's the people in our communities because without them, we wouldn't be able to build.

Yeah,

[00:11:07] **Christi Powell:** we wouldn't be here.

84 Lumber Company is the nation's largest privately held supplier of building materials, manufactured components, and industry leading services for single and multifamily residences and commercial buildings. The company operates 310 facilities, which include stores, component manufacturing plants, custom door shops, and engineered wood product centers in 35 states.

84 Lumber Company also offers turnkey installation services. services for a variety of products, including framing, installation, siding, windows, roofing, decking, and drywall. For more information, visit [84lumber.com](http://84lumber.com).

[00:11:48] **Patriece Thompson:** I

[00:11:55] **Christi Powell:** don't know about you, but I do, when I do get to get in front of the community, I ask a lot of questions and yes, I really do care about what they need. And I think that's the most important thing that we can do. We can't walk in there and act like, Hey, you know, we got it all together because we don't have anything together.

We don't know what's going to fix whatever's going on in that community. We just know we want to help if we can and we want to support it. So, um, yeah, I find myself asking a lot of questions. I do that at home too. My family sometimes gets annoyed by that. It's better to ask questions. Yeah. I ask a lot of questions.

Yeah. In your experience, what strategies have you found most effective in fostering collaboration between public and private sectors in construction? Because that's a, that's a tricky spot in community development, ensuring that the needs of all the stakeholders are considered. You kind of answered that a minute ago for Angela.

But is there any kind of strategy that you've found that works really the best other than, you know, uniting everyone?

[00:13:01] **Patricee Thompson:** I think it's making sure that you're a part of organizations or memberships that are within your city or your community that provide access or have resources. I know, for example, would be like your chamber of commerce, like your, your, your NAOPS.

We have a organization here that's called the Allegheny Conference and the Economic Development Organization, and just aligning with them to kind of see what are all the needs that you're hearing out there that we might be missing? Because if we're out in the community and we're having those conversations, what also is going on in the business world?

How can we align that? And I think with all of those types of organizations. You're also then able to hear from your elected officials, your government officials, you're able to hear maybe from the business, you know, stakeholders, and then you also have your nonprofit community leaders, which in my opinion, those are some of the most important folks when it, when it comes to our type of work, because they're not only in the community, but they're sitting in those boardrooms.

So that's really my strategy and, um, our business unit in Pittsburgh strategy is. It's getting aligned with everyone left and right, you know, and, and how can we just have good conversation? You know, it's good conversation. It's questions and it's collaboration. And that's something that I think Turner Pittsburgh BU does really well as a whole, because Pittsburgh is a small city, but it's a big city at the same time.

So, you know, like you have to collaborate, you have to have conversations and I think that's the best strategy that myself and business unit works, works great with.

[00:14:35] **Angela Gardner:** Okay, so my next question, I know you've kind of mentioned one of these already, but let's think of another one. So could you discuss a specific initiative or program you've been involved in that has successfully promoted a culture of collaboration?

Because we're, we're talking about that all the time. Yeah. Collaboration within the construction industry. Um, particularly in terms of workforce development and supplier diversity. Absolutely.

[00:15:01] **Patricee Thompson:** So I'll split that question for you, Angela. Yeah, I'll split that question. Cause I think there's as much as we have our own programs, there's a lot of work that went into even getting to that program.

Um, you know, working with organizations like the Master Builders Association of Western Pennsylvania, you know, they have. A great workforce development director there that I've been working with Lance Harrell and then Dave, their, their ED. Yeah, working with them. And you know, they really sat down with me when I started this journey in construction.

And they're like, listen, this is, this is kind of where Pittsburgh stands. This is where our unions are at. They did a great job connecting me. With our unions and connecting me with subcontractors and, you know, they have a minority supplier committee that I'm a part of, that's really been a huge help to getting to where we're at now with Turner.

We at Turner feel that it's very important that workforce development is discussed. It's something that we should be involved in, and it's something that we should be a champion for. And it started with that data and research. You know, working with folks like the MBA, um, and then being able to, again, talking to communities when we have that availability and the resources to build off on programs and get others involved.

And that's currently what we're doing. So we did just put out a, um, workforce development, labor union pipeline program, partnering with our, um, local three 73, um, labor's union. And then we have, you know. The University of Pittsburgh's behind us and a couple other folks like Partner for Work. Again, organizations like non stop just constantly wanting to figure out how can we



better not just the communities that we're building but like Pittsburgh as a whole.

