

תמליל לפרק השלישי גיוון והכללה ומחברות עובדים

ברכות וברוכים הבאים לפרק השלישי בפודקאסט שלנו בנושא מחברות עובדים למקום העבודה. שמי פרי. אני יודע שבשבוע שעבר הבטחתי שאדבר על המנהל כגורם מרכזי בתחושת השייכות של העובד, אבל אני אחרוג משפחתי ברשותכם מכיוון שהשבוע מציינים בה 31 במרץ את יום הנראות לטרנסג'נדרים ברחבי העולם ומכיוון שהנושא של גיוון והכללה הוא אחד הנושאים אולי החשובים ביותר בהרגשת המחברות של העובדים לארגון, ראיתי לנכון לעצור את סדר הדברים כפי שרציתי להציג ובעצם לחשוף אתכם לאישה בשם סינתיה, שהיא טרנסג'נדרית. היא עברה שינוי מגבר לאישה והיא מדברת בפתיחות על השינוי הזה, כמו גם על תחושת השייכות, שחברות היום מנסות לעשות חלק ממאמצי גיוון והכללה ומה לדעתה נותר עוד לעשות או לחזק באזור הזה. הראיון נערך באנגלית לפני כמה ימים ומיד אחרי האות אתם תופנו לראיון.

מחברות עובדים בעולם העבודה החדש הפודקאסט

Perry: Hello all, the international transgender day of visibility is an annual event occurring on March 31st. Today we are holding a special interview with a special guest for that occasion. Our guest was awarded as one of the 20 most influential CIOs by CXO talk, and financial posts and involve in leading 100 LGBT plus executives, finalists CIO of the year by women in IT, and Yahoo finance outstanding 100 LGBT plus executives. She is an award-winning gender identity speaker and consultant, entrepreneur, and founder of CAF services. She dedicates herself to helping corporations, organizations, and individuals navigate gender-related issues using acceptance without understanding. She identifies as a white queer pansexual woman with a transgender history, and in recent years she served as president of the Rainbow Resource Center in Winnipeg and was the national chair for women's March Canada. She's currently working on her new book about acceptance without understanding, and I am so privileged to have her in my own team at Perry Corporate Coaching. All, please welcome Cynthia Fortlage.

Cynthia: Oh, thank you, Perry, that was a beautiful introduction.

Perry: So, for the first question. When did you decide you were transgender?

Cynthia: That's a really interesting question and when I answer questions A. I always answer them completely so the audience and you will get a complete answer. But I do believe in educating in the process of answering and in that particular question, the way it was asked, no one decides they're transgender. I like to jokingly say lady gaga is right - we are Born This Way and regardless of how you identify within the LGBT plus rainbow, the fact is we are all Born This Way. We're not made this way we're not created nor do we decide to be this way. We just are this way. So it was at four years old when I began displaying traits that were not considered in alignment with my sex that was assigned at birth. Again, you imagine that you know your whole identity, that they refer to your sex is based upon your genitalia and the simple fact is you're born, and the doctor looks between your legs and gives you this entire identity that is actually locked up inside of you that you yet don't of the language for nor do you have the ability to communicate, let alone the bravery to do it. So for me that was at four years old is when that began to more clearly emerge, but that is also when the social pressure to conform to what others thought I was rather than accept who I was really began in earnest and that was really the beginning of me learning about acceptance in my own life. Unfortunately, it took another 46 years for it to manifest into me being strong enough, and courageous enough in order to actually own it and live it.

Perry: What is your relationship like with your ex and children?

Cynthia: You know it's always difficult for everyone that's involved. I remember when I began my journey there was this naive hey that felt well this is just happening to me. It's not happening to anybody else, you know, and nobody, nobody else can tell my story. This is my story and the reality

is is that everyone who is a part of my life, in any way shape or form, is going through their own version of my story with them. So everyone is transitioning, everyone is journeying at the same time and so we all have our own different stories. So clearly for my spouse, this was not what they had expected, but I also like to repeat it's not what I had expected either. Because up to that point it was a very quote heterosexual heteronormative, not a great word, I think the audience will understand it, living experience, you know. With two kids the whole bed. So when I came out and told them I referred to it in the book as "it was an atom bomb in our relationship". It literally blew it up. We spent about 16 months in couples therapy trying to work through it, but there was not a loss of love for each other, there just wasn't acceptance, and for me, that was really the concept that I talked about today and as presented in the upcoming book, that is where I talk about that you know there's acceptance without understanding. Because I had love but love is not enough. I need love and acceptance that is really the unconditional love that we talked about. That is the love that we talk about giving our children, you know, without passing judgment, but the fact is is and we know certainly from the LGBTQ plus community, that many parents pass judgment when their children go through a coming out process, and may disown them remove them, and in fact, my own birth family did and even though we tried with my partner. I am divorced, and the first year with my children was really really tough. I only saw them three times in that first year, so it was a very lonely road for me to travel as I was figuring all of this out and while there's a certain euphoria of getting all of this weight of hiding off my shoulders and so forth there was also quite a great loneliness that goes with it. The friends and my community came around and really supported me. Happy to say that my you know relationship with my children is warm and very inclusive and fabulous and my daughter is so amazing and my son is just such a loving soul and so open so I am blessed in that. Unfortunately there is no relationship with my ex, that is not my journey to travel now that is their journey, and I simply remain open and accepting wherever that may arrive at one day.

