

From Hardship to Allyship: The Value of Chronic Unease, Pt. 2 (#21)

Jean 00:00

This is the second part of the conversation with Mark Hayes, an organizational consultant. One of his specialties is inclusion and equity. In part one, Mark talks about growing up painfully shy and ostracized as a young person. He also had challenges with his family of origin. The second part of our conversation starts by my asking Mark about his continuing commitment to addressing racial issues. At the end of the interview, Mark references Mary Holland, a beloved friend and colleague of us both. Both parts of this conversation are dedicated to her memory.

Jean 00:56

Why did you continue to challenge yourself in the racial arena? Why? Why that?

Mark 01:05

Well, it's part of how can I live up to - I will not cooperate in my own oppression, if I suddenly leave one of the biggest areas of oppression in our country. And, you know, oh, my goodness, the number of friends that I have who are African American by then and the people that I care about. You're African American, and no, I mean, the song that probably started me on all this, Peter, Paul and Mary, it's not the one sitting when it's not the blowing in the wind, and all those everybody knows.

Mark 01:46

It's Long Chain On. I listened to that song at least once a week. From the time I was in the ninth grade, I think when I got the record, and it's about a person in her cabin late at night, getting ready for bed, and she hears some chains clanking. And so she goes to her window to look out the window. And there's a man, obviously from the song, but he's chained, his chains on, tattered clothes, unkempt hair, a beard. And he comes up and asked politely if she can spare a biscuit or something to drink. And so she gives him that and talks about how gentle he is. And at the end, just thanking her for what she's given him, and he's getting ready to leave. And she says, Can I help you take the chains off? And he looks at her and says, No, I'm not going to give my burden to you, I will carry these. And then he walks off. So that song has stood with me through all these years, Jean and trying to live to that song.

Mark 03:08

I remember the last time I was on a jury in Houston, it was right before we moved, and it was one of the tough judges that was there. So I made it into the jury panel where you get asked the questions and stuff. It was a Black, young man that was on trial. They talked about there

not being any eyewitnesses and stuff. And then there was this extremely double worded question that we were asked by the attorneys that the judge said we had to answer with a yes or no, that wasn't a yes or no question. And I went through that four times with the judge and the attorney saying I'm sorry, that's not a yes or no question. And there are other factors involved in this, especially in this particular case that I can see just from being here. And judge said, do you want to be in contempt of court? Can you answer this yes or no. And I said don't want to be in contempt of court. But in good conscience, that's not a yes or no question. And I think that's an important part of what will be decided in the trial. And so I probably just got dismissed.

Jean 04:18

That ended that.

Mark 04:19

It was pretty quickly, too. But she didn't hold me in contempt.

Jean 04:24

Okay, I just want to correct something you said I'm not going to work in a business. There are people who will be listening to this who are in businesses. How do you want them to think about what you're saying?

Mark 04:39

Since 1981, I've been working in businesses.

Jean 04:50

Okay.

Mark 04:51

Not nonprofit, not social work. I've been working in businesses since 1991. I've done non-technical training in energy companies. I've done Diversity and Inclusion work. I've done work around and, well you read my resume and I keep getting asked back by people. So I've found a way, but I've found a way where I do the things that are, I feel are in alignment with my pledges to myself and not in conflict with what people in the business want, obviously, since I've been doing it for that long period of time.

Mark 05:45

And I find, this is something we talked about, I don't make blockbuster movies. I'm a small moviemaker. I constantly in businesses, looking for micro-inequities. Where things that are going on, where are people diminished, and how can I get feedback so that doesn't happen, and how can I help people in recovery from that. So those things don't need as big of scar. So that's where a lot of the things that I do are now is around that kind of stuff. Have been really the kindness and those kind of things are important to me in a business room.

Jean 06:30

So Mark, I have personally witnessed you take principled stance on behalf of justice and in opposition to micro inequities, time and time and time again. And I have seen you being tremendously well respected for that, as opposed to ostracized and labeled a troublemaker and all of that stuff. Can you think of any example of when you've done it, how you've done it? Because I want people to understand what you do, and the secret of how you're able to make it work? When I've seen other people try to do it, and they flounder, get dismissed, or ignored.

