

Jean 0:01

So, I am so pleased to welcome Amy Foy Hageman, who I have known since she was a very young child and has been an associate of Leading Consciously for the last how many years?

Amy 0:18

Three or four years.

Jean 0:23

The most remarkable thing happened, which led us to doing this interview. Shortly after George Floyd's death, Amy posted on Facebook, something that didn't work out as well as she had hoped. And she ended up in atonement, shall we say, she ended up posting for 30 days straight on race.

Jean 0:50

This interview, talk about what happened, how she happened to do it, and what's been the aftermath.

Jean 1:00

So thank you for doing this. And let's begin by finding out about you. So we gotta have some background because for somebody to do that they came from somewhere.

Amy 1:15

Sure, sure. So I grew up in Houston, Texas, and for the people that live outside of Texas, everyone that says Houston thinks, you know, oh, a suburb of Houston. But I grew up in actual inner city Houston, which is very diverse. So my family is not very diverse, full of White people. But I, in elementary school, I would say my school was probably just over 50% White. So while I was solidly in the majority, I was around a lot of Black students and Spanish speaking students, Latino, Hispanic, etc.

Amy 1:56

So I am luckier than a lot of White people in this country to have been around other ethnicities from a very early age, and that stayed consistent. Not during college, because I went to a pretty White college but up until college and then after college, I worked for a retail organization in which White people were the

minority. So I've had a lot of exposure, I guess you could call it. I've been real fortunate to have a lot of other ethnicities in my life.

Jean 2:26

So let's come to George Floyd.

Amy 2:32

Yes.

Jean 2:34

What was your reaction?

Amy 2:38

I was devastated and distraught. There were several things that happened. I remember when Michael Ferguson was murdered, I remember thinking, "Okay, now it's been exposed and we're going to take care of it."

Amy 2:58

Which obviously, years went by that's not what happened. And then when I remember when Eric Garner died, and he was saying, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe, I can't breathe." I remember thinking, Okay, well, we're going to get rid of chokeholds. Obviously that's not working for us as a country, we're going to get rid of chokeholds; I'm never going to have to hear I can't breathe again.

Amy 3:24

And for some reason, when George Floyd died. And it was I can't breathe. It just made me feel hopeless in a way that I had never felt before. And then the knee on the neck was so visceral for me. My grandfather was a hunter. And there's a very prominent picture in the past growing up of him, with his knee on the neck of a deer. And so to see George Floyd who's also a Houstonian, so I feel like in a way he's like one of my own friends because he's from Houston, to see him so casually pin down like that it was, it was just too much.

Amy 4:16

I have known logically that people with brown skin have been dehumanized in this country. But then when I saw the knee on the neck, I got it. Like how big this issue was.

Amy 4:36

And then of course, the irony of Colin Kaepernick kneeling and people making it about the flag. There was just so much going on in that one image that got me. I was just genuinely distraught by it.

Amy 4:55

And it was one of those things where I didn't know—I wanted to reach out to all of my friends and say, Are you okay? But I didn't feel like I could because I still was not okay. And I realized that part of my impulse for wanting them for wanting to talk to them was because I wanted them to make me feel better. Like, tell me that you're okay so that I can be okay. Because if you're okay, then I'm okay because I'm White and I'm safe. So it took me a long time before I even reached out to a lot of my Black friends because I just felt like I needed them more than I could be there for them. It was a really, it was a tough time.

Jean 5:40

Wow, that's a really astute observation. So when you finally reached out, what did you find?

Amy 5:47

Well, honestly, by the time I reached out to people directly, it was after I had done this whole Facebook posting, I'm going to pledge for 30 days. So it really became more about that, and here's what I'm doing. And I just want you to know that I love you.

Amy 6:10

And they, I mean, everyone was just grateful and said, you know, yeah, we know and it had been by the time I really reached out it had been a week since George Floyd died. So I found that friends of mine that are usually pretty distraught were distraught. And the friends of mine that have learned to

suppress or repress their emotions were doing so. And it was just the, whatever their normal action was a little bit louder than usual.

Amy 6:42

But for the Black community, it wasn't as new to them as it is for me.

Jean 6:51

Yeah. For your friends, for your Black friends. What about your White friends?

Amy 6:58

Yeah, that was really rough. So my White friends were largely much more outspoken after George Floyd's death, then in previous times, and what I mean by that specifically is on social media.

