Episode 1,418: Luis J. Gomez, Co-Creator of GaS Digital, on Racism, Free Speech, Comedy, and SJWs

Guest: Luis J. Gomez

WOODS: I'm so glad to have you on here. When I was telling people that — first, I've told people that we'd met, I posted the picture — and as I told you, I've got landscaping going outside my window. It's making me crazy. But when I posted that picture, people were going nuts about it. They're saying, "Worlds are colliding," right? "How could this be that the two of them are there?" And they're also noting, because you're kind of tall and I'm kind of short, so the contrast was not favorable for me. And then I started promoting the fact that I was going to get you on the show, and people are going berserk.

So let's start off. I want to talk about the great stuff that you do now that is pioneering and important, and you just grabbed the bull by the horns and you created something really important. And my instinct — I have not discussed it with you — is that things are going pretty well. But we'll get to that in a minute. I want to know about your background. I want to know about where you grew up and how your experiences as a young man helped to form the man you became.

GOMEZ: Well, first of all, I want to say thanks, Tom, and yeah, I had no idea you were as short as you are. I didn't want to say anything.

WOODS: [laughing]

GOMEZ: In fact, I never thought you'd talk about that, but since you brought it up, I'm glad —

WOODS: I brought it up.

GOMEZ: It was the elephant in the room, apparently, the whole time. Yeah, my background, I grew up in crap. I grew up in, you know, the suburbs of New York, Rockland County, New York, and I grew up very, very, very poor. My mom on welfare, Section 8, never really holding down more than a part-time job.

And, you know, this is something that I only started thinking about recently, but it's like the suburbs, it's such a depressing type of poverty because there's not any type of — and this is rural areas, as well, but for the most part, there's nobody that is dreaming and excited about going to work, and you're not in an environment where people are really just motivated. I'm not saying, you know, nobody, but just in my life, and when you're dealing with poor people who are in those areas, it's just a little bit weird. When you're in New York City, I can walk down the street, and I can be on the same subway car as a guy that makes millions of dollars

on Wall Street or a movie star or a musician or a banker or somebody who opened a business, and there's all of this stuff that's happening in a very close space, and it can be very motivating and you can kind of see a way out. There's a path to — it's a little bit easier to visualize kind of getting there, I think, for a little kid.

And for me, I remember the first time I had a job and made any sort of money, like 400 bucks a week, I was like, *Holy crap, this is it. I don't need any other job my entire life*. And we just grew up and the way that I looked at money, it was something that was a very big deal in my household. I had a job since I was 10 years old. I was sweeping up at the local hair salon and getting all the girls lunch, so instead of them ordering delivery, I would kind of be a gofer and grab lunch for the girls and all the different hair stylists at the studio.

And literally since I was 10 years old, I've always had a job. I've always had just something in me — even younger than that, to be honest with you. I mean, I was the kid, when I was a little kid, when it would snow, I was knocking on everyone's door first thing in the morning, eight o'clock in the morning, "Can I shovel your driveway for five bucks?" You know, rake your leaves. I always had, you know, iced tea stands and lemonade stands, and just there was always some — I don't want to say a scheme, because it wasn't a scheme, but I always had an industrious thing about me, and I think it was just because I didn't have a lot. My dad died when I was really young. My mom was really poor. And I was jealous of the kids who had things, and if I wanted to have things that were really cool, I had to go out and earn myself. So it was something that sort of was built into me.

The first real — I remember, maybe when I was eight years old, seven years old, really young — my son is six now, so this stuff is crazy when I think about it, right? My mom's at work, and I come home from school; my sister's two years older than me; she's watching us. And one of my neighbors had died, this guy who I didn't really know, but one of my buddies from the neighborhood was like, "Yeah, they're throwing all this stuff out right now from his house, so we should go grab some stuff." So I took it a step further. I was like, "Forget just grabbing some stuff. Let's go take all this stuff, move it into my yard, and we'll have a yard sale." And we went over and took all of this dead guy's garbage, moved it over to my yard. Now, we're seven, so like it's a couch that we brought over that we sold for like 10 bucks. You know, it's like a nice leather recliner; we're like, "$6. Wow, we have $6." For a seven-year-old kid, $6 is a lot of tootsie rolls, you know?

WOODS: Yeah.

GOMEZ: So that was my upbringing. That was my background. Just being poor, knowing my mom's financial situation, knowing that we couldn't afford to pay the bills, it was always something that was on my mind, and it definitely shaped who I was. It made me sort of a hard worker. It made me want to have nice things. It made me sort of set goals. And I think actually having real, legitimate goals and goals that are tangible is a very, very big deal. I think it's why we have so much social media outreach, because people feel as if they accomplished something. When they get a retweet, they feel as if they hit a goal, but there's no real goals being accomplished. And I think just from a very young age, I sort of was setting these little random goals and hitting them and sort of building that into my spirit, and I think that that sort of gave me a lot of the business philosophy that I have today.