Mark 07:20

Yeah, well, and again, little things I'm talking about. So let me give you and these are, these can be built. But a couple of these are little things. But here's my approach to it. In one of the companies that I was working for, a new chief executive of the company, and I was in a role, where I had some responsibility for the diversity and inclusion work. And so I'm waiting and waiting. And three months in, I still haven't heard anything from the gentleman about that. And so I'm trying to figure out how to talk with him about that in a way that won't front him out, be embarrassing to him. And so what can I do with that, this was at a time when we're also getting the iPods and people listening to music on their iPods. And so a favorite question for folks of executives was, hey, what's on your iPod, are we listening to the same kind of music as you are, and yada, yada, yada. So what I did was I recorded him 2 CDs of music on social consciousness, social justice, with songs from catalogue of music that I thought would be cool, that would help him understand of what it is. And also he could share, you know, Hey, I know we haven't talked much about diversity, but here's some songs I listen to and this is really cool. We're gonna be talking more about that. So I recorded those songs, put CDs and with playlists, artists in the songs on it, with a note attached in a confidential envelope that I sent to him an interoffice mail. And in the note, I indicated that I'm sending this to you, it's been three months, you know, part of my accountability is on diversity and inclusion, doing some work with that. You're new to the company, wondering if now might be a time you'd be able to have a conversation about that. And here's a way maybe I could give you light way to get into it. If you don't want to go too deep, but here's some music for you, I thought you might enjoy listen to and you might share with folks. So what I got back, about a week later, sent back to me with the CDs in it, and a sticky note on my little note, handwritten note to him, said, I'm a person that attends to the critical few things that are most important for the success of this organization and this is not one of those now.

Jean 10:01

Whoa.

Mark 10:03

With his name signed at the bottom. Okay. So the interesting thing from that then was I was in a lot of things, sustainability work we were doing then on that committee and different things. And so he would come to those meetings. And he would see me and he would zero in on the chair farthest from me, he would not make eye contact with me, he would not look at me. No

bother to me, dude. So one time, he had to sit next to me and he was talking with the person on the other side of me. So he was leaning all the way forward and turning his head, so he was still not making eye contact with me. Finally, in a town hall meeting, in an auditorium, I was sitting with another person that he liked, and so she asked a question, she raised her hand, ask a question. I waited for several other people to ask questions, when it was getting pretty close to him, I raised my hand. And he kept saying any other questions, any other questions, and looking around the room. And I kept my hand up, and he finally said, Yes, Mr. Hays, what do you have for us? And so I actually shared something, a question around diversity, it was a pretty easy one for him to answer and answer in a positive way. And, you know, he did that and kind of breathed a sigh of relief. But part of what things were important to me, then in particular, it wasn't just who I am and all, but the sustainability initiative that we had. That requires employee engagement polls, and it requires what are the ratings on you and as a company and how you handle sexual orientation as an issue and the protections is provided. So the intent that I was doing with this is to provide him with you need to be watching this and let's talk about that. But then I got on the committee, and I could do it another way. So that's one example.

Jean 12:10

Okay, but let's dissect it. You tried one way; you tried the soft way in multi media approach. It did not work. You then got ostracize basically. You were treated as though you were invisible. Didn't bother me, dude. People would have wilted in your position.

Mark 12:36

Yeah. I think it was my reputation in the company. He wasn't gonna be able to fire me. And also, the piece that would not be true for most people, is I knew with who I am, I can't believe I got to be a director in the company. I was raised in manager roles and director roles at companies with who I am. So I wasn't worried.

Jean 13:11

No, so Okay, so you can't bother me. So when you did what you did, you did it. I call it a power base. People step out without a power base. You had a power base, you were widely known as being effective in your job. So you did not think he could fire you because you had a strong enough power base. That's what we're protecting you. Right? Did you bad mouth him? Did you share?