Amy 7:15

I want to say come to think of it I don't think any of my White friends—No, we did my closest two or three girlfriends. We did all talk about it over the phone, but in general, my White friends, I would say were more outspoken about George Floyd's death than they had been following previous deaths, which gave me hope.

Amy 7:40

But I was real curious as to why this one as someone that has, you know, been really intentional about trying to become an ally and advocate and trying to educate myself. I was really curious sort of culturally as to why this was the one that sparked so much outrage even though I had such a visceral reaction to it as well. It was really interesting to me that all of a sudden people that are normally silent or that it doesn't come up in our casual conversation, we're all about it.

Jean 8:13

And did you draw any conclusions?

Amy 8:17

Yeah, I think, and this is a real common conclusion, but I think it had a lot to do with the fact that we were all home social isolating, and that there's nowhere to

go. We couldn't just pick up and get back to our normal life and stick our White heads in the sand. You know, we were kind of bombarded with it. And then thankfully, you know, the sort of the pop culture was more responsive as well. So there were lots of podcasts and books and interviews, but it felt like there was a lot more going on in the general media about George Floyd as well. So it just sort of snowballed.

Jean 9:01

Right. Okay, so let's come up to one what led to the 30 days of writing about race?

Amy 9:11

So as you know, I'm not very active on social media. I am an introvert and I'm a people pleaser. So sharing things on social media is fraught because you know, somebody's not going to like it.

Amy 9:28

But in the weeks following George Floyd's murder, I was seeing a lot of my Black friends and for some reason specifically, I was seeing my female Black friends from high school, saying what's up with the White people, where are the White people?

Amy 9:45

And so I had actually reached out to several of them directly and apologized for my silence and simply said, "You know, I don't know what to say. I feel like everybody's saying everything already." And they all responded, oh, you know, not you, we're talking about, you know, the White people that are posting about their lunch. We're not saying the White people that aren't active. We're saying White people that are that are active but not saying anything. And it's like, okay, but it still didn't sit right with me not to be saying anything.

Amy 10:20

So I found a resource that I liked and I scrambled to write a statement and just post it. Like I was just like, Okay, I have to do this. So I'm just gonna write it and post it. And unfortunately, in my anxiety and rush, I didn't read it well enough or

edit it and said something to the extent of, "This is all I'm going to say on the matter."

Amy 10:48

And what I was trying to say is, "This going to be my one post, I'm going to post this one time, so you all know that I care and then I'm going to be gone. But you know that I'm going to be gone so that makes it okay." That was what I was trying to communicate.

Amy 11:05

And that's when you lovingly called me and gave me the feedback that what I had written really didn't sit well. And was coming across as okay, so now you get to go back to your pretty little White life and we're still out here.

Amy 11:22

So in our conversation, I you know, lamented to you about my resistance to social media and how it just can feel so arbitrary to me. And everybody's posting everything already, Jean. You know, nobody needs to hear from me. And I don't think you specifically said the word quantity over quality. But I remember you saying, "We need voices, we need more voices and more action. And to some extent, more often and more frequent is better than once and perfect."

Amy 12:01

So, you know, that was a lovely conversation and we hung up and I just thought about it.

Jean 12:09

Did we talk about that? About how you were going to make it up? I can't remember.

Amy 12:16

We—I asked you if you had an opinion about, "Should I just edit the original post? Should I make a statement? Should I just say nothing and learn my lesson?" And you didn't solve it for me. You were like, "You can decide what to do, Amy."

Jean 12:38

I was thinking that, "You cannot leave it alone." I know I was thinking that. I didn't think you would.

But I didn't say that. I just let it be.

Amy 12:46

I think I remember you saying I needed to do something. But you weren't going to solve it for me.

Jean 12:54

Yes, I remember that. Yes, no, I was not.

Amy 12:58

So I remember it very clearly. It was the next day I was outside. During isolation, I was home with my two and a half year old and one year old. I was outside with them. And it was a beautiful day. And I was just feeling really peaceful that day, and I just had this idea of, you know, if I really wanted to make this right, I would just write every day for 30 days, and it just felt like this very simple, obvious idea that it would (a) demonstrate my commitment to my friends of color, and then also, (b) it would help me heal my resistance to social media and whatever it is that needed to come up for me to be healed, was gonna come up during the 30 days.