Perry: What do you think about young children declaring their gender identity?

Cynthia: That's a brilliant question. I just actually responded to a post online this weekend and somebody was, you know, they were kind of "OK I get this but in this case that might be OK but you know when it comes to children it's like no no no like". Children have their parents and children and parents have medical professionals. Nobody just decides, that's something we talked about, that and nobody just magically waves a wand, trust me if I did I would look more like Sophia Loren, but at the end of the day, it's just very simply that between the child and the parents and the medical professionals who are involved. It is up to them as to what happens. It is nobody else's business what happens. It is nobody else's business how the decisions that are made between those three parties because it is their private medical life and history that's been dealt with. I will say that a lot of people are confused about two things. One is children in most countries cannot transition before the age of majority in extreme circumstances, I think 16 in North America, they might be given the right of kind of self-control over their destiny to deal with it, but other than that no child is quote making life-changing alterations to their body or to their life. The most that they can do under medical supervision is use hormone blockers or puberty blockers specifically, and the interesting thing about puberty blockers is they don't damage the child they've been around for a long time and all they simply do is delay or pause the puberty process, because the process of going through and going through the puberty that's assigned with your sex that was assigned at birth, can be very detrimental and expensive if in fact, everyone comes to an understanding that you're going down a different path. Whereas using the puberty blockers it just simply pauses allows everybody to kind of ask the question and ensure that they're on the right path and then actually make a proper decision and head down that path without a detrimental effect, and if that means that in that pause in that moment that they decide to revert to the sex that was assigned at birth or the gender that was

assigned at birth, well then puberty just continues as normal. So, they really have no negative impact other than buying time for everybody that's involved the child, the parents, and the medical professionals to ensure that they're actually, you know, heading down the correct path that everyone isn't in agreement for it. So, outside of those three parties, it's nobody else's business that's what I think.

Perry: Sometimes we see children that declare their gender identity even though they are not going through any medical process, and they come to school and say "please refer to me as male or female or whatever". What is your opinion about that?

Cynthia: I talk about the idea when I talk about acceptance that people's identity, not just the their identity which is really what we're talking about here, the child's identity, is whom they say they are not whom we say they are. So if a child comes to me and goes "you know, I knew you Cynthia but I want you to call me Sir now", we don't question it cause it's just simply a name, but yeah, when we talk about a pronoun or we talk about an identity of male, female, intersex, other, because it is a spectrum, that somehow it becomes a question that is way too difficult for us to accept, but the reality is is that by not accepting it you have made a choice, because your choice is literally to accept or to not accept, and if you're not prepared and not ready to accept that's fine, but that doesn't change the child's, right? So, in other words, no matter what you do you're really the only choice is to accept that the child says that's who they are. Now the next step is up to you as to whether or not you would say have that child in your life and so forth, but remember that child can also choose as to whether or not you get to be in their life, and because we know that diversity makes the world so much richer, learning to not try and box people into places we are comfortable with, and just be open and accepting to the identity of people of who they are, not who they were, allows us to really open our minds and our hearts to just simply accepting people. So, when a child tells me that and they're not on medical intervention, so it doesn't matter then if that was um you know whomever they were yesterday, but it's about who they are today, and it doesn't hurt me to identify them that way and maybe they don't like it maybe they don't like the name maybe they don't like the way people shorten the name or change the name, but the same happens today, when, you know, children get teased and they're given a nickname or something um, the child didn't ask necessarily for that and others give them this identity that could, in fact, be hurtful and spiteful, and yet we seem to be OK with that. Why can't we just simply accept the identity of whom the child says they are and allow between them their parents as a child and their medical providers to make those important decisions? It's not for us as outsiders. All we can simply do is to accept who they are.

Perry: Before we move on to your work with organizations and corporations it's interesting to know - you talk a lot about acceptance and acceptance without understanding but how do you really handle folks that hate you even though they don't really know you?