Mark 13:41

No. Oh, no. Okay. I told one of the persons that I shared it was one other person that was it. But my intention was not to, to turn him out or anything it was to find out and so through the, the other means that I got access to to the sustainability initiative. I was able to achieve my objective without him.

Jean 14:03

Oh, okay. So so that's the other really critical point. Some people would do it, get the reaction and then fade into the woodwork. You said, Okay, I just went down lane A, that didn't work. I've tried lane B, that wouldn't work. Let me go try lane C, and get to where I need to go. And if he doesn't have to be a part of it, I can get it anyway.

Mark 14:28

Yeah. Yeah.

Jean 14:30

So did you agonize, were you distraught?

Mark 14:36

I was puzzled. Why in the world is this so difficult?

Mark 14:41

When I was going through the stuff at the work and volunteer work at Center for the Healing of Racism, I was asked to be with other people that had been there for a while now, to be on the first board of directors. And that was oh my goodness, I can't tell you what that felt like. But you know, corporations you need if you're going to be on a board, you have to submit that and get approval. It took six weeks for my boss to approve it. That's something should have been two days. He had all the information, there was nothing there that was anything close to a conflict of interest. And people at the elevators, it's obvious he had talked about with a lot of people, because some of the White men that I worked with, who knew I was going through that stuff, would come by and ask and kind of a sneer. So I understand you're going to be on a board of directors, how did that happen? And asked questions like that. Yeah, for the Center for the Healing of Racism was the board of is going to be on.

Mark 15:55

I don't know if he kept it that long. Because he was hoping that they had to make a decision sooner than he was going to sign it. And so I'd come in and tell him Well, I'm sorry, they've rescinded their offer to me, and they've got someone else. That may have been why he's keeping it but it wasn't; it was his decision. And so that was interesting, the reaction from White, my peers, as White managers and what their reaction was to that.

Jean 16:30

Okay, so Mark, what did you think about them? I don't even know how to ask this question. Here you are White male, you're describing being ostracized by your peers, you were ostracized as a child, White men are looking at you and saying, Oh, that's weird. And yet, you're saying I'm doing what I do. Why didn't it bother you?

Mark 16:58

By that time, I pretty much learned that my shelf life on having a friend who is a White male might be four or five months. I know that's funny. I'm not telling a joke. I'm sorry, White men out there. I know there are many of you that that would have been a very different realization with. But that was the reality for me. I mean, one of the questions we talked about you asking me was, what are the consequences of this, and I have maybe two or three people now White males who I can consider had friendships with that aren't colored by what I do with my stance on things at all. But it's very rare that I that I've had White friends. But that was the case when I was younger then.

Mark 17:59

But the last performance review, I was in a company where is really kind of a talent management type role with a number of groups and number of employees, and probably half the employees, maybe two thirds were people of color, gay. And so I remember, so as to bring those groups together and produce some synergies and make sure there is alignment across the three groups because they really should be working together to work against what we're talking about, you know, the things that we don't want to happen around race and all and micro inequities. So the review I got at the end of the year, when I started that group was really good. All the things that they wanted to see us making progress on were really good, all. And so we get to the end of the of the review, is the one positive, the one critical piece of feedback I give to you is so I've had a number of complaints that when you're talking with and interacting with the employees of color in your group, that you're laughing harder and longer and more with him than you are the other employees. Well, I'm not making that up.

Jean 19:20

Okay, go ahead.

Mark 19:24

I was laughing harder with people who were Black or Latino. I was laughing harder with the people who are gay than I was laughing with the White straight people in the group. So and I'm being kind of funny with this. But there's a question towards the end of this around, You know, what's this mean for you going forward? You know, what are the prices we pay for this? I mean, it's serious stuff.

Jean 19:53

It's serious.

Mark 19:54

And this goes back to words like racism, equity and privilege. Those are the things that, you know, you're laughing harder with this group than me is around a privilege. I am supposed to be the one that is most special to you. Not that group. I'm the one that you're - but that's that privilege piece. Privilege shows up in so many ways around the racial question, especially more between White and Black. Saying White and Black even, it's difficult for folks, it scares them.