Amy 13:46

So it just was this idea that I had and I kind of waited for my ego to step in and say, listen, terrible idea, but it never did. It just felt like you can write every day for 30 days, like you know enough and you've been doing your own work long enough, and it's just writing on Facebook. And because I am White, like, what's the worst that's going to happen? Someone's going to call me a bad name? You know, like, so the stakes were relatively low.

Amy 14:23

It doesn't always feel that way. Sometimes it felt like I might ostracize somebody in my family or something like that. But for the most part somebody's feelings would get hurt would be the worst thing that would happen.

Amy 14:35

So I posted—I want to say it was May 30 or May 31—and announced that, you know, I had this other post and had not intended to be offensive but was incredibly offensive. And so as a way of atoning as you said, or I would like to say being accountable, I decided to write for 30 days and I shared that post. As a matter of fact, the post that said, okay, I've done something offensive, and here's how I'm going to move forward. That was May 31. That post was the most liked, commented, shared post.

Jean 15:14

Really, of the whole series?

Amy 15:17

The whole series, what I call Day Zero, and then Day One was the next most popular.

Jean 15:25

Whoa. So what was in Day Zero, it was contained the interaction between us as I recall, right?

Amy 15:33

Right. So Day Zero, I cut and paste the offensive part of my original post and said, you know, that I understood what I had communicated, which was not my intention, of course, and then said, you know, in light of both what I need to learn, and what I'm getting feedback from my Black friends, is that they need more consistency and more White voices. In light of that feedback, I've decided to post every day for 30 days.

Amy 16:11

So that got the most posts, and I didn't know that until we were preparing for this interview and I went back and looked at everything. And I remember that the beginning had the most but it was literally Day Zero because I did but 30 days is June 1 through June 30. So it wasn't even June 1. It was the end of May. So it would have been, I think six days after George Floyd died that I had said, Okay, I'm going to post for 30 days.

Jean 16:38

Okay, so now how hard? How easy? How did you play it? How did you decide?

I want to make sure people are clear. We're talking about your writing on your Facebook page.

Amy 16:58

Yes, on my personal Facebook page. I did make it public in case there was anything worth sharing.

Amy 17:09

So I figured out from the beginning, that it was a weird sort of friction because I was writing because I love my Black friends and family—or adopted family I should say, but I wasn't writing to them. Like there's nothing I could say, to Black people that's going to help them, you know, so it was like I wanted to write in honor of Black people, but to a White audience.

Amy 17:40

And once I got that sort of figured out, I thought, okay, what's the goal here and I had started off thinking that I was going to try to attack very common sort of social media threads. So like people that say, all lives matter, I thought maybe I'll do a post about why we say Black Lives Matter instead of all lives matter. I thought I would do a lot of that type of content.

Amy 18:06

And then it just didn't feel like a strong enough vision. So when I got really clear, what I wanted to do is I wanted to help people, White people who weren't as far

along in their self-reflective journey as I was. And I just wanted to share my experiences in the hopes that it would help people get through their own.

Amy 18:32

And I wanted to have, as much as possible, I wanted to have some hopeful messages and empowering messages. Because my variance and observation has been that a lot of times, White people will get motivated by something, and they'll dive in, I'm going to be an ally, I'm going to do all the education like, let's go. And then it gets rough, you know, they learn it's scary or sad, or then get more involved, but then they upset Black people, and then they decide, well, it's not worth it, if I'm going to go, you know, out of my way, and then still not be helping, and it feels like it's very easy to get burned out as a White person.

Amy 19:15

And so, I just I wanted to, I didn't want to necessarily call that out specifically over and over again, but I wanted to write in a way that we continue to sort of bring hope and empowerment to White people that are early in this journey, because it's a rough journey to find out that you're privileged and fragile and there's no easy answer.

Amy 19:45

So then in terms of how I figured out specifically what to write, it became sort of a daily routine, where I would wake up every morning between 5-5:30. And I would edit what I had written, posted around 6am. And then I had a babysitter come in at 10am to be with my toddler while I put my infant down for a nap. So I had, you know, those first four hours in the morning to let my mind wander and come up with an idea for the next day.