Cynthia: Well, it is a daily occurrence. I would say you start to grow a bit of a thick skin, but that's not really the answer cause it still hurts I'm still a human being I'm still having emotions and feelings, and they still get attacked and hurt in those moments in those moments. The power of acceptance or acceptance without understanding is the full saying sometimes I'll just simply say acceptance. So, acceptance without understanding says I don't ask you to accept whatever you perceive as my lifestyle or any other aspect or any decisions that you believe I may have made. I simply ask you to accept that I'm a human being and this is really powerful because if you accept that I'm a human being, it means that you acknowledge I deserve human rights, and because human rights are about equity, not equality, that means as we are all unique, diverse people, therefore, the way that we consume our human rights is also equitably unique, and so I have a choice with that hater. First of all, I have to accept that they hate me without even knowing me because I'm not going to change

them. I know that for my life and business. One of the things you have to learn when you first become a manager of people is you cannot change someone. You can work on changing attitudes and but you can't change the person. So what you need to do in those cases are accept that that person hates me for no reason than their own perception and their own biases. Now I do get to make a choice because I get to choose whether or not that person is allowed in my life, is allowed to have an impact on me, and I can remove them. I can set a boundary to protect myself that that person's not allowed in my life. Everybody's free to open themselves up and to learn to accept because when you learn to accept without understanding it opens a door to a conversation that allows us to grow to acceptance with understanding, and I'm always open to people being open to growing to learn and unlearn all of the material and biases and socialization, that they have been programmed to believe, but is not in fact true. I rarely will engage with a person that hates me, because they don't want a conversation. They didn't say "Cynthia, I don't really understand why you are the way you are, but I accept it. But I'm wondering can we have a discussion?" that would be a conversation I'd be open to. But when you get somebody that goes "well, why did you like her?" it comes across as feeling very much like an attack, like a heavy judgment, and I'm not interested in being their educator and taking them through socialization when they have no intent or desire to change all the bias and programming they have been given. So, I choose, I set the boundary for my own sake, that I don't engage with them and they're not in my life.

Perry: "And maybe that is great advice to all of us that have people in our lives that don't approve of us or hate us. We can put those boundaries. That's great advice! So, moving on to the corporate world. Working internationally with organizations and cooperations, what is your perspective about the work needs to be done in the diversity, equity, and inclusion area?"

Cynthia: Wonderful question, thank you! The power of diversity, equity, and inclusion is the place where they meet. If you imagine them with three circles, that all intersect there's a place where all three circles meet, and that's called belonging. Now Maslow and Maslow's hierarchy of needs talked about at Level 3 belonging was a key aspect of our needs. We all have a need to belong. So, diversity, equity, and inclusion is a way to build belonging, and belonging is an element of corporate culture, organizational culture, social culture. It is that, every organization has a culture the question is is that the one you want, and so if an organization decides to throw in the word a place where people belong and so forth, that means they want to develop an intentional culture, that helps people belong. Now if you don't identify within any marginalized category, which typically means you're a heterosexual, cisgender, CIS meaning to agree with in Latin, so that you agree with your sex that was assigned at birth, male, white, then you are in that very powerful group, I know because I used to be, that has so much power and privilege, and the whole idea is that when you truly believe that you need to have an organizational culture belonging then that means for those folks they need to use their power and privilege as allies, and actively show us allyship, and to deal with it. And allyship is so powerful because not only is it an active process, but it's a very special process about creating relationships, and relationships based upon trust, and consistency, and performance. Right? it's active. You don't just say it, you do it, and so someone that wants to create spaces that might not know the language that might not necessarily have all the correct behaviors but is open to learning and unlearning those behaviors that do or don't make their place a place to belong, well that's the active work of allyship, and in corporate spaces that is the work that I do so much is helping awaken people to what is allyship, and the work that needs to be done, but more importantly learning some of those very simple aspects, such as language matters, and if you don't know the language you need to learn it. So that's what I love to do and the work in corporate spaces amongst all the other things that you may do such as, you know, audits, and reviews, policies, so forth, but allyship is where, you know, the talking meets The Walking, and actually gets the job done.

Perry: Great answer. As a matter of fact, my next question was what is the impact of good implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace on employee engagement, and belonging, but you already answered that fully at the beginning. So, thank you for that. So, I guess one last question may be an important one - can you share one thing that you learned about yourself through your journey?

Cynthia: One? There's so much that I learned but one of the most important things that I learned when I look at my journey I don't look at my transition journey. That was that was a few years. I'm looking at my life journey, 56 years long, and for me, the most important thing was that all of the aspects and traits that I thought made a leader, you know, strong and wise and so forth, and a word that never came up was being vulnerable. A leader is a great leader because they can be vulnerable, and I have learned to be vulnerable, and I have learned in the process of being vulnerable that it creates safe spaces for others to feel vulnerable with me, and that creates honest open conversations where we can learn and unlearn from each other.

Perry: Well, thank you so much, Cynthia. It was truly inspiring to talk and learn from you and happy international transgender day of visibility to all.