Because from that, it's going to be racism and privilege. And those things we're going to have to start talking about.

Mark 20:47

Yeah, I've made my peace with who my friends are going to be and where I'm going to live and what I do. I know, a way past, you know, number of years, and most people will be working even. And so it's a very different place I'm in there. But this has been part of who I've tried to be for a long time now.

Jean 21:08

There are people listening to you might conclude you don't like being White, you're ashamed of being White, there's something wrong with being White.

Mark 21:14

No. No, I'm talking about individuals who respond to me, not a group who responds to me, but individuals or, you know, White males are a group. That's a tougher group. But no, I am in part of another part of my journey. I mentioned my parents wouldn't talk about anything to do with family, there were all kinds of family dynamics in our family that just were very strange. So I didn't know anything about my ethnicity. My father's parents died before I was a year old. I don't even know how they died. They never even would tell me that. So I had no knowledge of who I was. So I did, I started doing some research, probably around the time of being with the dialogue, racism stuff, and discovered that most of my family comes from the Highlands of Scotland, and my father's side of the family in Ireland, from Derry in Ireland. And so there's a wonderful history of fighting oppression, and social justice in those two groups. So and that was an important piece for me. You know, there's also for those of us that are Irish, there's the how Irish became White was by doing horrible things to people who were Black so that they could be seen as part of the group. So there's that piece too to own as well. But no, I'm proud of being who I am. But I'm proud of being Irish, I'm proud to be a proud of being Scottish. Being White is the color of that. You know, I told you before, when I was doing the work with the center, I tried to put everything right, we come from a geographical place. So I called people, European, European American, African American, Asian American. When I said to people, to someone, you know, European American men like us, he said, What are you talking about? I tried to explain, so I've kind of given up on that.

Mark 21:27

But White is not White or Black. It's become who we are, in some ways, because of our behaviors with each other. But I'm Scottish and I'm Irish. And the White is a designation of that, but I'm Scottish and Irish. And I'm very, very proud of that.

Jean 23:49

Okay, so if you know that a mutual friend of ours has wanted to hook you up with a White guy he had in his organization that he and I say, This guy has the potential to be a Mark Hays. We

always has the thought this guy has the potential to be a Mark Hays. If you know if there's a young up and coming, White guy who was facing all of the stuff that White men face in trying to launch diversity and inclusion initiatives, what advice would you give to White men who want to promote justice and equity in a company when most of the other White men in the company don't understand what they're talking about?

Mark 24:44

Yeah, I wouldn't well, number one, I wouldn't give advice. And I know that's a rarity, but, but I would visit with him and I'd be glad to visit with him and I do those conversations a lot with folks. I mean, one of the main questions I'll ask is, you know, where are you now with that? What have been your experiences? What's been your learning? What are the things that are important to you? From what you know, right now? What are the things that concern you? So I would very much be asking questions like that. And from that I get pretty quickly a realization, I think, but where I would go at some point is, so let's look back at all we just said. Are you ready for that? What do you think, could be possible obstacles or consequences for you taking that path? And have that conversation. How comfortable are you using these words? What do these words mean to you. In your life experience, what do these words mean to you? When do you use these in your daily life and your daily work? Because if you really get serious about this, there will be prices. If you want to continue it, you can always find out where your level of uh-oh is, as you go into this. But you are going to get labeled at times, there are going to be very difficult things that can happen to you. The other piece for me is I got my guardian angel. I've been directed. So this is again, different. But I said that I've had help with being guided on a journey for me. And I've listened to that. And I've followed that; it's taken me places I had no idea I would be able to go as a man. And, man that's I can't tell you how much that's worth to me and that I can be in companies and be a man.

Jean 27:02

Okay, so people of color. You as a White man, you have observed many successful people of color in corporations. What have you observed that you've - and you also have been in a position as a White man to hear other White people talk about them. Right? What success factors? What is it that creates success, so that the person of color can be themselves and still gain respect?