Amy 20:20

So I never really had a very structured plan. I knew that I wanted to talk about reparations at some point, but I figured that would be towards the end of 30 days. That was the only thing I really had as like, okay, we have to talk about this topic, was I knew we had to talk about reparations.

Otherwise, it was just day by day.

Jean 20:41

How was it received? What happened? Well, yeah, before you say that, let me ask a question before that. What kind of topics—give me an example of one of your favorite topics?

Amy 21:00

Sure. I talked a lot—I, as you know, I am an emotion geek. I love studying emotions. And so I talked a lot about White guilt, White shame, how to process your shaming thoughts and move into something more positive, how to get into curiosity; I had several posts just on the emotional experience of a White person.

Amy 21:25

One of my favorite topics was actually about how we are allies in this race and we have the same goal. But our emotional experiences are so different. That was one of my favorite topics. Because I as a White person, I was almost caught off guard to realize, you know, all these White people are finally showing up to the table after George Floyd. Like we're finally here. We're all excited, like, let's make that happen.

Amy 21:55

And my Black friends were like, listen, we're tired.

Amy 22:02

That was one of my favorite posts, because I was hearing that from my Black friends and all my White friends that aren't in close relationship with Black people, they weren't getting that feedback. And so that was a really helpful post for a lot of people to understand that. It's not that Black people aren't excited that White people are finally waking up.

Amy 22:24

And then there were also some topics like, you know, just what is White privilege and fragility, and that sort of thing.

Amy 22:34

One of my favorite topics was a very short post and I talked about facial recognition and the technology behind facial recognition and how precarious

that is because it's way more accurate on lighter skin tones than on darker skin tones and how when this technology gets used with policing, we're gonna have really large issues on our hands.

Amy 22:57

And the reason why that was one of my favorite topics was because (a) it was short and easy to write, but (b) I heard from some of my Black male friends on that post that I didn't know were even reading it. And they just shared their experience. I had two or three friends. And it just, it felt so great for me to know that they felt seen. And I didn't even know they were reading it and so to know that they were reading it and that they felt seen just a little bit by me was really satisfying and motivating to keep going.

Jean 23:36

Were people offended? Did you get negative comments? Even hate comments?

Amy 23:43

No, no, not a single one. So I got one corrective comment. Not in the post. But I was going back and forth with someone lovingly, we were just spitting out ideas. I was going back and forth with someone and I put out an idea that she thought was offensive and explained why. That was the only negative feedback I got, but nothing about my post, nothing hateful, nothing derogatory.

Jean 24:12

So did you agree with her that it was offensive?

Amy 24:17

Yes and no.

I can see why she thought it was offensive. Part of which was because I hadn't communicated my ideas clearly enough, and she had a different understanding of what I was trying to communicate. But even the idea I had, I could still see why she might think that it was offensive, but the reason that she was offended was because she thinks that White people shouldn't need incentive to change.

And that, you know, we should rely on our good character and our altruism alone and that's a lovely idea. I wish that that would work. But I don't think incentive would hurt.

Amy 25:08

So that that's where she was coming from. I had like a systemic idea that, you know, what if we all, not just White people, but all citizens, what if there was like an online training about bias and the way our brains work with bias, and what if there was a tax incentive just to take the training? Or what if there were tax incentives to educate ourselves on American history or that sort of thing?

Amy 25:34

And so she thought my idea was for White people only, which is not what I had intended. So that we were going back and forth about that. She was thinking that I was going to give only White people a tax incentive to learn about bias. That would be the wrong direction.

Amy 25:57

That was the only point of friction throughout the whole series. There were lots of people that wanted to add and expand on what I had to say but I never got anything that was that was negative.

Jean 26:11

Do you know the maximum number of people you reached? Directly, not through referral?

Amy 26:20

I have no idea. I think I have like 300 Facebook friends.

Jean 26:30

Well, that's a lot of people.

Amy 26:33

It is, but not everybody sees the post. That was one thing I learned that was really surprising is that I thought even if they if they had liked and commented the day before, then surely what I posted the next day would hit their newsfeed. And so there were some people that had to search it. Exactly. And then when other people would share my post, sometimes I could see what they wrote and sometimes I couldn't.

Amy 27:05

But I heard from a lot of people. Like I heard from my dad, his friend of a friend saw what I had written about something and thought was super helpful and I was like, I had no idea he was reading this you know? But his wife is Facebook friends with me so I guess he was reading his wife's feed. Like I have no idea.