WOODS: That is fantastic stuff. Now, what would the demographics like in Rockland County?

GOMEZ: Where I was at, North Rockland area, it was a mix of Hispanic and white, lower class. Lower middle class in the best-case scenario, and then like very, very poor, and very sort of violent areas of Haverstraw or West Haverstraw, where grew up. It was like, it wasn't — I think it's probably worse than I even give it credit for, because it's hard to kind of go back there. I didn't feel like I was in danger, but I was physically assaulted almost every day by kids in my neighborhood, and there were rocks being thrown at me. And it's just, when you're living in it, it doesn't — I don't really know. My perspective, it was just, you know, kids being kids, but, I really look back, and if that was happening to my son today, I mean, I would be on the front lawn with a baseball bat, you know?

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Was there a racial element to it?

GOMEZ: 100%. I mean, I was the N-word of the neighborhood. I grew up on a white block. It was like block to block, right?

WOODS: Oh, man.

GOMEZ: So these white kids were really — and I'm half white. I'm half Puerto Rican, half Italian-Irish; my mother, Italian-Irish; my father, Puerto Rican. My dad was murdered when I was four years old in Paterson, New Jersey.

WOODS: Oh, my gosh.

GOMEZ: So my mom raised me alone. She moved us to Rockland County, where my aunt and grandma had lived. And we moved to pretty much — I want to say a white trash neighborhood. That's the best way to describe it. And it was a bunch of kids who were just — you know, they were just from a — it's not even their fault; they're kids. You know, they're just from a garbage area, and their parents are doing drugs and they're alcoholics, and they have these racist views and these BS views on the world. And I was the darkest kid in the neighborhood, and it was just —

You know, the amount of racism that I've dealt with not only even from the kids in the neighborhood, but like family members — growing up in an Italian-Irish household in the '80s and '90s, it's shocking, and it's sort of shaped the way that I look at the world and the way that I look at — my perspective on racism is very, very different than I think most people's, because I've dealt with it in a very, very different way. I've been called the N word, with the same ferocity and the same venom that black people have been called it. Like while kids are throwing rocks at me or hitting me or jumping me, that was sort of the go-to. And I look at that, and still to this day, I'm a huge — I hate saying "free speech," but I really feel strongly about freedom of expression, especially in art and with what I do.

But yeah, the amount of racism that I saw, it was really crazy. And I don't even know if it was like — these kids didn't hate me because I was brown; it was they had to bully somebody, and I happened to be the brown kid, and that's sort of like in their household, the narrative there was that brown people were less. Simple as that. So it wasn't like, *Oh, I hate*; it was just more like, *Okay, we're going to bully somebody*. If there wasn't a brown kid there, they would have picked on the kid with the speech impediment.

WOODS: Yeah, or in my case, there weren't very many brown kids, so they picked on the nerd. I'll give you three guesses as to who that was.

GOMEZ: [laughing] I'm assuming that you at the very least hung out with him.

WOODS: I know a little something about this guy, I'll just say.

GOMEZ: Right. But once again, all these experiences, they sort of make you who you are. I wouldn't change anything for the world. I wouldn't have the most incredible son and career and all these cool things that have happened in my life if these things didn't happen in my past. And I also don't blame those kids. Those kids, once again, they're little kids. I feel so bad for — I watch it now. I live in Harlem, and I used to live up in Washington Heights, which is little more hood, and I would walk around and there'd be like four- or five-year-old kids on like a stoop at like two in the morning, and there's no adults around, and it's like their nine-year-old sister maybe is watching them. And in my mind, I'm going like, *This kid has no chance*. When this kid one day robs somebody or is selling drugs or whatever it is, I feel bad for that little kid right there on that stoop. I feel so bad, because he has no chance.

And it really does come down to a responsibility of being a great parent and trying to create a better world by creating better people. That should be the goal for everybody. I think that's the answer to everything. All the BS that people talk and all the crap that's happening in the world, it's: raise your kids better. Do the research. Our parents didn't know any better, because they didn't have the internet at their fingertips. My mom would have to go to a library and, I mean, find a book on parenting? My mom's never been to a library in her life, you know? So it's easier now, and people spend so much time on the internet screaming at each other and then posting things that they half believe, that it's like, if you just spent a little bit of time reading about how to make yourself better and make your children better, I think we could really make big, big, big changes.

WOODS: Can you just take a quick moment to say something about Harlem, because I think people when they hear "Harlem," they have in their mind images that maybe don't apply so much anymore. Harlem is a much more desirable place than it used to be. Am I right about that?

GOMEZ: Yeah, I mean, Harlem is the Upper West Side. If you can buy property in New York City right now, go buy it in Harlem, Washington Heights, Uptown. I mean, it's not necessarily the best thing, but this is all becoming extremely gentrified, where my block, I would say — you start to see it. Once you start to see more white people than brown people, the second that happens, usually within a year, you start seeing Starbucks; you start seeing major chains, Chase Bank; you start seeing city bikes where you can rent bikes like that. You didn't have that in Harlem. Five years ago, even, you didn't have a city bike rental in Harlem or a Starbucks. That stuff only started popping up in the last few years.