Mark 27:40

Yeah, well, you know, we have a shared friend that went through some difficult times, as well as some unbelievably good times. And he's part of my model for answering this. So well, know how the business, all the pieces of the business fit together is number one. Absolutely be able to describe to the group of people that you're going to be working with, or are leading, be able to show that you, as well as anybody in that company could show them how the pieces fit together, and where their individual role fits into things. And what that means in terms of possibilities for them moving to other groups, other positions, that kind of thing, you've got to know that company as well as the CEO or anybody else in that company knows. So that folks

will have confidence that you really can be a champion for them because you know more than anybody else knows you work for. That's number one.

Jean 28:45

Well, how about people who say, That's unfair because why so and so person over there? She doesn't know as much and she got promoted?

Mark 28:53

Yeah. Yeah, that's right. And part of this - so this may be outside the bounds of what you're asking a little bit. But diversity, I'm sorry, this is stuff where I know my language is not going to curse or anything but my language is not going to sell nice. Diversity has been a shell game, Jean. It's been a shell game, it's not real. That's the thing. I was listening to a conversation the other day and still talking about one of the companies that I get to observe is doing a lot trying to do a lot now on the anti-racism stuff. They started out using the anti-racism language a lot and are now moving more back to the diversity and inclusion and talking about hiring targets and stuff. And so part of the conversation I was sharing with this group from outside was quotas. You know, those were how people react to that. Yada yada yada. That's about privilege again.

Mark 30:05

It's about privilege. And so starting conversations now with I think where the world has come from and is now. Where people are, the starting place now is equity and inclusion, not diversity right. And until we can do real inclusion and provide real equity, I don't think diversity is going to be any different than what it was before. Because we're not changing the primary from a fundamental element of not being able to talk about things like privilege and equity, use that language and talking about how we're doing these things. And so we never get to where people who have privilege are going to have to take something else, the old showing to me was like the pea underneath for three kind of pods, and you keep moving it around and move it around. And usually there's a trick to it, where no matter which one you lift up, when you get to lift it up, what's there?

Jean 31:16

Empty.

Mark 31:17

Empty. And that that to me, we keep, we keep moving the shells and hiding the peas. And we're still talking, what we're talking about diversity and hiring, we're still talking about can we do quotas, because White people will react negatively to quotas?

Mark 31:35

Let me add one more piece to it. And this is again about privilege and the difference. Okay, the talked about piece it connects with that, because I am White, and I am a male. And people

do still talk to me, when we're angry about things. So over the years, the statement I've heard from men who were White in these circumstances is, and I'm not kidding, with a number of years, I'm going to use this the number here. Well, if they do that, I've only got nine more years to go here. And they're not gonna get anything for me but the bare minimum. If they don't do that, they're not gonna get anything for me but the bare minimum. Who in the company has a right to tell their boss, I'm gonna slack off for the next nine years, cause y'all put quarters in here. And someone else may be getting the job that I could have gotten. Who else has the ability to say that? Okay, and that's what I mean around inclusion, equity, privilege.

Mark 32:43

If we don't start getting those upfront in these conversations, I don't think we get anywhere differently than we have. And that will be terribly sad. This is the first time I've had hope that we really can make some breakthroughs with this. But I'm already starting to see now the default back to it's a diversity conversation. It's around how are we going to do the hiring and how are we going to do this? It's not around equity and anti-racism, it's slipping already away back to the same old questions. And that's why I call it the shell game.

Jean 33:19

I got it. I got it. So the word diversity means numbers. Loss of privilege to those who thought that there's a meritocracy. And a meritocracy that favored them.

Mark 33:40

Rather than a privilege system that favors them. Yes.

Jean 33:45

And so your preferred, that's why you said when I asked you how to define you, you said inclusion and equity is what you said. That's why.

Mark 33:56

Yeah, it's right back to diversity and inclusion. Well, we won't go any further with that. And I think, you know, when I hear people out in the world Jean, talking about now is equity and inclusion and anti-racism work. I know, people need jobs and all, but I hear that's what's being asked for. I don't hear people asking you to go back to diversity targets

Jean 34:22

Right. So diversity implies targets, implies quotas.

