

Episode 12: Do You Have An Accent? Perspectives on Engaging the International Workforce

Released on October 23, 2019

- Sherron: The opinions expressed by the guests and contributors of this podcast are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Cornell University or its employees. Thank you all for joining us today. My name is Sherron Brown, and you are listening to the Inclusive Excellence Podcast. Welcome back, and thank you for joining me and Anthony on another episode of the Inclusive Excellence Podcast. Anthony, how are you today?
- Anthony: I'm feeling great. Feel really accomplished with a lot of the things I needed to do today.
- Sherron: Thank you so much for sharing. So today on our podcast, we have two special guests. In our last episode, we discussed the challenges that people from other countries have faced by sharing personal narratives and examples of people in our own lives who have encountered these challenges. We also discussed the many benefits that an international workforce can bring to an organization such as Cornell University. I'm excited to talk more about this topic with our guests Lily Rice and Pilar Thompson on today's episode. So Lily and Pilar, thank you so much for being here. Today.
- Lily Rice: Thank you for having us.
- Pilar Thompson: Thank you for having us.
- Sherron: Would you please share with our listeners just a little bit about who you are? Tell us about yourselves and your role at Cornell. And of course, include your pronouns that you use.
- Lily Rice: Thanks for having us here. This is a great opportunity. So my journey prior to coming to Cornell, I was a Weill Cornell Medical College. They have a branch campus in Qatar, so I worked for a Weill at Cornell in Qatar for about seven years before coming here. And then prior to that, I worked at University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. I started out as a senior academic advisor. And then at Cornell, I was assistant director for academic counseling. And then my husband and I were living in Reno about two years ago. Two years ago, I got married and we had a baby. My husband and I thought, well, I decided I was going to stay home with my two year old. So after two years of being home with my baby, I thought to come back to work. And so that's how I applied and came back to Cornell.
- Anthony: Before we move on too, what is your current position here at Cornell?
- Lily Rice: Oh, yeah, I forgot about that.
- Anthony: No worries.

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- Lily Rice: I am the assistant director for student services at AAP, Architecture, Art and Planning.
- Anthony: Awesome. Thank you.
- Pilar Thompson: So I'm Pilar. I have been at Cornell University for probably about seven, eight years, different positions. You start as a temp and it sort of merges, so I never knew exactly where I'm at in the calendar. But I do know we've been at Cornell for just over nine years. I was a traveling, accompanying spouse for an international academic, and research that was brought and offered for a position here. Prior to that, we were in mainland Venice, Italy. We were there and then came over to Cornell. I'm currently working at the College of Veterinary Medicine. I am the associate director of international affairs and professional programs. It is actually quite a unique role that I've been very privileged to be managing for the last four years or so.
- Sherron: Wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing that information and giving us a better understanding of who you are. I do want to circle back and check in with both of you. Please tell us your pronouns.
- Pilar Thompson: She, and I identify as a woman.
- Sherron: Okay. Thank you.
- Pilar Thompson: Yep, and she is also what I tend to use.
- Sherron: Fantastic. Thank you so much.
- Anthony: Before we get started, I do have a question, so we have a question of the day that we always do before each and every episode. And so it is my honor today to do the question of the day. And so for the question of the day for all of us to answer the question is, and just as a side note too, I don't know if you all know this, our guests, but Sherron hasn't seen the question. She actually might briefly see it now but usually it's one of us and then it's a surprise for all of us. So right on the spot we answered this question.
- Sherron: Off the dome as they say.
- Anthony: So the question is to describe a memorable encounter that you had with someone at work, specifically. Whose, country of origin was not the United States. And in particular the question being what did you learn about the individual or even group and how is it shaped or impacted your role in the workplace? So as many people know I believe I talked about it in the last episode around how I taught English in Portugal for a year right after undergrad. And so that experience for me, it was not so much with an individual but with definitely a group of people. So what was unique

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about that experience was that I was teaching at a public university in Portugal and my students weren't just from Portugal, they were from Mozambique, Angola. And I had a group of students from Equatorial Guinea, it's the only country in Africa that's official language is Spanish, right?