But it's very, very gentrified. My block is beautiful. I live a block off of Morningside Heights, two blocks off of Central Park. And it's gorgeous. I mean, it's ridiculous. But at the same time, two blocks up, there's a project. There's a straight-up project building, where if you walk in there, if you're — I mean, I'm a bigger Puerto Rican guy. People don't really mess with me. I look like I belong, and it's sort of how you hold yourself. But Tom, if you walked through those projects, there's a good chance you're going to get messed with. There's a good chance, at the

very least, somebody's going to say something to you, and who knows where that's going to go depending on your reaction? And that's sort of where it becomes unsafe.

But it's not unsafe — if you were to visit Harlem as a tourist, you can get off 125th Street and visit the Apollo Theater, walk down to 116th Street, grabs some tacos or some Spanish food in East Harlem, walk all over that area. You're not going to be messed with. There's no issues. I wouldn't do it at two o'clock in the morning [laughing], but it's definitely become very — it's almost like it's becoming the Upper West Side of Manhattan at this point. But there's still a lot of culture. Especially in East Harlem, there's a lot of Hispanic culture there. There's still a lot of culture in West Harlem. They're holding on to it.

But the reality is, they push it out by gentrifying these neighborhoods, and you bring in all of these white people, and they make the buildings nicer, and they make everything look a little bit nicer, but a lot of the culture, you lose it. And it's not even a race thing. You see the same thing on the Lower East Side. The Lower East Side was so rock-and-roll for so long, but you had heroin addicts hanging out on corners, so the good comes with the bad. But it was really cool. If you wanted to get a $6 pitcher of beer and 10-cent wings, you used to be able to do that in New York City on the Lower East Side at a lot of places, and it doesn't exist anymore. So a lot of that coolness of New York City — you know, what do you want it? When I was 20 years old, I would say, yeah, make it punk rock. As an adult, I have a kid; I have things that are more important to me now. I have a business; I have multiple businesses. Once you start to have chips on the table, you start to look at the world a little bit differently.

WOODS: I lived in more or less in the Morningside Heights area for about five years. That's interesting to hear you say. Now, I can't help noting that you are very, very generous and gracious toward people who, frankly, were your tormentors as a kid. I mean, you're trying to understand why they acted the way they did. And for a long time, I was not able to look at my tormentors that way. These were SOBs and, you know, they can go to hell. And you look back, trying to get in their heads and understand what was really going on. That's amazing to me. But what's likewise amazing is that you never fell into the SJW, the social justice warrior world or their way of looking at the world. You seem to be completely opposed to that. So what's the deal there?

GOMEZ: I mean, it's not that I don't fall into that way of looking at the world. I understand it, but it's a lot of emotion, and I have to step back, and I really do — I look at myself; I'm a different person than I was 15 years ago. I have opposing views on things. I'm a different person. And people change, and you can't — what I've noticed from that side and SJW culture is it's completely based off of emotion, and a lot of the times, a very nice emotion, a really good emotion. It's not a bad place.

They really want — this is why the you can't argue with them, because they're like, "Yeah, punch a Nazi." You're like, "Well, no, you can't just punch a Nazi." They're like, "What are you talking about? Of course you can." Well, I mean, look. If somebody came in — my best friend, Dave Smith, is Jewish. If a guy with a swastika tattoo came in and said, "Hey, this Jew, I'm going to punch him right now, or I'm going to hurt him in any way," or anything, to be honest with you, the type of guy that I am, if you just said any words to my friend, Dave, my best friend, Dave, there's a good chance that I would punch him. At the same time, that's not right. At the same time, I would have to say I'm wrong to assault that man, and I should be arrested for assaulting him.

If I'm looking at it from a logical standpoint — and it's very similar to the way that I look at my, you said tormentors, growing up. I don't know, man. If Nick Giacalli was standing in front of me right now, I don't know that I'd have the same type of sympathy that I have when I'm having a conversation with you and I'm looking at it from a very logical way. We're all guilty. We're all human. We can all be emotional. It doesn't mean that it's right. So what I try to do is, at the very least, when I'm doing podcasts or I'm online — and this is philosophy that we're shaping in real time — I try to be consistent. That's really what I want to try to do.

So with the SJW culture, there's — look, I've been a victim of racism. I think it's really wrong. If I watched a racist — I'm telling you, Tom. If there was a guy that got on the train in Harlem, a white guy, and he started calling people the N-word in front of me, I would be the first person to stand up and say something.

WOODS: Yeah.