Mark 34:29

It implies that somebody, it's always implied that somebody who we wouldn't normally hire, we're gonna hire.

Jean 34:36

Winners and losers.

Jean 34:42

Okay. Tell me about equity. What does that mean to you?

Mark 34:50

Yeah, I mean, that's the start of what it should mean is that we start - you know, and I hate it. This is oversimplifying it, but the unconscious biases and those things, micro inequities. For me, it's more unconscious bias. This is just so simple. It's so simple. This is before the book just before the wheel went home.

Mark 35:20

Last time, I was in a meeting with actual folks and a young African American, young Black woman, doing a presentation in a group, just become the manager, maybe a month before the meeting around budget numbers, very technical stuff and important financial stuff. So her two bosses are in the room. But clearly they've given - this she's developed the slide deck, it's clear with that she's making the presentation. Doing very well making the presentation and so people start asking questions. Who are they asking the questions to? They're asking questions of the director of the two people in leadership positions that she reports to. And those two guys are all puffed up thinking, Oh, cool, you know, we get a chance to really show how much we know about this stuff and show how much thought we've been putting into the budget. And so I'm at the back of the room, and this particular, young woman and I have worked a lot together, so we stay pretty synched up. And as his first question is ending, I'm looking up at her. And we make eye contact, and we both nod our heads, she knows what's going on. So she goes on a little bit, pauses for questions, goes right back to those guys again. And at this time, I'm mouthing, do you want to do something? Kind of mouthing that and she's shaking her head, no. So but she gives me a look like, you know, thank you for noticing. It's not just me, I'm not imagining this. And so she and I talked after the break, after the presentation was finished, and talked about what we wanted to do with that. She didn't want to be brought out in the group in that kind of setting, that would feel too risky. But we did agree to talk with the two people that she reports to at the next break and talk about what happened and how those things occur and what to watch for. So and you know, how to just defer the questions back to her if that happens. So we did that. And they were going, Oh, my goodness, I'm so sorry. You know, I was really feeling my answer too you know, I was handling some tough questions, not thinking of how that feels for you. So those are the things I'm trying to do all the time.

Jean 37:49

That's beautiful.

Mark 37:50

Those are so small, they're small, but they're not. They're so big, because what people don't realize those things are happening every day, several times a day, often to the same person. So

when you look at that as just that's one single thing. No. And the conversation from that. So that's combating privilege. That's understanding what privilege.

Mark 38:18

So that's those are the things that I try to do all the time Jean. What I really have liked is been, we've been doing work for the company related to the hirability of the organization. So like with the nuclear folks and folks, hospitals and all. So talking about that a lot of the work that we're doing. In the analogy. And so one of the, I think it's five factors in that, and one of those is maintaining a chronic unease, maintaining a chronic unease, where that that's the way that we find things that we don't find. It's not trying to force ourselves to be negative or anything like that at all. It's maintaining that sense of chronic unease to make sure we're doing everything we could do to not, in those kind of organizations to create something that kills a bunch of people, that hurts people. And so that's like, become my theme for how I describe what I do.

Mark 39:22

I went to Target one morning, going through the store, a young African American woman, there's some sales on for baby clothes that look like, or young girls clothes. I'm walking by her and I always say hello to people as I pass into the store, make some eye contact. And so go on, do her shopping. Come back and you can see on her face. She's so excited. Oh, this will work and I can hear her saying those things to herself out loud.