Anthony: So I also speak Spanish. And so that was something that I remember kind of like when I first started teaching class and they all saw me and I told them, I speak Spanish, I speak English. They were like became afterwards to talk to me, and they were like, "Did you say you speak Spanish?" And I was like, "Yes." And then they were like, I dunno what you just said in Engli- like, in Spanish, they're like, I don't know what you just said. Can you please translate everything? So that encounter for me, I mean particularly with that group but just with all of my students, I think what I loved about each and every one of them was that they constantly reminded me of the privilege of being a US citizen, right? And so even though I had gone to other countries and my dad, he's from Guatemala, so I went to visit and I understood the privilege from that perspective.

Anthony: It's one thing when you're visiting and it's one thing when you're living in that country. And so just having that constant reminder of the privilege it is to just be a citizen, even though I have all these other identities that make up who I am. And so that's something that for me, when I think about the workplace and when I think about the work that I do, I'm constantly thinking about how that particular privilege shows up in the work that I do. And how I'm constantly advocating for immigrants and for people who are having difficulty transitioning into US culture into the workplace. And so that's something that for me, I always keep in the back of my head as a result of that encounter that I had with my students.

Sherron: That was a wonderful-

Lily Rice: It's good.

Sherron: ... example. Thank you for that.

Lily Rice: Something very similar, not very similar but almost to that. When I was at Weill Cornell in Qatar, this experience was very different for me initially. We would have students during orientation, this is their first introduction to their peers and to staff and faculty. And they would sit in an auditorium and introduce themselves and tell us one fun fact about themselves. A lot of the students that were introducing themselves were either born in Qatar, had lived in two or three other countries, had traveled to multiple other countries. I mean it was mind blowing. You never had one student who had just come to Qatar and not having traveled or live.

Sherron: That's wonderful.

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- Lily Rice: Or been in different places. It was just very mind opening. What a worldview and just that space, there are so many different perspectives and that was the same for staff and faculty. You had staff of faculty that came from all over the world pretty much. And I thought that was just very enriching for the students, staff and faculty.
- Sherron: Right. And all the perspectives and knowledge that they're going to bring to the conversations about having to work through the tasks at hand. I think that is enriching. That's exactly the right word for that. Thank you for sharing that.
- Lily Rice: Yeah, you're welcome.
- Pilar Thompson: So I have one of the core parts of my role is I have a very direct hands on interaction with the colleges international community. So I am on a daily basis in some way or another at least having one to two. Direct, one to one interactions with anything, whether it's a foreign student or a foreign faculty member staff. And what I find with what is good is that it grounds me to not get sort of complacent and forgetting to try to tailor our standard Cornell protocols or standard Cornell processes and sort of just bring it into them that it connects and speaks to their sort of culture or mindset. So something as simple as we could have a foreign, new researcher that's been brought in and they're being told to go through onboarding our go to workday and everything's automated and everything's pretty generic and their minds blown about all of it.
- Pilar Thompson: They're either coming in, sometimes they're have their spouses and we just had someone last week and you can't sit there and say, no, I can't help you I don't have time, right. So normally we would not have to explain at such length what it means to go in and activate your net ID or to do your onboarding or then check in as to with what department manager. By having them have such a direct contact with me, it does ground me with the fact of like let's bring it back down, let's take it back to a different sort of level and let's make it as easily processed by that individual. So you do want to make that extra effort that would not normally be part of a standard onboarding process.
- Pilar Thompson: So for me, I think it's just a good way of keeping my eyes open of remembering I am quite privileged. I am fluent obviously in English and so I don't question the difficulties of when I'm looking at the welcome emails, the activation letters, right? But when we're giving it to that community, we really need to understand for them it's sometimes really not that black and white.
- Sherron: It's not that welcoming.
- Pilar Thompson: And that's the problem, right? It's not that welcoming. So we were able to sort of tune it in. And again, we have recent researchers that just came

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over from Nepal that you just sit there and say, "Okay, let's bring this back down. Let's help him through the process and make them as successful." Because we know for a fact the minute he gets into the lab he's going to have so much more to deal with and so much more stress that the main thing we want to do is make these sort of protocols of, "Like here activate that, take this, go down to East Hill or go to [Day Hall 00:10:10]" a little bit easier for them. So I get this sort of like experience which is fantastic almost on a daily basis.

