

Anders

Welcome to the second episode of the fall 2020 season of the Manage-A-Bull podcast from the UB School of Management. Where extraordinary is our ordinary. I'm your host Anders T. Rosen.

Well actually, I'm not your host this time. For this episode, I've asked my friend and classmate Malkijah Griffiths to take the hosting reins for a timely, important and deep conversation on diversity, equity and inclusion, or D.E.I. as it is sometimes referred to by shorthand.

Open, honest and challenging conversations about race, gender, sexuality, and background are as important now as they have ever been, perhaps even more so. The School of Management is facing these conversations as well, with the recognition that change and progress requires both deep reflection and immediate action. Institutions like UB can and should be a positive, constructive force for advancing society and ensuring that the leaders of tomorrow engage the wider community with compassion, inclusivity and respect. This is a time for hard conversations. And I am so proud to be having them.

So let's jump into it, shall we with our next episode, diversity, equity and inclusion.

Anders

Good morning, everybody. Welcome to another exciting episode of the manageable podcast. I'm Anders Roseann And today, I am so pleased and excited to welcome a guest host for our discussion on diversity, equity and inclusion here at the University of Buffalo. This guest host is a classmate of mine in the second year of the MBA program, he and I have seen what it's like being on campus, whether it's in person online, dealing with you know, the discussions that we're having today related to diversity and belonging on campus. This is a person that I'm so pleased to welcome to host this conversation today. My friend, my colleague, Malkijah Griffiths. Welcome, Malkijah.

Malkijah

Thank you, Anders. Man, it's a real pleasure for me to be here today. And for you, you know, inviting me on to host this discussion of diversity, equity and inclusion, and I really feel strongly about it and passionate about it. So you know, it's a no brainer when you reached out to me, so I'm just excited. And thank you.

Anders

No brainer on both sides. I was like, I know who needs to talk. I know what I'm inviting. Right?

Malkijah

And I thank you for just giving me a chance to have some human interaction. Oh, my goodness, I don't know. I've been feeling a little a little out of place lately, because I'm a little bit of an extrovert. So it's

been, it's been tough to be in the house and, and talk to my computer all day. It's been tough. But again, through it.

Yeah. So I actually, you know, when you do things like this, it's good to bring an army with you. And especially to have good people just to have discussions like this surrounding the is very important. That is a group discussion, and you get multiple perspectives into play. So with me, and I have them introduce themselves as well. With me, I have my own professor in the MBA program, as well as the leader of the diversity, equity and inclusion committee, in the School of Management. I have Professor Mary Ann Rogers, if you want to introduce yourself as well.

Mary Ann

Hello everyone, I'm Mary Ann Rogers. I am in the department of organization and human resources. I'm a clinical associate professor in that department. And I'm the assistant dean for diversity and inclusion.

Malkijah

Yes. And Mary Anne Rogers is just phenomenal. She teaches the best communications class in the history of communication classes. And I'm sorry, I'm a little biased, but yes, she does. So far. The one I took that was, that was a great one.

Mary Ann

Thank you.

Anders

You're missing out this semester now. Because you know, I get to be her TA this semester.

Malkijah

Oh, I saw that. I pray for the students in that class.

And also, I have another guest with me, another colleague of mine, we've been through a lot of other organizations in school like, involving campus living, as well as the School of Management. So I would like to introduce Rebekah Reid as well.

Rebekah

I thank you for having me. Really excited to be here. So my name is Rebekah Reid. I'm currently a senior studying accounting in the School of Management and then following after my bachelor's degree, I'll be pursuing a master's in accounting, which will allow me to sit for the CPA so hoping to be certified soon.

Malkijah

Yes, girl, she's ready. A woman with a plan. It's amazing.

Rebekah

Thank you.

Malkijah

So yeah, thank you both for being here on this Saturday morning, early in the morning. You could have been doing a lot of different things. So I'm glad that you're here today with us. And I just want to first start out with talking about diversity, equity and inclusion for a second like that, let's, let's just take it back a little bit and actually see like what those words actually mean, to both of you and in everyday life in your everyday life. Like what how do you go about your life thinking about that? And kind of how does that affect you in just everyday life? Forget organizations, just you in general, and I'll start off with, I'll pass the mic to Mary Ann.

Mary Ann

Okay. All right. I've been lots of definitions of the D&I as we like to use the acronym. And my favorites, the one that I'm most comfortable using, I'll share with you Diversity, in its broadest context is understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing our individual differences, really embracing those differences. Equity is the fair and just treatment of all potential and existing members of the organization and its constituents here, it would be our faculty, staff, and students. And then Inclusion is the conscious effort of, of operationalizing, both actively and intentionally. Diversity and Equity within every facet of the organization. Diversity and Inclusion are prerequisites, I'm sorry.