Mark 39:50

So I was up to the checkout and I'm familiar with that store. And it was early in the morning there was only one checkout lane in the woman that was there is light, and often rough. But as I woke up one person ahead of me another woman who swiped, I heard her just be rating the young woman. Why are you buying this? What are you doing with these clothes? Do you not even know how to hand these to me? I mean, did you not have money to buy any of this stuff before we had this sale? Do you not even know that you need to take this out of this and put this over here? And just really berating her. I don't know how long I heard that. It seemed like a minute, but I don't think it was that long. And so I asked the woman in front of me, excuse me, do you mind if I step in front of you? I want to talk with the checkout clerk. And she's standing there with her eyes wide open. And she doesn't know what to do. Said yes, please. And so I walked over. And I said to the young woman, I want to talk with the clerk for a minute. Are you okay with that? And she nodded Yes, but she didn't have any idea what was going on. And I told the clerk, I need you to look at me. You know, I'm in the store regularly, you've checked me out a number of times, you know who I am. And she's looking at me like, so? I said, I need for you to get control of yourself. I need for you to stop the use of the language that you've been using. And I need for the tone that you're delivering it to this young girl to change. I don't know if these are the exact words. But this is like what I was saying a couple times as I was going through that she interrupted me. I said, Stop. You need to change your behavior. So listen to what I have to say and tell me whether you can do that or not. And the next time she interrupted, I said, Do I need to get your supervisor for you to hear me on this?

And then she stopped. And so I finished and said you're going to check out the girl, you're not going to give any more of that language. And then when I check out, you and I can talk about whether we need to go talk with a supervisor about this. And I turned to the young girl and I said, Does that sound okay to you? And she said yes. And so got her checked out. As the young girl was leaving, I said, Are you okay for going to the car yourself? Or do you need any help? You okay? And she just nodded with some tears in her eyes. And so I thanked the woman that I stepped in front of and said, Thank you for letting me do that. Got back in my place in line. Thankfully, no one else would come up to the store.

Mark 42:30

But that's the stuff that I want to watch for and I want to catch. And I don't know, but without battling racism. Without that my saying, you know, I will not cooperate and will not participate in my own oppression? How could I have stood there? How could I have nodded to that young woman and said good morning and been friendly to her, and then come up to the counter to the checkout and let that happen to her, Jean?

Jean 43:03

Mark, that's why we're here. That's why you're here.

Mark 43:07

That's my guardian angels work and a lot of people helping me to understand stuff. I know when I do things like that, then - I don't know. And I was trying very hard not to disrespect the clerk.

Jean 43:25

That's what you were trying to -

43:28

If I start talking to her like she's talking with a young woman, that doesn't do anything so trying very hard not to be disrespectful for I saw things, you know, something triggers these things. I don't know what triggered the clerk. But there was something there that was hurtful in her memory around, maybe not having the money to buy her children clothing. And here's this young woman, you know, half my age, and she's buying all this stuff on sale, and I gotta fold it and put it in your bag. I had no idea what was going on in there. But I know there's a story behind it.

Jean 44:06

Yes.

Mark 44:07

So. So I don't want to berate her.

Jean 44:10

You were able to stop abusive behavior without berating the abuser. And by thanking the abuser for allowing you to do that. That is totally marvelous. And I will project because a White guy stood up for me when I first interview at UH in a meeting.

Mark 44:31

Wow.

Jean 44:32

And I remember him till I die. Every time I passed him on campus, I ran up, gave him a hug. I was so excited. And I saw him and he's thinking, what did I do? And he said, Well, Jean, I was just sharing - you were there when nobody else was.

Mark 44:51

Yeah. And you were asking me before what would I share with people who are Black coming into an organization. Or people who are White who want to participate in this stuff, and you know, what I do is share some stories, you know. Can you do this? Do you want to do this? And what I see so often, we've talked about things like this sometimes with the executives under the head of the organization had an incident, particularly that happened that I won't get into, but people didn't react and support the woman when something happened, that was really bad that was done by another person in the meeting, it was just silence. And, you know, talking about recognizing these things is critical, you know, doing the work to understand what these are and recognizing them. But you got to practice or something you got to know, when these happen, what are you going to do?

Jean 45:53

Yes.

Mark 45:54

How are you going to intervene in a way that will make this something that may be a learning moment for everybody around you versus making it worse? So it's not enough to recognize it, then you also have to think about, okay, how am I going to take action on this? What am I going to say, and I got like, 15-20 seconds to do it before, the person that's been targeted, is going to either have to answer that themselves, or they've given up hope that somebody is going to support them on it. So that's the second part. That's where I was struggling a bit when I was talking about - I love, you know, the micro inequities training and stuff. But the other piece of that is to make sure what do I do when I get in there? to handle it well? And there's some, I mean, there's some good stuff out there, companies giving some good guidance on that kind of stuff. But you got to, that's where the courage comes in. That's where the risk is.