Anthony: Sounds like get a lot of experience.

Pilar Thompson: Yeah it is a good experience. I started here at Cornell in 2011 and at the time we did not have a Title IX office. It was a committee of people and so I remember being on the outskirts, I was not on the committee but you know as an admin assistant working with the people who are on the committee. I remember the conversation about diversity and inclusion and what is sexual assault, how to identify it, what, what is unwanted or unwarranted sexual conduct and sexual contact.

Pilar Thompson: Somewhere along the line, one of the people on the committee was saying, "You know what? We are not, we are not considering international students staff in this conversation." So the definition and understanding of what, what would be covered under Title IX had to be adjusted and the definitions had to be broadened, certain definitions had to be tightened. So depending on what was happening. And I just realized that in that moment I thought to myself, I absolutely have privilege because I understood everything.

Pilar Thompson: I was not born in the US but I've been in the US since I was four years old. And while I am very, very influenced by my Caribbean culture, I grew up in the United States. So there are lots of things that I don't need to have explained to me. So just something as sensitive and private as anything having to do with Title IX there are so many areas where the cultures may not align. And so somebody who is not necessarily comfortable talking about anything having to do with that. Now as a university, we're asking them to go to explain a situation in detail that may be very, very hard.

Pilar Thompson: So I, I appreciate that. The committee and now the Title IX office absolutely considers international students.

Anthony: And I mean even the office of title nine in terms of the work that they do now, it's also expanding too because they are also taking on discrimination cases throughout the universities so now they're, and they're going through a rebranding with the office of institutional equity and Title IX and so it is really reassuring in that example to know that that was a consideration even when they were considering the policy and the writing of the policy to know that international populations were a part of that conversation.

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- Anthony: Because I think one of the things that Sherron and I talked about in the last episode was that there's, there seems to be a lot more dissemination of information for international students, but particularly for staff and faculty. I don't think that conversation is very much there.
- Pilar Thompson: I agree. I mean it's, it's very, very minimal. And this is one of the main concerns that I would raise is you have the, the normal front facing first contact interaction that that foreign researcher is going to have or that foreign new faculty is going to be an admin manager and admin assistant, an HR rep, a student service provider, and they're not necessarily going to be speaking a global language as it were. Nor are they also well-versed in understanding that that interaction that they're going to be getting.
- Pilar Thompson: So we will have researchers and we will have a new faculty hires that themselves are also acting if they haven't worked in the US before in a very specific way, speaking in a very specific way, writing their communications in a very specific way. And I've had many, many occasion where I've heard of the accounting rep or the HR rep say, "That was so rude or that was so blunt or that was so this, I don't understand."
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- Sherron: hat was the example I didn't want to use because [Crosstalk 00:13:47].
- Pilar Thompson: That's the truth though. Right?
- Sherron: It's absolutely true. And I think that even as people who are grounded in the United States way of communicating, I feel like we always have to leave room to understand that our way is not the only way.
- Anthony: Absolutely.
- Pilar Thompson: And if you're global engine like Cornell. Then you've got to be prepared for some of these faculty, some of these researchers that are not good, they're not going to be well versed. I mean, yes, okay given American TV and American film is everywhere. [Crosstalk 00:14:17]. And they're not taking courses like, "How to write an email to your support staff would work in the United States." And that is very lacking. So a lot of the time it's almost like just we're all still speaking English.
- Pilar Thompson: But we're, having to do a little bit of cultural translation, having cultural competencies, unless it's a visitor. For example, I speak five languages, right? And I can get away with a few other ones as well. But if you're bringing someone in as a hire and someone who's really aiming to study or work here, I will speak with them in English. I might change my vocabulary the way I sort of process things, but to get them to understand where we're going and kind of teach that communication. But you got to