Diversity and Equity are prerequisites for inclusion. So you have to have those pieces in the foundation. And then you think about inclusion, there's kind of a, an old us cliché that diversity is inviting everyone to the party, inclusion is asking them all to dance. So that's a way of you probably heard that before, probably, yeah, really get some get some shape to it. So that's the definition. Those are the definitions that I carry as I go through my daily work and thinking about how we can make things better, bringing in more opportunities, from the way that we hire to the way that we recruit to the way that we teach into the way that we treat the people that we work with.

Malkijah

Absolutely. And what I noticed really about what you just said, is that it's the connectedness of those three terms, like you can't have one without the other, and so on and so forth. They all connect, and you can work backwards, you can work forward, it's just like kind of three pieces to a pie. And showing that those are interconnected is really important. And actually, understanding that diversity actually incorporates those tough conversations and perspectives, which leads to inclusion. So like, that's, that's how I look at it. And speaking of like, tough conversations, Rebekah, like, what, how important do you think, you know, tough conversations is in terms of diversity, and inclusion and even equity?

Rebekah

Yeah, I think in terms of these pieces, is that people have a difficult time having conversations about anything that makes them uncomfortable, which is understandable, kind of like that fear of the unknown, so to speak. Um, but I think it's important because this is what allows our communities to be better in general. So like, for example, your college experience is it's kind of dependent on the environment you're in and the community that you're in. So for example, I can take the same exact accounting classes anywhere. I could have taken them back home in Rochester, I can take them anywhere else in the country, and I've even studied abroad, so I technically could have taken them, you know, in the country that I was in at the time. Um, but what each of those places what like has to be in common, so to speak, is the community that you're in. So whatever classes you're taking, how people treat you, is indicative of how you see your experience. So whether or not I had a good experience when I studied abroad in China at the time depended on how the students in a whole other country treated me, how they saw my differences. And not just like the color of my skin, but the fact that I spoke differently than them, I spoke a whole different language than them. The fact that my interest in food were different like all of that, I think our experiences in life are indicative based on our communities and how our communities respond to us. So these conversations are so important to have, so that people become more comfortable with understanding differences. And then to be better able to address when anyone else or something else is different. How to better adjust handling in those situations.

Malkijah

Absolutely. And that acceptance, right, because a lot of people are from different communities, right. And you will want to feel, especially when you're talking about you're going to China and you're studying abroad, like it's very important how you receive those situations and how people accept you and to see like how you are and just know that you're also a human being but you're different. But you know, we're all the same in a certain way on, we're all human. And we all like to be received positively positively. So speaking of the acceptance part of that, and kind of everything that you're talking about community, community sometimes is left out of diversity, equity and inclusion. I don't know if y'all feel the same way. I just feel like there's a couple of misconceptions surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion that people really don't know about. So do you do any of you, Anders as well? I guess I'll extend that to Anders first to talk about do you know, or see any misconceptions that people usually take on when in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion?

Anders

Yeah, I mean, I think what I first just want to lift up something that Rebekah mentioned, which is just being comfortable with being uncomfortable. There's a need to begin having these conversations in places where you might not have had those conversations before. Right? So that is, in your community, of course, right with your neighbors, don't be afraid to kind of walk up and say, you know, hey, how's your day going? Also, by the way, you know, you know, how involved are you in helping others around the area? How often are you getting in conversations about whether it's, whether it's protests, whether it's systemic racism, whether it is, you know, how the police is interacting with the community. These are all conversations that we have to be ready to just engage in more often. So that can be with your neighbors that can be even within you know, the household, you might have a very different understanding, and idea of what systemic racism is from, you know, the generations above you. And so you can't really be afraid to maybe approach your parents and say, What have you been doing recently, to talk about racism and to talk about, you know, dealing with injustice in our society. And, and when it does come to, you know, diversity, equity and inclusion, these conversations, they, they can be framed in the areas of race, they can be framed in the areas of gender, sexual orientation, all of these things that we need to be willing to have the conversation with somebody and say, Hey, you know, have you actually thought about this? Have you moved beyond your default narrative? Beyond that first idea that you think, Oh, um, you know, for me, personally, I need to move beyond the idea of the default that I'm white, therefore, that is just what it is generally. That's not, that's not true. That is one way of encountering the world. That is one way of engaging with people, you have to actually, you know, see beyond and be willing to engage. So I really appreciated what Rebekah had to say about being comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Malkijah