Jean 46:54

Yes.

Mark 46:56

And privilege. I have had the choice most of my life, if I wanted to, not to have to do those things. Nobody's gonna - there will be obviously situations where people will think less of me there. But for the most part, I would be doing the norm.

Jean 47:21

Thank you, Mark.

Mark 47:23

Yeah, thank you for letting me share that that last one.

Jean 47:27

That's the - the last part is why you're here. And we have to figure out how you got from there. Where you were? The making of Mark Hays.

Mark 47:37

Oh, yeah, that's embarrassing to hear that.

Jean 47:41

It's real for me. And it's not only real for me, Mark, I know so many people who appreciate who you are.

Mark 47:49

Yeah.

Jean 47:49

And what you've done in the company.

Mark 47:53

Can you tell people how much you've helped me? Can you say that out loud?

Jean 47:57

I can. But Diallo will cut it out.

Mark 48:00

Okay, well, then, let's frame it up a little bit more. So in one of my roles in a company, there was a new role. The only reason that I agreed to doing that was I got six months of coaching with you to do that role. And Okay, go ahead. I'm sorry.

Jean 48:21

I forgot about that.

Mark 48:22

Yeah. So in one of the reasons, one of the things we talked about early on, one of the questions you asked me, was not what do I want to accomplish? Yada yada, any of that, but who do you want to be in this role? And how does that lead you to getting the results with developing the people and hitting the objectives? How does that contribute to that? Do you remember that conversation?

Jean 48:51

Vaguely. It's one of my questions I ask.

Mark 48:57

It's a key question. I may not have said it exactly right. But I think it was pretty close. And that's where I came back and after a lot of thought and thinking about my history. I said, I want to be in a guardian angel role with this group.

Jean 49:12

I remember that.

Mark 49:13

Okay. These are really good people, they're smart people. There are a variety of ways that in the organization, people haven't always seen them as at the level to be able to do the things, to move up a level and to do the work that we're talking about in this group. And so I was saying I think the guardian angel giving people safety, you know, those kind of things, these will be important and so I want to find ways to be in that place with them when I'm working with them, having relationships with them. And you help me with that, figure that out and helped coach me doing that and watching me do that. So and another gentleman Jim who I've worked with for 20 years. He was an amazing man, knows nonverbal behavior and all kinds of psychological types and all. And he spent 20 years helping me to learn things that helped me recognize these. Him helping me learn nonverbal behavior is part of what tips me off to the things that we're talking about identifying and so I can never possibly repay him enough for what he gave me. This gives me sight on things from perspectives that other people know who I am.

Jean 50:30

Yes. Oh, that's a very good point. You got nonverbal training.

Jean 50:35

Yeah. Deep, deep, deep. I mean, this man went to the Union Institute in Switzerland to learn his craft and transfer that to me for nothing.

Jean 50:44

Wow.

Mark 50:45

So that's a good place for me to maybe, I don't know. Are we ready to wrap up? Or?

Jean 50:52

Yes. Oh, yeah.

Mark 50:53

I'm embarrassed about how much time I've taken.

Jean 50:55

Oh, that's fine. I'm sitting up here wondering what we're going to do. I've already conceived of maybe having a two part segment, because this is very rich. We'll see how we handle it.

Jean 51:10

Mark.

Mark 51:12

Yes, ma'am.

Jean 51:12

Thank you, thank you.

Mark 51:15

I don't know how to express who you are, to me. And the, you know, part of the reason it felt good about doing this at this time, you know, I don't like doing these. I know it's important to but you know, who we just lost. And so again, if I wasn't going to do this and all I learned from Mary, and the faith and trust she had in me, that would just be a ridiculous thing. So this is for Mary as well, Jean.

Jean 51:44

Great. Thank you. And okay, Mary, wherever she is, knows that.

Jean 51:51

Thank you.

Mark 51:52

Thank you. Bye.