But this, you know, pipeline program is really helping people get access. And I think when we look at workforce development, that's the first issue is the access. And then, you know, you look at the challenges and the barriers and the resources. We're really quick to give folks opportunity, but are we sitting down and looking at the challenges and barriers so that opportunity is sustainable?

Oh yeah. That's so important. It's so important because. If you can give somebody a job, but they can't get to work, you know, like, did we really give them an opportunity? So. We've just been really blessed to sit down and have partners to figure out programs like the labor union pipeline program. And there are so many other programs in Pittsburgh.

Um, the builders guild has done, and you know, um, there's a pit to work program that all of us are coming together to understand what is needed in Pittsburgh, which is workforce development.

[00:17:30] **Angela Gardner:** Yeah. I love how y'all are really. Trying to help them be successful in always not just giving them an opportunity because that's not Christie's always talking about this.

It's not just giving them the job. It's about making sure that they have the ability to print those 500 pages for that blueprint to quote it. It's it's so much more than that.

[00:17:55] **Patriece Thompson:** And you're right, when we look at our UBEs and our MWBEs, I mean, it's important to make sure that we understand where are the gaps and what are the needs and Turner Construction as a whole, there is great resources and support our procurement team in general, again, as a whole in Turner Construction is always wanting to help and providing resources.

You know, we have a Turner School of Construction Management. Yeah. Oh, wow. It's a nine week free program that each business unit across Turner puts on for, you know, UBEs, MWBEs to come in and, and understand where gaps, you know, what barriers we can help them through. So it's really amazing. It's, it's just support.

Yeah. Yeah. I've had that conversation. It's about support. Yeah. We can find that opportunity, but let's just make sure you can hold that opportunity once we, once we step away. Right.

[00:18:45] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. That's the tough part, right? Is just making that follow up, that follow through, you know, are you there? Did you grow? Are we helping enough?

Do you need more? What do you need? And let's find a resource to fill that particular need. We can fill so many, right? You can we can, but then there's still other things out there that need to be presented. There needs to be more resources for we can't handle banking, right? If they need a loan. So, no, it's not something you and I can handle, but there are a lot of other aspects that they do need.

So we bring our partners, like you said, to the table and say, Hey, you know, we want you to help with this banking because you have that knowledge and you have those resources. So yeah, what advice? Okay. So this is probably my favorite question of the day. Um, what advice would you give young students and young professionals interested in pursuing a career?

in construction or in community development like you have with Turner and how can they contribute to creating impactful change? So this is like a two part question too, um, especially in terms of diversity and economic development. Hmm. My

[00:19:58] **Patriece Thompson:** first piece of advice would be do not limit yourself. Hmm. It's a good one.

When I was in undergrad and grad school, this was not what I saw my path to go, you know, and be on. I thought I was going to just be like in business and that, you know, I was going to be in office all day and that's what it was going to be. And I think as I've gotten older and, and talked to mentors and, and fell in love with my city and people, just the love of people, this is the journey that I'm on.

So I didn't limit myself and I just, I found a fit and what you're good at, keep pushing. You know, I was always told you talk too much. And what do I do for a living? I literally go and talk to people and, you know, have conversations. So. Sometimes taking the, those negative pieces that you might hear and find a way to make them positive in a skill set that works for you.

Love it. And what was the other one? One more. Let's see,

[00:20:49] **Christi Powell:** um, how can they contribute creating impactful change?

[00:20:54] **Patricee Thompson:** I think impactful change, look at, look at what's missing in your community or look what your friend group is missing. Look what around you and your family and, and find a way to fill that gap. You know, find a way to, to build impact.

If you see that, you know, the street that you live on recycling is not great, or you, you have, you see trash everywhere. Find a way to make a committee or find a way to, to make the change as an example, but you know, just look at yourself first and who's around you. And then you have no idea. It's like an olive branch.

It'll continue to keep extending to the next person. And you're

[00:21:27] **Christi Powell:** always going to find people to follow you too. Yes. If you start making an impactful change. You may lose a few friends that maybe weren't your people, but you're going to gain a whole wealth of friends that are on the same path as you are, which they also want to make an impactful change in their communities.