GOMEZ: The first person. It's a problem now, because I have to fight that instinct in myself, because I have a six-year-old, my dad was stabbed to death in a fistfight in the street. Like, the writing's on the wall, Tom. I have to fight my instinct to not be this guy, right? But I would stand up for that person. I mean, the amount of times that me and David have seen a girl being either assaulted or about to be assaulted in the street and we've stepped in and said something, I mean, we're those guys. So for people to paint a picture that guys like the Legion of Skanks, we hate women or are racist or whatever it is — what makes me laugh is dirty stuff, things that you weren't supposed to laugh at. Dice and Eddie Murphy, and I grew up on Def Jam.

I grew up on — and by the way, this isn't like white-power comedy. I mean, it's Eddie Murphy. He talks about being poor and dealing with that experience, and I really related to that. And he just had a very real view on — and the way that he spoke about these things. Even going back and listening to those tracks now, you listen to the — you might have to bleep me again, Tom, but the opening track, "F****ts"; "F****ts, it's called, on his album — and it's very ignorant. I cringe at it. I go, *Ooh, dude, you can't say* — But what's great about it is, first of all, it's a different time. That's the way people spoke then. But it's just this real honest and raw thing, and that's why I appreciate it, and that's the type of comedy that I grew up on.

And then I started comedy 16 years ago, 15 years ago, and the culture shifted during that time. Within the time that I've been doing standup comedy, I wasn't allowed to say certain things. So you build this foundation; you look at the world a certain way, you think certain things are funny; you start comedy; you do things; you're getting a certain amount of success; you get some traction. Then all sudden, all the opportunities that are afforded to everybody, you're really not eligible for because you've just been telling dick jokes for the past few years and now that's no longer cool.

And that's sort of what led me to start working for myself. It wasn't any other reason, except for the fact that I have to create opportunities. Once again, my mom wasn't going to buy me toys as a kid, so I had to go shovel snow. So the industry, they're not handing me anything, nothing, nada. I've been on TV shows, and I've fought tooth and nail for every television credit I've ever gotten. Nobody's ever just called me up and, "We want that guy for something." It's been a fight every time. And for me, I just got sick of waiting around for people to hand me opportunities. I don't want to be a poor comedian with roommates in New York City. It's fun when you're 22 and it's romantic and sexy and you can chalk it up to this really cool punk-rock

lifestyle. But when you're 37 years old and you have a six-year-old and you have a roommate? Pshh.

WOODS: Yeah, no kidding. No kidding. Well, so first of all, I want to say, when you were mentioning Dave, I bet most people know you mean Dave Smith, who's been a guest on the show before and hosts *Part of the Problem*, on your GaS Digital Network, which we're going to get to in a minute. But I actually don't know how you got into comedy.

GOMEZ: I was — in fact, remember the first job I said that I was making $400 a week. It was like, *Wow, this is crazy*. It was I answered an ad in the *Village Voice* for a commission-based sales job, selling comedy club tickets on the street.

WOODS: Oh.

GOMEZ: And if people have ever been to Times Square, they've probably been harassed by these guys. But this is 2001; this is September 6th, 2001. I remember the date because it was five days before 9/11. And I sold comedy club tickets three days after 9/11. I was trying to get people to go into comedy clubs in New York City. And we were scared to go out there. This is what a badass city New York is. We were like, people are going to be like, *Really, you're trying to sell comedy club tickets? We're still like finding body parts in Lower Manhattan right now*. And the amount of appreciation that we got for being out there and for coming out and just trying — we were just kid just trying to make some cash, right? But people were like, "That's incredible. We're going to buy some tickets. We're going to go to a comedy club." And all the comedy clubs were filled up the next week. All the comedy clubs in Manhattan were filled up. People wanted to laugh, and the comics, you know what they were doing? You know what the comics were doing the week after 9/11.

WOODS: Yeah, no.

GOMEZ: Making jokes about 9/11.

WOODS: Wow.

GOMEZ: That's how we deal with it. That's how we dealt with it. I lived through it, dude. I was here in New York. I rollerbladed from 23rd Street and Seventh Avenue, the Chelsea Hotel where my girlfriend lived, over to college on the East Side. During the time I was rollerblading to school, 9/11 happened. I got to class; I didn't know was going on. We just thought there was an emergency or something downtown. I was in class from 9am to 1pm. I didn't even know 9/11 happened. We were in a four-hour marketing class, the most boring class in entire my life. A four-hour marketing class, and I got out at 1 o'clock, and people were on their phones freaking out because 9/11 had just happened around me. It was nuts. One of the nuttiest things ever.

But New York City, there was a sense of pride about not letting that stop us. People didn't want to not go to work. I talked to a lot of cops. People love to crap on cops. People love to — you know, I'm no fan of the cops. I've been arrested a dozen times for smoking an herb on the street. Let's get real. That's crazy. But I talked to cops, my friend Mark Tomeo's a cop; he's a standup comic, as well. And he was like, "Dude, nobody didn't show up." People could have not come in. People could have stayed at home with their family. He was like, there was

like one guy that he'd heard of that didn't show up for work. If I was a cop during 9/11, I can't tell you that I wouldn't have said I'm going to leave my son in Jersey and go into Manhattan right now to maybe a world war. Who knows what was happening in that moment?