That's really, I'm glad. I'm glad you said that, because that is a model that I follow. And I, I was gonna respond to that. But it's just another thing on my mind, thank you for reminding me because what Rebekah said, that is super important. And I think that's something that I carried through academia since I got to University at Buffalo, just being, just putting myself just going away, far from home eight or eight hours away from New York City, Queens, New York, where I'm from, and just living a certain way. And coming to upstate New York and Buffalo, amazing place, but just with new experiences, and being uncomfortable and new experiences, not not analyzing race, leaving race alone for a second, just a new experience and being somewhere that I'm not used to. So that uncomfortability and turn that into being comfortable is very, very tough. It's hard to master. And I don't think you can master it. But just acknowledging it, like you said, Anders, just acknowledging the space that you're in, and what's your role? Because everybody has a role. And everybody has a role. No matter if you like it or not, or think you don't, you have a role in it. So that's a misconception. I think you said right there. Like people kind of don't think that they belong in the conversation no matter where they from, whatever demographic they are, but do you are you belong in the conversation? Because it's interconnected? No, what what what is? What do you think about that? Um, Rebekah?

Rebekah

Yeah, I actually was going to echo the point of Anders when he said, I'm, like, starting to explain different groups. Because I think one misconception of D.E.I is that people assume that it's just about race, like so for example, if you're in a group of friends and say you have a black one black friend, and then maybe Asian friends, white friends, you'll assume that you're diverse. And sure you may be diverse in terms of race, but there are a lot of different facets to D.E.I., like another example of that is the way we refer to different things, I think goes back a long time, in terms of like, what our knowledge of differences is now is really based on what people said before. Like, for example, individuals who have differently abled bodies were so used to saying disabled, when they're not disabled, they're just differently abled. And it's the same thing in terms of mental health, there's still a lot of stigma around that. And conversations still need to be had about that. But I think that mental health is just another facet of D.E.I., it's not that people, there's something wrong with people, there's just something different about the way they think about it, or the way their brain responds to certain stimuli. So I think, to understand, it's really good to talk about the fact that D.E.I. is not just it's an all encompassing term, but it is not just about race, it's about race, gender expression, mental capabilities, like it's everything, it really is everything. And I think the better we can do about addressing each facet of D.E.I., the better our communities will be in general.

Mary Ann

Absolutely, I'm so glad to hear these statements. And, you know, we hope here in our School of Management, and at the university, that everyone feels secure, and accepted and encouraged. And we want to know, I think, you know, after the social unrest of June, as awful as the situation is, and as difficult as these times are, if there's one silver lining, it's that it really, these events really shone a light on the work that we have to do.

I was guilty of this myself thinking when I was appointed to my role in 2019. I thought, This is great. I'm in a university that cares so much about D.E.I., and works on it both academically, and there's a professional office to make sure that, you know, compliance is taking place. But aside from that, the culture of our school that I always really felt was progressive and open and inclusive. And why don't you foster a culture of belongingness. That was true, but we still have so much more than we can do. And the thing about the uncomfortable conversations, this is something that the university has been working on a lot this summer. And there is a real fear. I think, no matter who we are, that we're going to say something wrong. I've told this to our Dean, in the early days of the summer, I said, I just, you know, it gets back to that place where you think you're on top of everything, but we don't know what we don't know. And that's a terrible feeling. And I think that people are really afraid of a thought of curing ignorance, or out of touch. And I think that's the most frightening part of these kinds of conversations for most. And I think as a university, we're starting to get our footing is to having more forums and getting through that, that discomfort and really making strides in doing this the way that it really should be done.

Malkijah

Yeah, that is super important that you acknowledge that, Mary Ann, because that I think that that is premise is the reason why more, sometimes more doesn't happen is because people are afraid to step on toes that are walking on eggshells, because they think another group is going to be offended.