Um, you mentioned another word and I want to definitely highlight that. You mentioned when you said don't limit yourself that you had a mentor, and I think that's probably one of the most important things that we can tell our youth and young professionals. If you don't have a mentor, find one. It does not have to be.

It doesn't have to be scheduled. It can be organic. It can be easy. It can be a phone call. It does not have to be a formal. That was the word I was looking for. It doesn't have to be formal. It doesn't have to be an hour every other Thursday. It can be pick up the phone and call someone that you admire and that you want to be like.

Or you want to learn how to be better at what you're doing, but I think that's one of the most important things that we can say. Every podcast is that, um, if you're listening and you don't have a mentor, absolutely consider finding one. And where do you find one organizations? Just like Patrice talked about

[00:22:45] **Patricee Thompson:** earlier today, and they'll change throughout your life.

They're going to change your life in different seasons. So you'll have many mentors.

[00:22:54] **Christi Powell:** Yes. Yes. And we do, right? Like you have a mentor. I have a mentor for my personal life. I have a mentor for my Bible study. I have a mentor, you know, I have a mentor for, um, work and, you know, I think it's important, you know, I even have a mentor that actually helps me when my marriage is, you know, we've been married 20 years, but sometimes I need advice.

Like things aren't going as well as I'd like. So it's important to have somebody there just to ask questions. You don't have to call them a mentor. But that's exactly what they are. They're helping you navigate life. Right.

[00:23:27] **Patrice Thompson:** Yeah. Get your life advisory board.

[00:23:29] **Christi Powell:** That's good. Yeah. I like that. That's a good one.

So thank you, Patrice, for being on today. You and Turner are doing some great things for people all over the world, not just in your little. Um, community there in Pittsburgh, um, everything that you do and the strides that you make and the support that you're providing others is helping everybody across the world.

And not just in the construction industry, you're touching every industry, which I love and really. Giving people a place to be. And I think that's the most important thing that we can do right now is, is make people feel like they belong in part of a bigger community than what they see right in front of them.

So thank you for all of that. Now that all of our listeners love you, which I'm sure they do, you let them know how to get ahold of Patrice Thompson and or Turner Construction. What is the best way to just keep up with you and know what Turner's doing? Thank you If they want to do work for, for Turner, how do they get ahold of you too?

Possibly do some work with Turner.

[00:24:33] **Patrice Thompson:** Absolutely. First and foremost, it's go to Turner construction. com. You know, you can type in Turner construction. If you're looking for a career, there's a tab for careers. Look at your city, see what's available. If you're looking for the Pittsburgh business unit for Turner construction, and you want to send me an email, you can find me on the website.

P Thompson, T H O N P S O N. At tcco. com, or you can also my favorite just add Patrice Thompson and LinkedIn, but either way, if you're trying to get

ahold of Turner myself, we can figure it out. And I'd love to hear from anyone that has questions or wants to collaborate. That's all. That's what we're all about in any city.

Because we all we're all connected at Turner. That's 1 thing. I love all connected. So. If you're in a different city and you need some help, I can connect you to the Patrice in, in Cali. I can connect you in the Patrice in Texas, North Carolina. We have a really strong, uh, team and family across our Turner nation.

[00:25:27] **Christi Powell:** Yes, yes, you do and there's 60 of you, right? Wow.

[00:25:31] **Patrice Thompson:** Yes. There's, there's, I think we're growing now. We might have a little bit over 60, uh, but yeah, we're, we have some great leadership. We have, you know, Fuquon Collins and we have Chris Harrison. So our team is growing and they're doing a great job at

[00:25:45] **Christi Powell:** it.

That's wonderful. Well, all of our listeners, please check out Turner Construction's website and reach out to Turner. If there's something that they can provide, that's going to help you get a job, or maybe, um, you're thinking about going to work in the construction industry, definitely reach out to them.

They're great with minorities and women and all people who are interested in being a part of our industry. Thank you again, Patrice, for joining us today. Thank you. We really appreciate you.

[00:26:14] **Patrice Thompson:** It was great. Appreciate you all for having me. Thank you so much. Well,

that's

[00:26:28] **Christi Powell:** all for this episode. Thank you so much for listening to the Women Talk Construction Podcast with your hosts, Christy Powell and Angela Gardner. See you next time.