WOODS: Yeah. Yeah, that's amazing. That's amazing. And I did not know — because I was living on Long Island at the time, which meant I got into the city once every two months. So I had no idea what was really going on. But of course, everybody who knows me across the country but knows nothing about New York thinks I'm five minutes away from the World Trade Center. So I'm getting calls all day, you know, "Are you all right?" And yeah, yeah, I'm the last person in the world you've got to worry about.

So tell me about the origins of — I mean, we can talk about comedy, but I also want to know about the origins of GaS Digital and what it is that you were seeking to create when you did it. And it seems like, again, at least to an outsider like me, it's been a big success.

GOMEZ: Yeah, it's been very successful so far. Myself and Ralph Sutton, who's my business partner — he's a genius. He's incredible. I am a big-picture guy. I have a million ideas a minute, and he reels me in. He's the one who figures out five different ways to accomplish these ideas versus just talking about these things, so I've got to give them a ton of credit for what he does. He's really incredible. He just interviewed Mark Cuban on the *SDR* show, the *Sex, Drugs, and Rock-n-Roll* show. I mean, he gets Mark Cuban. Who does that? Nobody does that. It's just his nonstop hustle, it impresses me to no end.

But me and him were both doing shows. I was doing *Legion of Skanks*. That was sort of a separate thing. I was doing another smaller show called *Real Ass Podcast*, and I still run that show now, and he was doing the *SDR* show. We both had collectively — I think I had maybe 2,000 downloads an episode; he had maybe 5,000 downloads. Really small shows. Not big shows, by any means. Not shows that could really attract advertisers. But here's Ralph on the phone; he's got four ads per show, and he's selling them, and he's selling extra things, space on the TV and the lower thirds, and this is just Ralph, you know, and he's picking up the phone himself. And me and him are just on the phone, constantly sharing ideas and just trying to figure it out.

And every network, "podcast network" that we were working with, they just were really lacking any sort of vision or any sort of fluidity, I should say. That's the better way to put it. It seemed like everyone was like stuck. They were just trying to get control of the ship. They could never get control the ship. They were just trying to control the ship and hold it steady. And there was no like ideas. You didn't walk into any of these environments and go like, *Oh, this is exciting. This is cool. This is a podcast network? This is great.* A podcast network, it wasn't sort of an association or a thing. It didn't seem like it was even a real thing, right?

So that's sort of where we came up with the idea to work together, GaS Digital, G-A-S, Gomez and Sutton. That's where the name came from. We just wanted to create solutions for podcasters. Obviously, not just ourselves, but we have friends that are incredible. Dave was one of the first people that I went to with this. He was one of the first. Actually, in the first launch of the first four or five shows, he was one of the first shows, and we just wanted to start doing it ourselves. People weren't handing us anything. I went to my network at the time and was, like, "Hey, I want to" — this was before Patreon. So I essentially had the idea for Patreon. You know, this is four years ago, maybe, and Patreon was around, but you know, musicians were using it to get tips or whatever. Nobody was using it for podcasts at the time

at all. And I was like, "Hey, can we do something where like people could pay me like three bucks a month, and they get like extra content, the video version of the show?" And the network was like, no, no, there's just no way to do it; we don't have the infrastructure.

WOODS: Ugh.

GOMEZ: And I was like, this is just crazy. It was crazy to me that I was like — because here was my thought. 2,000 people, it's not a lot of downloads, right? But if I had 2,000 people a week, showing up to a parking lot in Long Island, within two weeks, it would be shut down by the SWAT team. There would be an FBI raid. There would be police surrounding us. There would be fire trucks. It would be like, what the hell is going on? These people are trying to take over the world. There's one man speaking into a microphone as everyone sits there and listens, and they're showing up every single week, without question and telling their friends about, and it's growing slowly but surely? What? That would be a problem. They would shut that down. That would be a big, big gathering.

So in my mind, I'm going like, wait a minute. We're coming close to a time where the internet and real life are going to be completely connected. Where basically there as it is. You know, you can't get anything without the internet. And my why is it that my lunch knows my Twitter handle? That's crazy. However lunch, they're connected to my Twitter, that's bananas to me. It's crazy. But we just saw, with that network in particular, I was like, they're not looking for a solution. And I was like, well, this is it. And me and Ralph said, "Well, let's do something together."

And we created a website, and we created the platform, which we have our own premium service. And I don't want to make this sound like an advertisement for GaS Digital, because that sucks. But we offer on the premium side — the latest 15 episodes are always free, right? You can get it on iTunes or YouTube; you get all the latest episodes. But for the premium subscribers, you get the on-demand library; you get every episode we've ever done of all the shows, prerelease, so it's three to five days. I think in Dave's case, it's a day or two, actually, prerelease for him. Uncensored episodes, ad-free episodes, live chat, message boards, a couple other member benefits as well.