Actually, that couldn't be more true. untrue. I'm sorry, untrue. In terms of not wanting to step on somebody's toes, because in life, people are going to make mistakes. Right before this talk. And another talk, Rebekah said something about disabled, I would have said that word. If she didn't say that, and that, no, they're not disabled, they're differently abled, I would have said that word. And now and it would have been right on this podcast. But that would have been a mistake that I would have made. And I would have to live in my mistake and move forward and acknowledge that I was wrong. acknowledge that, Okay, I need to be aware of that I need to have more of a total span of scope of different topics and different facets of the not just what's in my scope, and being, you know, just a sponge and learning about different things. Like I don't consider myself as differently abled, so I wouldn't be that much indefinitely, connected to that world, which is okay. However, it's not okay for me not to be aware of what are the things that that minority group goes through? So that's a learning moment for me. And I think people have to not be afraid of learning moments. That's what life is. Nobody's going to say, yes, you'll be corrected. But that's the journey. That's the process. And now from you being corrected and receiving that feedback, well, like, Oh, I apologize. Excuse me for my mis knowledge. I'm aware now and I actually do more research, me acknowledging that we're moving on and we're moving to a closer place as human beings, because we're acknowledging wrongness. And I'm looking at you and saying, Hey, brother, sister, I apologize because that's what we all are. And I think once we do that, we'll we're going to be moving forward and we'll see how receptive people of all different minority groups are when they see that people are trying. I think it I think it affects more people and people are more has more emotion of sadness and anger towards the when people aren't involved in it? Because it seems like you don't care. We don't know what you're thinking in your mind, we don't know that you're scared to say the wrong thing. And if you are, it's fine. We all go through it. And I'm say openly, and being honest, that I just had a moment just now I'm, everybody goes through it, you know, so I just want to put that in there.

Rebekah

I was gonna say that point really quick is that I think it has to be on both sides. Like, if I'm a part of a minority group, I have to have that level of acceptance of, hey, someone might say the wrong thing. And I can't immediately come from for their character, like, Oh, they meant it, like they meant to offend me, they tried to, you know, it's not from that intention. So I think it's on the side of the minority group, but it's also on the side of the individual that may make a mistake, to not to have some level of grace and not incorporate pride and say, Well, I was just trying to help her, I was just trying to, you know, say something that might be useful. So I think it's on both sides of the issue is, individuals in the minority group have to have to extend the grace and be able to receive it as well. When those mistakes do come up.

Mary Ann

The phrase that I keep hearing is we have to be open to being vulnerable. And that can be really frightening. And you know, just even a space like this, I would hope that and, you know, I would hope that we are creating opportunities for people to learn how to be vulnerable, and to just really learn. And yeah, I guess that's pretty much all I have to say about it. But that really is the spirit of the thing. And you know, that's all I have to say.

Anders

One of my favorite terms, this is from like, community discussions I've been involved in and, you know, different group, group activities is, take space, make space. So, you know, absolutely, there's a time where it's up to you as the individual to actually take up space and say something. And then after that, you have to step back and allow someone else to fill the space next. So it's a give and take, it is a conversation back and forth. And it's understanding that there is a continual progress forward through that you take up, but then you step back, and you make as much space as needs to be there for everyone's voices to be heard.

Malkijah

Give grace and make space. Give grace and make space. I think that incorporates everything that everybody just said, I think that's fine to realize that you don't have to be the person, you don't have to come on too strong. It is it is a vulnerable topic. And it is no two people to be expressing things openly at a time like this. So that's exactly what you said is it's completely important.

And switching gears a little bit, not too much. But I kind of wanted to ask, is there a specific level of like diversity, equity and inclusion, like this specific level that something should be operating like that? Or is it more of like, oh, it could be the minimum or at the maximum? Is there? Of course, there's not a maximum however, is there a minimum? And how does that minimum look, the would you think, an organization.

Anders

If I might add something there, actually so you know, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who recently passed away, may she rest in peace? She was once asked the question, when will there be enough women on the Supreme Court? And her answer to that question was nine when there are nine women for nine members of the Supreme Court? Now why would she answer it like that? She would say that, because the fact is, for so long, there were nine men on the Supreme Court.

And I think she also and I don't want to speak too much for her. But the way I also read that is that this is a pendulum a little bit, right. There has to be it's not to say that it is equitable, or fair to only have nine women on the Supreme Court, it is to say, at some point, that seems like a place that would illustrate the value that women bring to that role, just as the value that men bring to that role. And then after that, there may be eight women and one man and then seven women and two men or seven women,

one man and one non binary person, right? There is no, I think, there's no end point that we're aiming towards. This is a journey that we are continually going on.

Mary Ann

That's beautifully stated, Anders. Truly and it's, you know, the way that we look at this, we took a pretty good look at our school we inventoried our school to see where we have the policies and really wanted to do a new light look at them again. And, you know, I always say we're only bound by our imagination that every single element of our programs, and our student body and our faculty everything, there is an opportunity for us to do something better, or to do something new. And we would come up with a string of ideas that we're implementing this fall that we frankly didn't think about before. And they were right there in front of our eyes. But the key to all of this is constantly having D.E.I. top of mind, when something comes across my desk, or when someone says something interesting, that can be explored, that can be developed, and that can be launched. And I just feel like, there's just no limit to the opportunities that we have. We might not know what some of them are yet. But together thinking collectively, we can we can figure out what they are, and just continue to move in this direction.