Jean 27:27

That's the second reason I wanted to interview you. I wanted to show the ripple effect. If one person steps out and influences another who influences another, we will see change.

So what was the biggest surprise that you had in this process?

Amy 27:55

So just going to be fully vulnerable and fully White...

Jean 27:58

Go for it.

Amy 28:00

...and admit, there was no prize at the end.

Like, I thought maybe someone would bring me a ribbon and there'd be like some fireworks. I don't know.

Jean 28:14
It just ended.

Amy 28:19

It just ended. And I don't know, it felt like I was practicing for something. But what the thing I was practicing for I don't know. So it's just sort of ended. And I was ready for it to be done. But I was also really sad because it had become, you know, something other than being home with my kids and it becomes a meaningful activity for me to do.

Amy 28:44

So that was a big surprise is that I couldn't see what the ripple effect was. And another surprise was people weren't really talking to me about it. Most of my friends and family, like, unless I brought it up and said, Hey, did you see I'm doing this thing? No one brought it up to me or mentioned when I was writing it.

Amy 29:14

And it was a big part of my life for 30 days, it was pretty much all I thought about a lot, you know, and no one really mentioned it to me. And so I don't know if it was just because it's sort of unorthodox, if they were uncomfortable, but I went to several family members, both my blood family and my in-laws, several family members. "Have you seen what I'm doing on Facebook? Can we talk about it?"

Amy 29:44

That was the other surprise. I sort of thought that both my family and my friends, whether White or Black, I thought that they might bring it up and no, no one ever did. Maybe one person brought it up.

Jean 30:00

Yeah, really. We're in this work for what it does for us and what's our ability to make a contribution. There are no little gold stars, A+ on a report. It just is. And I'm not surprised very few people brought it up because people would not know what to say.

Amy 30:28

Right.

Yeah after I brought it up specifically with my parents, after I brought it up with them, I got a lot of "Well how's it going for you? You're happy, you're doing okay?" And it's like "Yeah, everything's great." Once or twice I had a family member say, "Well if you finish..." I thought "IF"? of course I'm gonna finish. But those were the only comments.

Jean 30:53

Well, I will tell you, I wondered about your stamina. Because I knew the history of why you were doing it, I thought you would stay the finish line. But I did wonder about your stamina through this and what that would mean for you. But I also did think that anything we take on, you know, I believe in personal growth, so anything we take on as a challenge will benefit us in some way in the end.

Amy 31:22

Oh, your original question was, what did I learned? There's one other really key thing.

It's really hard to talk about racism for a whole month and not talk about politics.

Jean 31:35

Yes, ma'am.

Amy 31:39

So that's what I've learned is I have to start talking about politics. There's like, I've gotten to that point. It's just looking at the cards out on the table. White people, we've got to step up. And we've got to get involved in politics at every level, because we can't, we can't just love one another into social justice. It's not going to happen.

Amy 32:00

But really going through the 30 days and trying to figure out what to say that would help White people feel empowered, but wouldn't be divisive and too political, that was the only thing that got really tricky. And that's also why I saved reparations till the very end because I thought, okay, anyone that's still reading by day 30, they've stuck with me, you know. So if there are some people who politically are on different sides of the aisle than I am, then they stuck with me through this far they, they know my intention is not just to love Black people at the sake of White people. You know, I think there's sometimes that friction there. So, yeah, to me, I feel like that's my next step of the journey is learning more about politics so that I can get involved more.

Jean 32:54

That has been the single most difficult thing for me, dealing with White friends, and those who don't want to get into politics. Well then if you don't want to get into politics, you can't talk about my life. I can't talk about my life. So that moves you out of the arena of a friend into the arena of a colleague that I need to maintain a relationship with.

Jean 33:18

And I am struggling with this issue now, because you know, I have a blog, and I'm struggling to continue the blog, and I'm struggling now with that balance of what can I write? And I'm about to decide. There's no neutral in this game. So, so I'm glad you said that.

Jean 33:43

So tell me about self-doubt.

Amy 33:49

I think this was the perfect exercise for me. I, in general, am a person that feels unless I'm on a stage handed a mic, then I have no business speaking. For some reason, I need some sort of position or authority to feel like my voice matters. So writing every day and trying to convince myself that this mattered was a perfect tool to handle my self-doubt.