So we sort of created our own platform. Nobody else was doing this at all. Now, there's a couple other people — Luminary, a couple other brands — that have come out and sort of copied our model. But we created our own platform and our own subscription service, based off of just being told no. I'm an old sales guy. It brings me back to selling comedy club tickets on the street. You know, go stand on a street corner and try to stop people. It is a near-impossible task. So when I'm told no, it sort of excites me.

And this is an old sales mantra — I don't know if you've ever done any sales, Tom, but every no gets you closer to a yes, right? And essentially what that means, it's a game of numbers, right? So if you could try to sell everybody in the world something, if you had a pen and you tried to sell it to every person in the world, your best pitch, every person in the world gave their best pitch, it's a ratio. One out of however many people in the world are going to give you the dollar for the pen, right? And that's an absolute. There's no debate about that. That's not up for debate. Anybody in the world can agree with that. A child would understand that, right? There's going to be big variations in the ratios. There's language barriers, whatever it is. But everyone has their own ratio. So the reality is, every time you get a no, the ratio is better. It's more in your favor. It's just another one out of the bucket, right? *Get out of the way. Now it's*

one out of whatever million, right? So that sort of motivates me. When I hear "No," it really kind of gets me going, and I start to go, "Oh, cool, you know what? A yes is coming up." And it's a little abstract, but any sales guys that are listening to this completely understand what I'm talking about, because that's literally the difference between people that can sell and that cannot sell it, is they do not get demotivated by that no. They embrace it. They go, "Oh, wow, this is awesome. I love it." And then you start to have fun with it, and, *Well, how can I turn that no into a yes? How can I change the ratios in my favor? How can I make it* — you know, it starts to become fun, you know? But I have no idea how I got on this rant, Tom, but I will just go on —

WOODS: Actually, let me jump in here, because I want to ask you, you have a lot of shows now on GaS Digital, and I want to know, how do you decide: this is a show for me?

GOMEZ: Typically we're looking for shows that are sort of taking chances, that have a little bit of an edge to them. Not everything is *Legion of Skanks*, which is like way over the top. I think nothing else is like *Legion of Skanks* on the network. We have some shows that are clean. We have some shows that — you know, Tommy Dreamer doesn't curse at all, but he is the "Innovator of Violence," legendary ECW Hardcore champion, so there's an edge there. It has to sort of fit that brand. But we do comedy; we do sports; we do music; we do politics. So it's sort of we're trying to hit every area, but just not people that are playing it safe, people that are taking chances.

We've developed a really strong base of advertisers that really believe in the message. I'd say a good 25% of our advertisers are real fans of the content that have approached us and been like, "Hey, we love what you guys do. We want to stand with you guys. We want to work with you guys, because we see you guys giving the artists that you work with complete freedom of expression." We just had Milo Yiannopoulos on *Legion of Skanks*. That is a big scary thing for sponsors, and we have to go to them and say, "Hey, you're probably going to get some flak." And the fact that they're willing to work with things like that, for me, I believe that we're going in the right direction, and we're doing something really, really great, because I don't believe anybody else is trying to create those opportunities.

WOODS: It really impresses me that you've been around for just a few years, and you've got shows like — you mentioned Andrew Dice Clay earlier in our conversation. I see an Andrew Dice Clay show on GaS Digital. I see a show with Dee Snider from Twisted Sister.

GOMEZ: Yeah, we did one season with Dice. Hopefully he comes back. He's so busy. He's a movie star now, so we're hoping that he comes back for a season two. But Dee Snyder; we have Jamey Jasta, lead singer of Hatebreed; legendary Hardcore legend Michael Bisping, former UFC Middleweight Champion; obviously, guys like Dave and Michael Malice, who's just brilliant and hilarious.

The network has really grown very, very impressively. The reason that a show would want to work with us — because a lot of people would go, "Well, you don't really need a network," we try to make our artists feel like rock stars. We try to make the podcasters and the content creators be exactly that, so they don't have to spend their time worrying about marketing and editing and posting and looking for the next — you know, they have a team of people that work with them. They should care. They should have their fingers on it. That's the only way the show is going to grow. It's their passion that's going to really come through. But they have a team of people that are constantly looking for the best way to do things. And if you are

constantly — and I said this before about the fluidity with those other networks — if you're constantly looking for the next best thing, and you're constantly looking to move the ball down the corner, and you're constantly looking for progress, it usually comes.

We have a really cool philosophy. So I stole this from this gym that I worked at, which is very silly, but I worked at Equinox, which is a really nice, high-end gym, for a while. And one of the things that — they're a really great company, in in a certain sense. What they do is every department has their own management, so all the sales guys have their own manager, and all the fitness trainers have their own manager; person trainers, front desk, the maintenance staff. There's like six or seven managers per club, and they manage each department.