Rebekah

It really quick to that point, I was gonna say, I feel the same as you, Mary Ann, in terms of the fact like, I don't know, if there's necessarily like a level you can reach where it's like, Alright, we have enough diversity now or word, you know, we have enough inclusion now, I think you can always be growing, especially since times are consistently changing and progressing. So like, for example, years ago, non-binary would not have been a gender choice, you know, what I mean? Whereas now it is. So I think it's more, it's not necessarily about trying to reach a certain level, our optimum level of D.E.I. I think it's more so just being open to change, and just remaining adaptable as things do change.

Malkijah

Yeah, I think that that's important. It was just a little bit of what do you think about that, because people kind of, you know, use checkboxes for D.E.I., and that something that is very little bit confusing to me. Because it's like, oh, once we reach here, we'll be great. Or once we have this program will be good. or, or, or once we have this will look at some of the heat will be off of us. Right? And that's not what it should be at all. And just the fact that we have a gender as non-binary, and people are open, and not understanding what pronouns are, and not looking at it, like, Oh, what is that? I remember somebody, I used to be an orientation leader. And I had, um, it was it was around 2017. And that was when pronouns or or people, we, it was it was, it was growing, that people was openly wanting to be received as what they want to be received, right, rightfully so. So, we was implementing those and parents used to be like, what, what did you just say, at the end of your, of your of your of your names? What What is, what is he, what is that he looks like, and it's totally fine. I love parents, because they will be open, they want to know everything. And they're not afraid to say what it is, especially if it's for their students. So that was just a great point of time for me, because from those from three years ago, to now it's just so much

growth that happened to where like that's on my email list, that's when I'm going zoom. That's when I introduced myself in front of a large group of people. And I say, my pronouns, and I have the button on my car, and I see it everywhere. And nobody, I don't get as much questions as I used to get about what that is. So I just, and that's just me, being more of an ally and understanding and that people want to be received as what they want to receive. Somebody could automatically assume that he has, but that if unless I tell you that, then you shouldn't assume that. So that's just me being ally and loving that communities. And this, especially UB, in general is just being more conforming to that and more open and I don't get as much question as I used to. So that's, that's amazing. For movement.

Rebekah

I was gonna say two things you said that really struck a note with me, one of them was assumptions, I think, once again, with every group that's encompassing and D.E.I. is that people make assumptions. And assumptions shouldn't be made. Like that should not be the expectation of oh Malkijah as a boy, so I'm going to address him as such, not necessarily, you know, whatever someone's expression is, is dependent on them and whatever they want to be recognized as.

And then the second thing you mentioned, I think you said about, not just assumptions, but when you said about just like being more comfortable in those groups, and the fact that you're an ally to some groups. I think that that is so important, because my white friends, my Asian friends, my Hispanic friends, they don't know what it's like to be black. They don't know what it's like for me to identify as a black woman either. But even though they can't understand what it's like to be me, they can still be an ally to me, they can still support the fact that black women in America are seriously under appreciated, you know what I mean? So, I think those two points in terms of assumptions, that's really good to bring up in terms of the fact that people have to kind of get that out of their mindset. But also in terms of being an ally, you may not know exactly what it's like to walk in my shoes. But you can still be there for me while I do.

Malkijah

Yes. Oh, my goodness, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, I did. I that's what I was going with it. And that is, I think that's the most important thing, because we will not like I would never understand certain things, it's me acknowledging my own privilege of, yes, I'm black, but I'm also a man. So I have privilege in the workplace, just being outside and just having a certain prestige of people going to listen to me more, because I am a male. So just acknowledging that I have that privilege is important that I will never understand how it will feel to be a under underrepresented black woman going into the field, getting the pay cuts and having to go through gender bias in the workplace and all that other things. I would never understand that. However, I'm not going to sit here and say it doesn't exist. I'm not going to share and say that, oh, I don't see it that often. So does it exist? Or that's, that's when somebody is telling you something, what they go through. Don't invalidate them.

