



Lifetime Achievement Award, Tracye McDaniel | TIP Strategies (TX)

There are moments in life when everything becomes so clear that it stops you in your tracks.

The day this award was announced was one of those moments. And what many of you do not know is that it was the very same day I lost my brother, Shamaur.

Two headlines. One heartbeat. Celebration and loss sitting side by side — reminding me how fragile, and how extraordinary, this life truly is.

We all get two dates that mark our time here: the day we are born, and the day we leave this world. But what really matters ... is the dash in between.

The dash is where we love. Where we show up. Where we serve. Where we strengthen communities. That dash is where purpose meets people.

I have spent my career in economic development, but for me, it has always been heart work, not hard work. It's about restoring hope. Expanding possibility. And helping communities claim visions for the future.

When I look back, I do not think about titles or initiatives. I think about faces, I think about you.

Colleagues who became family. Professionals who found their calling. Communities that discovered their voice. That is the heartbeat of this work —this is our work.

Tonight, I accept this honor in loving memory of my brother, Shamaur McDaniel.

His life reminds me that our dash is not promised... but it is powerful. And we get to choose what we do with it.

So my promise moving forward is to live my dash boldly, with intention, — and yes, with joy and plenty of laughter. To keep lifting up this industry, this mission, and the people (each of you) at the center of it.

And when the time comes, to drop the mic, on a life well-lived.

Thank you, IEDC, for this incredible honor.

And thank you to everyone in this room who continues to build a better world — one person, one community, and one dash at a time.