Now, every department is, on a monthly basis, given a grade. They come out and they grade them. And then they're given bonuses based off of how well they do comparatively to other months. So essentially, they set sales goals for each of these departments, and they do it straight down to the maintenance staff. So they're grading the maintenance staff, and they have these goals, and the idea is they constantly are dangling the carrot a little bit further away. But it's creating an increase of quality in every single department across the board. Month after month, they're getting better and better. Now, if there are slip-ups. You'll see there's a certain month, maybe the grade won't be as good. But overall, if you look at it, the clubs are cleaner. They're working at a higher function. The training is going better. They're selling more. I watched, and it was incredible. I worked there for a couple years. You know, in November of 2010, the goal would be to get 100 sales; in November 2011, it was you've got to get 112 sales. They would always expand it. They would always dangle that carrot.

And I sort of looked at that, and I mimic that in the sense that we're constantly looking to make the video better, audio better, the marketing side better, the studio — when you walk into our studio, it really incredible. You've got to come down to the studio, Tom, if you haven't been there yet. I don't know if you've Dave or Malice's show at the GaS Digital Studios. But we really care about the quality, and it's just constantly growing, and we're constantly looking to make things better. No matter how good it's going to be, it should always be better. And I think because of that, you're going to see the numbers will always grow. The advertising sales will always grow. Subscriptions will always grow. Those metrics, we can't control those metrics, but we can control the quality and expand the quality, and it's not a coincidence that those other metrics also increase.

WOODS: I have actually done Malice's show several times. I love being at the GaS Digital Studios. And yeah, it's super professional, and the guys running it know exactly what they're doing, and I feel like I don't have to worry about a thing. I just sit down and talk. That's exactly how it should be. So it's always a pleasure. When I go to New York and Malice invites me to be on, I always feel like I know it's going to be a good time, and it's going to come out looking great, also. The video side of it looks great. I mean, you don't feel like you're dealing with people who just started doing this last week.

GOMEZ: What was funny is we all of our producers were fans first. A lot of them did just start doing this not that long ago. A few of the guys there had no experience. Shannon, who's one of my best producers, had no experience with video editing of all. Bobby Hutch, he's a photographer and had a little bit of experience, but he was a mailman for years and would just come in as a fan and volunteer to take pictures for *Legion of Skanks*. And eventually, he just became so engrained with us and became so important to the team, he quit his full-time job and now he's working as the executive producer of GaS Digital. So that passion is the thing

that you can't teach. I can't teach these guys to completely get it, to go like, oh, wait a minute, these guys are doing something that's really good. They're doing some that's really good for the world comedy and entertainment and something that's, at the very least in my opinion, very pure and very honest. And you put a Craigslist ad up or an ad on the internet up. You're never going to get that in a million years. I don't care about their resume. The amazing thing about this industry is that it was sort of created by self-starters. All of the podcasting technology was created by guys like us who sat down with a phone or an mp3 recorder at first and said, "I'm just going to talk into this thing and figure it out after the fact." And there's an industry that's emerged out of that, which is pretty cool.

WOODS: Yeah, no kidding. It's amazing, like what you and I do for a living, more or less, is something that neither one of us could have anticipated when we were younger, because it's not like we aspired to it. There was no such thing.

I do want to wrap up, because I want to respect your time, but I want to ask an unusual question as we as we wrap up. How would you describe your politics?

GOMEZ: I'm basically nonexistent. I would say I only really get invested in things that I can directly affect in a very real, tangible way, things that are right in front of me. And I believe that the political system, it is as complicated as me opening up this computer right now and trying to — I don't even know the word to use. That's how bad I am with that type of stuff.

WOODS: Yeah.

GOMEZ: Like, if this computer, if the keyboard stopped working right now, I would have no idea how to open this thing up and fix it. It just wouldn't happen. And for me to attempt to try and then passionately get online and argue about, *Well, hold on. Now, this is how you've got to* — It's like, guys, let's get real, okay? It's a really big, complicated thing, and I praise Dave Smith, because he cares. He spends so much time. He really does. But I think even the people that really care and spend all their time researching and doing, there's so much that we're not aware of. You think of the amount of variables that you don't know, it's absolutely impossible to predict these things.

So for me, I just play my cards. You can win the game no matter what your cards are, right? I am a Puerto Rican kid who grew up in poverty with a mom who was a heroin addict; my dad was murdered when I was a kid. I could sit here and go, *Oh, man, I'm really a victim. Life really handed me a bad hand. I should be given something, and I can sit around and wait for that.* Or I can say, *All right, screw that. That's fine. Bad things happen.* There's kids in Africa who are born with AIDS and with no food and starve to death. They have worse lives. And I can go and do something and try to create something.

And so it's more about, like, life philosophy. The politics, I don't know, man. If you were to sit down and tick off the issues, like the big issues, I'm probably pretty left-leaning. The reality is, it's just when it comes down to business and speech and expression, I would probably be a little bit more right-leaning. But that doesn't matter. Who cares? That's the way that I look at it. Like, when we get off line for a second, I go to the supermarket, I don't care what the guy that is making my sandwich, what he believes politically.