And don't be like, Oh, man, you know, I'm sorry. Just Oh, that's that's, that's, that's, that's, that's, that's, that's annoying. It sounds like it or just like empathy, not sympathy, like saying like, Oh, that's so sorry, I have to go through that. Yes, I know, it is. It is, however, just like, what can I do to help you improve

that? Like, can I just how can I be here for you in that moment? So that's what I learned over the course of my time. And moving with that in toto another question out there? Um, what do you think? So I have a diverse call right now we have, you know, white individuals and black individuals. So we all have a different role to play. So what do you think, is your everyone's role in D.E.I., in terms of your demographic, I know, Anders was saying a little bit, but so I'll throw it to Mary Ann, to kick it off.

Mary Ann

Well, you know, obviously the ally ship, and speaking up. I grew up in Buffalo. From time to time, I hear something that I don't like, and I'll address it, even if it's a close friend. To me, it goes back to teaching and learning, never in an attacking fashion, but in a way that we can hopefully get to the place that person really sees the you know, the damage that comments like that, too, and the way that they hold back progress and reinforce old notions and stereotypes. And it's just, you know, in my role here, I would never say that it's my role to help our faculty, my faculty help me, as much as I would hope to lend assistance in any area that anyone wants to gain more knowledge in. About two weeks ago, we had a program on implicit bias for our faculty and staff. And it was fantastic. And I got so much email from my colleagues saying how eye opening that was, and that was 90 minutes from Dr. Mark elbow, who runs the Center for Diversity Innovation, who's highly talented and skilled, and just had an incredible program for us where every single person learned at least one thing, if not more, and I've just never had that kind of reaction to a program that we've had, even when people are happy about a program. I just got an email and I got, I got comments, how vitally important that was the people that really thought things so much about this, and everyone's getting away from me. So I just see my role, wherever there's, again, an opportunity to step in with some enlightenment and also to receive as much enlightenment as I can. That's really how I see my place.

Malkijah

Thank you for sharing.

Rebekah

I was gonna say, um, I think it goes back to the point of playing both sides. So for me, it's in terms of helping the individuals around me be more educated about what I'm knowledgeable in. So that's my own experiences or the experiences of perhaps even like family or friends. So I'm definitely being that informative piece, but also, being a listening ear and understanding other people's experiences as well. And being receptive to feedback on anything, like we said before, in terms of, we all make mistakes, we may say the wrong thing. So both sides in terms of me, helping to be informative to people that may not understand my walk in my shoes, but also being receptive to learning new things.

Malkijah

Yes, absolutely. Anything to add Anders?

Anders

You know, I think maybe the only thing I'll add here is that I think we shouldn't place all of the burden on the shoulders of people who, you know, don't match our demographic or don't, you know, fit the different, you know, diversity distinctions that we fit within. What I mean by that is, you know, don't, If you have a question about race, don't always go to your black friend and say, Can you tell me more about this?

Malkijah

Thank you?

Anders

Yeah, that's a lot of baggage and a lot of weight for somebody to have to carry. And you know what, there's a lot of information out there that we as individuals can go and gather on our own without having to place all of that burden on somebody else.

Mary Ann

And I'm so glad you brought that up, Anders, there's so much that's been written in the past few months about, especially in organizations, that black and African Americans, employees, especially have been saying the same thing for decades, and over and over and over, and they really haven't, you know, been heard to the extent that they should have, and all of a sudden, everything exploded this summer. And they're being asked to be on every panel for the company. And they're asked to help host town halls, you know, and I can, from what I can gather, there's a level of exhaustion to all this, where it's sort of up to others to, you know, be proactive in finding information on their own, and invite your colleagues in. But with the understanding that, you know, it's not more pressure or expectation to have to carry the load of this really difficult topic, now that so many people seem to be really interested in it.

Malkijah

That's so important. And it's it's all about how we act how you hear we asked how we asked our colleagues to be involved in this conversation, I was talking with Mary Ann about this, I'm on the side. And it's just, I think we both agree that it's like, what with what Mary Ann just said, it's how you have to ask them to be invited to the space. And not asking them to run the space and do everything for you is just asking them to wait, this is an influential conversation that we want to have. And we would love for

you to be a part of it. And nobody's going to say no to that. Well, you will run into problems if he said, Oh, come host this meeting, please come do this training. And I'm like, I'm just a regular person. What do you What are you talking about? So I think I think that's, that's very key. And a great point that everybody just made it extremely, extremely great points. And last thing I wanted to talk about before we wrap it up is, um, social media really quickly.