Amy 34:22

And it was beautiful, you know, I said there was no ribbon at the end and there wasn't, but there were people that I would get a message here or there talking about something that I wrote and how it affected them or they hadn't seen it that way. And it was really affirming for me to say, okay, no, I'm not a politician. I'm not a leader in an organization, but my voice does matter. It is having an impact. So it was every time I would sort of get to that place of oh my gosh, like, what am I doing? Why am I doing this? I would get a message that would really keep me going. So I feel like I have much less self-doubt now than I did before the 30 days.

Jean 35:07

So I will tell you that on one of your posts, a comment was put by someone we both know that said—and then two other people who I assume are Black. “Jean, I didn't know. I'm sorry, I didn't know.” And I thought if a nothing else happens, this person who I know was very influential in her sphere of influence, if you reach this one person speaking of the ripple effects, what that could mean as an impact on the world. I'm saying this because I want the person—I'm sure is watching the interview—I want her to know how meaningful that was to me.

Amy 35:55

What's interesting about that is I almost didn't even notice it.

Because I know who she is. She's a well-meaning White person, you know, and so it's like it hadn't dawned on me that she didn't know, whatever it was she didn't know. It just hadn't dawned on me. And so when she wrote that comment, I was sort of like, Okay, well, that's nice. I was thinking in terms of, Oh, I'm glad my sharing helped her, it didn't hit me how impactful that might be for you and for everyone else.

Jean 36:33

So in our lives and Black people lives, those of us in professional spheres and have White colleagues and friends. There's always this thing of, here's this wonderful person who would give her last shirt for me. And this whole part of me is not in the conversation, not acknowledged, not anything. And so, I go in

with half of myself, not my full self into that relationship. And I'm not the only one. We talk about it a lot among my Black friends. This split that we have to live. And I, I really think the person we're talking about is lovely.

And so to have that from her was—it made your whole 30 days worth it for me personally.

Amy 37:39

I'm so glad to hear that. Yeah. She'll be too I'm sure.

Jean 37:49

Yes.

So can you name one thing that you know that White people, whatever some White people who read this one thing they've learned that they did not know?

Amy 38:07

I really think White people have an underestimation of how political it is. I think, in general, when we talk about racism, White people think we are talking about bad people. Bad individuals who are hateful. And that's part of why we haven't moved very far. Because we have a conversation about race, "Well, I'm not racist."

Amy 38:40

And I think White people are now beginning to learn it's not about us as individuals because we have to do the individual work. But unless we do the system work it's not going to get very far.

Jean 38:57

No, it will not. It's not a matter of what's in their hearts. It's embedded in the structure, in the system and how this country and the world works.

Amy 39:10

Right. So I do think there were a few people that are waking up to that idea that it is systems and maybe lightly because I really didn't preach too much on anything that could have been perceived as political. But I would say that's one thing. Yes, it's about you, yes, you need to do your work and it's systems. It's not about you. And that, to me, is what really hit home over the 30 days.

Amy 39:42

Sorry, I'm going to tell you something you didn't ask. Because every day I would I would write and then, you know, talk to my husband about what I wrote, what people were saying. And we would talk about just what it means to be a White person and how it feels and you feel stuck or trapped or whatever, whatever.

Amy 40:00

And it just kept dawning on me that White people are making all their decisions about around their emotion, like, we might feel embarrassed or humiliated, or we might feel uncomfortable, or we might feel some sort of negative emotion and that is motivating our decisions and our actions.

Amy 40:21

And the whole time that we're sort of playing to our comfort, actual Black experiences and lives are happening. It just really sunk in for me how much White people are just sitting around talking about their thoughts and feelings while you know—and it's not just about police brutality, it's health care and job pay, you know, it's a lot more than just Black men dying at the hands of police.

Amy 40:51

And so, it just, it really hit home with me by the end of the 30 days, how much White people don't understand. We're just beholden to our emotions, we're just making all our decisions based on our comfort. And while we are staying comfortable, Black peoples' lives are not comfortable, you know, and experiencing oppression in all forms. That really just sunk in so viscerally by the end of the 30 days.

Jean 41:21

Wow. That's very insightful. And we have no expectation of the comfort level that you assume you're in.