WOODS: Yeah.

GOMEZ: He doesn't care what I believe politically. We coexist. I'm a collaborator. I collaborate with 25 different artists on my network, and we create some incredible things. We don't agree on everything. If we agreed on everything, we'd be psychotic. It would be boring. Holy crap. You know, you come to some amazing things by taking all these different variables and going, Go, play, see what happens. Let's create something. Let's find truth somewhere, right?

So when people are telling you not to have Milo on my podcast — look, we weren't having a serious conversation, but so what? Let's say we were. Let's say we were. Why wouldn't you want to sit down with a couple guys who don't — Dave does care, but me and Jay don't really care about politics — and see where that conversation goes and see if there's some sort of truth that everybody listening can kind of extract from it? Because that's what it is. It's not what one guy's spouting. Nobody's spouting complete and utter truth. No one person has the truth. People are more obsessed with being right than finding the truth. It's not about being right. You should care about being true and finding the truth. You know, just the act of like, *Oh, I got you*.

Look, if I get into a debate with anybody who's read three books, I'll probably lose that debate, you know? But that's why I don't debate those things. I don't get online and talk politics. But if you start talking about, I can't have a conversation with another human being, I'm very passionate about that. So talking about parenting? Very passionate about that. The things that are close to me that I can control and that — and to be honest with you, I think I can affect the world in a much bigger and better way than going online and reading about politics and social issues and trying to get people drummed up and get people angry.

I think by what I said earlier — to bring it all back to the very beginning, because I'm one of the best podcasters in the world — is treat your kids right. That's a better thing you can be doing. Play with your kids. Hug them. Tell them you love them, you know what I'm saying? Make sure that they are prepared for a world where they're understanding and they're willing to have conversations and they're willing to accept people that are different. You want to talk about diversity, and you want to talk about acceptance? Accept ideas. That's more valuable than just accepting somebody's skin color, in my opinion. Yeah, no s***, we're supposed to accept people's skin color. Racism is bad. Wow. Oh, my God. Good job, guys. We figured it out. I can't even get up to say that. It's so boring and so vanilla, that it's like, we're entertainers. People are downloading these shows. We are supposed to be provocative. I have a lot of vanilla ideas. If we talked about a lot of these big issues, you'd like, "Oh, yeah, Luis has a pretty middle-of-the-road view on that." But the reason you don't hear me talk about those things is because it's absolutely not interesting for me to talk about that. It's not interesting when most people talk about that.

WOODS: Right, I'm not going to do a show where I say I'm against cancer and I'm in favor of basketball. I mean, what the hell? What? Who wants to listen to that?

All right, how do people get — you had a very successful comedy special come out recently, so maybe you could say a word about that. And then how can people get more Luis J. Gomez? Of course, on the show notes page, which is TomWoods.com/1418, I'll link to GaS Digital Network and anything you say right now, but just as many links and plugs as you feel comfortable giving out, we'd like to hear.

GOMEZ: *Luis J. Gomez Presents: Luis J. Gomez* is the name of the special, and there's a little bit of a — you know, number one, I produced it myself .I do my own things. I produced my own special, and it was a little bit of a jab toward all the comedians that are having their specials produced by other comedians now. It's kind of funny. But yeah, you guys should go to LuisJGomezPresentsLuisJGomez.com and grab that. I think it's great. It's 50 minutes of really dirty comedy. This is the cleanest I've ever been for an hour on anything, ever. So yeah, definitely don't listen to it in front of your kids. Or my podcasts, don't listen to it in front of your kids, *Legion of Skanks*, the most offensive podcasts on earth; the *Real Ass Podcast*; and *Believe You Me* with Michael Bisping, I'm the cohost of that as well, which is a great MMA podcast. He's a great person, great dad, as well. Yeah, they're all available on GaSDigitalNetwork.com or on iTunes, YouTube, or wherever else.

And really, that's it. Just buy the special, review it, tell people about it. I think that people might — you know, Dave's special, as well, *Libertas*. I directed that. It was my directorial debut, and I produced his special, as well. He's got an incredible hour of comedy, the best political comedy special ever, period. I don't care what anybody says about it. So we were the first comedy specials that GaS Digital produced, and he was first, and I was second, and we're very proud of them. And I think that fans of really good comedy that like ballsy, dirty comedy, you're going to love it. It's going to feel like a throwback for you.

WOODS: All right, all this stuff will be linked to TomWoods.com/1418. Well, Luis J. Gomez, I'm glad to have a chance to get to know you. You are even more interesting than I thought you'd be, and I already had the bar set pretty high. And I have a feeling that the people who follow both of us are going to enjoy hearing this particular exchange, because there's a lot of great stuff in here. Thanks so much.

GOMEZ: I appreciate it, Tom. You're the man. Thank you very much for the opportunity.