And social media I feel is really controlling the diversity, inclusion, equity space. Because as you know, it's growing. And I don't know about you all, but that's the main way I get my news. If it's getting a ping on my phone, or if it's going on social media, Twitter and seeing what the updates are about CDC, etc. So, you know, and I know Rebekah also has like a YouTube and she does a thing on there - shout out to Rebekah's YouTube - check that out. And but I want to kind of ask you, Rebekah first, like, what role does social media play? And, um, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion? And if and if so, what is it good? Or is it bad?

Rebekah

Yeah, I'm actually glad you have that follow up question, because I think there are good and bad pieces to its role. So on the good side, when there was a lot of social unrest around like June ish in the black community, and I was posting a lot like, on my stories, YouTube, whatever. I had other friends, like students in UB, that were from different countries like India or China wherever, asked me a lot of questions like, I don't want to come off rude, like, these are their questions. I don't want to come off rude, but I genuinely don't understand, like, how black people are affected? Or, like, if you didn't know George Floyd, then like, why are you sad? or Why are you whatever, and I would explain to them, um, for me, it hits home because I have a black father, I have two black older brothers. And it's like, when I watch a video of a man be murdered, I can't help but see their faces. So I think it the good side of it is being that like I just said before, being that piece of information giving to other individuals and being able to spread awareness. So that's the good side.

However, unfortunately, there is a bad side to it. And I think a lot of the bad side is miscommunication. People are very comfortable behind their screens, to share whatever they want to say about whatever topic. People are very comfortable to comment, whatever they want to comment, and it's scary. Sometimes the types of comments people leave, and I don't think people realize the effect that their comments have on individuals that read them. Sometimes people just think it's just words. It's never just words and to suggest that they are is incredibly dismissive. So I think social media has a really good place. So like for example, the things that happen in the black community now are not new like this has been happening. There was this one image surfacing A while ago of like people centuries ago, unfortunately, that were lynched. And the caption said, we couldn't breathe then and we still can't breathe. Now, this is nothing new, like it keeps happening. The difference between then and now is that we have social media, which means individuals who capture video that video spreads like wildfire. So I think change is starting to matriculate in our communities a lot quicker now. Because we have that vehicle social media, but of course, you know, people still share ignorant comments and have their own ideas of what how things should be handled, or how people should be treated. So there is that bad piece. But I think for the most part, social media really does have such a powerful role in how we get information out there. And even in terms of like signing petitions, that was one of my favorite things was

like telling people like, please sign the petition, like, it takes two seconds, like read the article, donate if you can, like do whatever you can.

Mary Ann

I'm not sure I can add anything to that, Rebekah, I think, really brilliantly. And that really is the essence of it.

Malkijah

Yeah, I think you said a lot of powerful jobs, a lot of powerful gems. And in that in that one abbreviation that was that was amazing. What I really wanted to add on to was the comments made by some of the like, your Asian, white, different demographic friends, which is okay to, to you, I see that you're, you're aware of the situation, and you will generally want to know, ask the question. That that's, that's fine. Um, I never really seen nothing wrong with that, because I said educating moment for me so I can do for my friends who actually care, and they're reaching out. So that's, that's a genuine gesture, right. However, sometimes, I had a lot of friends tell me a personal close friends that were that were white. Tell me that, you know, sometimes I was posting about George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and other black people would tell them to take that those posts down, or take those ally ship posts. It's like black people are telling them to take that down.

So that was that is the side of this that I don't like that African Americans play. Because sometimes they do turn off the idea of ally ship. And I can't disregard that. You know, so I definitely hold my people accountable for that type of situation. However, I do say that nobody, those people are always gonna find those people just like they're gonna find people in every demographic that do wrong things like, not every police officer is bad. A majority of police officers are amazing individuals who want to do their job, like and not all people are racist. I would definitely agree with that. I don't look on somebody automatically and think that they're racist, or no matter how many experiences that I encountered, which I encountered a lot. But I don't automatically think a whole racist like that. So it's the same thing when you're posting stuff about being an ally about situations are going on social and justices. So I think that's just a word to everyone is don't be afraid to show their ally ship. Because guess what, I'm looking at that, Rebekah is looking at that, everybody else in the School of Management is looking at that to show that they're appreciated. And that I'm not alone in this. So don't quit because somebody is disagreed with you. And so that's that's the good thing about social media is that we can see that and I actually made me feel better when I saw a lot of people doing that. And also, tick tock, I would never get on that app. Tik Tok doesn't do app that is very dangerous. Because it's a lot of like, like Rebekah said, people can hide behind the computer screen and make videos that have definitely derogatory terms and gnome and just very, you know, a lot of stuff I don't want to get into. But it's just very scary to see that and to think like people around my age, and parents are teaching their kids to not be okay with other demographics. It's really tough social media showing that light. But that's just a little bit of the good and bad that I've seen.