Amy 41:38

Right. And it's so hard to imagine that we get to choose this comfort. You know, in order to become an ally or an advocate, we get to choose this comfort, whereas Black people, I can't imagine that you're hardly ever comfortable. I don't know. But—

Jean 42:03

Yeah. Okay, so yes and no.

I watched some kids playing after a bomb hit in some country, Israel or something. And little kids were playing and laughing and picking up the stuff and there was debris all around because they had just been bombed. And I thought the human spirit, kids can still play in the midst of death and destruction.

Jean 42:30

And so that's the paradigm of living. I can still be happy and you know, I am a happy person, I can look around and look at some of my relatives and look friends and look at the news and lose my mind. So that's the split, I don't expect to be chronically comfortable.

Jean 43:01

So what's changed for you, Amy?

Amy 43:09

Um, well, I mean, we've talked about this, a little bit about self-doubt where I now have an understanding that I don't need permission to speak. You know, I don't need somebody to give me a title and a microphone in order for me to have a voice.

Amy 43:27

I wouldn't say that my understanding of racism has changed that much. But I would say my focus on it has changed intensely.

Amy 43:45

I feel, and this is going to be selfish but White person, so there you go. I feel like this 30 day—I think it's helped me become who I thought that I was, somebody that would be uncomfortable in order to do the right thing.

Amy 44:10

And somebody that has learned from life and is willing to share that. A lot of the most popular posts were the ones where I had an apology at the beginning. And I tried to fill out very specifically what the behaviors were and what their impact was that I didn't understand at the time and apologize for that. And those posts tended to be the ones that were the most helpful for other White people because they also had engaged in those behaviors.

Amy 44:50

So I think what has changed for me also is just learning to value in sharing what I know, and just realizing that my voice does matter, it sounds so trite, but you don't have to be a published book author. You don't have to be a professor, you know, you don't have to be a specific person to have an impact. And I don't think I really understood that before.

Amy 45:25

And so it feels—I think it feels really great not only to have sort of figured that out for myself, but to have figured that out, not because that was my goal, but because my goal was to demonstrate to my Black loved ones that I cared about them. And then, you know, my own personal growth was a lovely bonus.

Amy 45:55

I don't feel I could have—I love my Black friends to my full capacity. So that hasn't changed. You know, my love hasn't changed. I think the only thing that's changed is my understanding of myself.

Jean 46:13

The best social justice actions, the best contributions we make, if we do not grow in it, we are not giving or getting the full benefit of it, I believe.

Jean 46:27

So for you to grow in that, to me, is an indicator not only of your growth but of the service that you provided. Those things have to go hand in hand. If it's all sacrifice and I don't get something back, it's not right. There's going to be something missing and hollow in it.

Amy 46:55

Right. So, yeah, the personal growth is the ribbon.

Jean 46:59

Yes! Thank you. That's the ribbon. Yes.

Okay, so let's wrap up. What next? What do you think this means for you moving forward?

Amy 47:22

I think I, like many White people, am sort of conflict avoidance, and would steer away from what might be unpleasant conversation. So what's next for me is to stop doing that?

Amy 47:41

And to get political. I already was a little bit politically minded, because I've been interested in social justice, but it's gonna be with a whole different tune now, a whole different ferocity, I guess. I think that's what's next.

Amy 48:05

I did have a few requests from some people about turning my 30 days into an E-book. That sounds like a lovely idea. There would definitely need to be some edits and some additions in there. I don't have any immediate plans to do that. But that does sound like an intriguing idea. If it's something—again, I don't know the impact, but if there were things where, oh, my father's friends' friends' boss happened to see it and found it helpful, you know, if an online ebook could get passed around and it would be helpful to people, then that's certainly worth exploring.

Amy 48:49

And honestly, the other question of what's next is, is to know because we're still in the pandemic, and none of us know.

Jean 48:58

That's true.

Okay, so this has been Amy Foy Hageman who wrote for 30 days about race. And she's promised to give us at least one of her posts. We'll have it as a PDF.

And thank you, Amy, for being here.

Oh, and I have a blog: www.leadingconsciously.com. This interview with Amy will show up on the website in a section called blog and vlog. And this is our very first vlog. Thank you for helping introduce it. And thanks for being here and thanks for being you.

Amy 49:46

Thank you.