Anders

Can I just quickly comment as well on something Rebekah said, which was about the comments and social media, I was actually talking with my wife about this. Where she was like, I need to just get a T shirt that says don't read the comments. Because it's like, it's a lot. And I think the worst beyond that just a little bit is that, you know, in social media, you can have a post that goes viral and suddenly you have hundreds of thousands of people responding to what you said. And that is very difficult, right? It just from the human standpoint for a second, because inevitably, there will be people who who disagree with you, inevitably there will be people who attack you. There will be you know, it'll run the spectrum. And that as an individual, we just don't know how to process that. You know, Mal, you mentioned that sometimes when you know, maybe when it comes to race, it's someone who is white will post something, but then someone who is black says take that down. You know it, there's this conflict of well, I thought I was being an ally, am I not? And that conflict is real. And you know, it's important, you cannot invalidate it right? The point that I generally go back to as well, what am I doing for the people who are around me? How am I being, you know, if I sure I can be an ally on Facebook, and on Twitter and on Instagram, and all of these different social media platforms, but what does that mean to my friend? Ultimately, how am I ultimately helping the people that are really surrounding me and my community? And you know, if they recognize my support, and if they know that my support is real and genuine, I think I fall back on that.

Malkijah

Absolutely. Yeah. Thank you, you for that. And I think that is a perfect way to say our final thoughts about the topic and anything else you want to say regarding upcoming plans about diversity, equity, inclusion or anything like that. So just final thoughts, and I'll go around and give it to Rebekah first.

Rebekah

Yeah, my final thoughts is just continuing my education. I'm just understanding other people's experiences, how I can better help and serve them, how I can be a better member of my own community and sphere of influence. So definitely just continuing education and be more informed of what's going on in the world.

Malkijah

Absolutely. Mary Ann?

Mary Ann

From people that have been in this fight for equity and fairness, it's in social justice, I've known people that have been in for a lot of decades, and I've been told very clearly several times this summer, and it's really stuck with me is that there's a window open here, there's a window that's been open through a

series of terrible events that we want to keep open. But other things might come along and force it closed again. And for all the learning that we're doing, for all of the effort that we're putting into this, and the building of our awareness that this is something that has to continue for a lifetime. It's just not something it's just not a 2020 thing by any means. It's a lifelong effort. And, you know, it's up to us to just continue to focus and help in work where we can.

Malkijah

Yeah, and I would say, I agree with, with both statements, and also it's, it's going to be a long journey. And it's just beginning, I think, the events that happen this year, last year, even before that, 2008, all the all the things that happen right now, is the time that we cannot let off the gas. And it's it. And I'm grateful that we have this time to not let go of the gas because of social media, because of the time we're in because of how life and interactions is literally changing before our eyes, literally, this literally, it's literally to the point where you can't, you can't run away from this conversation wherever you go, no matter what you're going to work. Even if you're entrepreneur, you're going to school, you go on social media, the news. You cannot run from this conversation. So now I'm grateful for that. And also, in terms of being the change we want to see, this is when I urge students to go to academia, go get your PhD. Go get your law degrees, change the laws that's in place that allowed the ruling to happen for Brown and Taylor changed those laws. You don't like what's going on change that we have to be in positions of power to change that because those laws are in place we're mad at the laws of matter who makes the laws we have a direct impact in that so let's change that because once we're fighting on this side, and once we actually have ally ship on the other side, there's no there's no way we're going to lose. So keep fighting. Please let this be a spark for everybody and show that we're all in this together and you know hug one another man say say they say I love you to your sister, your brother. You don't you don't disagree. You disagree. I have different political views. You may not agree with, you might want to shoot a basketball, I might want to kick it whatever it is, like we're all human and just love one another man truly embrace differences. And that's all I have to say on that.

Anders

And immense thank you to Malkijah for leading that conversation. And for inviting me right back on to be a guest in the discussion. Special thanks as well to Mary Ann Rogers and Rebekah Reid for sharing their insight, their wisdom and their stories with us. Rebekah, I know you're focused on accounting, but do keep the MBA program in mind, we need more leaders like you. The Manage-A-Bull podcast is produced by me Anders T. Rosen, in partnership with the UB School of Management. Special thanks to Dean Paul Tesluk, Assistant Dean Erin O'Brien, Assistant Director of recruitment Aaron Shaw, and assistant director of marketing Harrison Cheung.

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I'm Anders T. Rosen and how am I managing? Any better, I couldn't stand it

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