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be a little bit flexible with that. You got to understand and not get insulted. It's not personal [Crosstalk 00:15:09]

Lily Rice: It is not personal. Sometimes we forget that we look at international community as being the other, but then the important thing is that we're all the other, right? Because if I'm speaking to someone from event North Dakota, I went to college in North Dakota. So they have a certain accent that's very different from Minnesota and that's very different from the South. If you're looking at someone else and pointing a finger that they are the other, they speak different. We all speak different.

Lily Rice: So it is important to appreciate that the other doesn't mean that they don't get it, they don't understand, but it's just that they bring a different perspective. We need that, right? We need that.

Sherron: We definitely need it. And it's like saying that, "I don't have an accent. You have an accent." And he's like, "I don't have an accent. You have an accent"

Lily Rice: Their accent is so strong and I'm like, you're [inaudible 00:15:58].

Anthony: I Apparently have a Chicago accent. And I didn't know that until I went to school in Connecticut that people were like, you say Chicago weird, but apparently Chicago accent, we extend our vowels so we don't say Chicago, we say, "Chicago." So it's like minor things like that. Right. But, as Americans, I feel like that's a huge privilege.

Lily Rice: I'm really excited about these podcasts and all the initiatives in your office because sometimes I feel like when we define diversity, we do forget the international community, whether that be students or staff or faculty. We are looking at the other numbers they're not really necessarily the international community. So really just going off of what you had said, I really appreciate these conversations.

Anthony: Thank you.

Sherron: Yeah. That, that definitely speaks to the intersectionality because diversity is such a... It's something that is so hard to define, but we know it when we see it. Right? And, so there are people who wear all the different labels for all different reasons. And being international is one of them. Also, I know that what I have learned about privilege and things like that for myself, just being Christian in the US is a privilege, understanding that there are people who have to work harder to find their community when it comes to a place to worship.

Pilar Thompson: I mean in that also, I try to bring it up quite often, is trying to highlight those connections, as you just said. There may be something that is really, really quite aligned, let's say dividing line of whether nationality,

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skin color, certain backgrounds, socioeconomic, but highlighting where we connect is the best place to really, really build strong relationships and build strong communities because you have a huge proportion of individuals at Cornell that are not from Ithaca or the Ithaca area, but the idea is that we build that Cornell community.

Sherron: Right? That's exactly what we tried to do all the time. That whole sense of belonging to Cornell is because we want everyone to know that we thought about you right before you got here, not after the fact. Yes.

Pilar Thompson: That's true.

Anthony: So I wanted to dedicate a little bit of time to, to talking about some of the stereotypes that are associated with working with international populations. I think there's a lot of stereotypes that kind of misconceptions, especially when we think about visas and you know, "It's so easy to get a visa kind of thing." You know, it's not, it's costly, right? There's a lot of word that goes into it, so I want to spend a little bit of time maybe talking about some of those and then debunking them too because I think there's a lot going on currently within within our society that are outside of our control, outside of Cornell, but that definitely impact the workplace. Right.

Lily Rice: Yeah. I want to talk about specifically, I think that's a very interesting question. Talk specifically about accents. I feel, and I have an accent, right? I talked about this a little earlier. And I feel like sometimes non-international staff or even students will easily quickly judge a person based on their accent and feel like they are not, they're not competent because of their accent. And that is something that I have experienced as I, when I started out as an international student, and I'll give an example one time, we were just as a first year student and as I started out, our professor said, to divide ourselves up in groups and, I had only a couple of people that wanted to be in my group.

Lily Rice: I was like, "Okay, I'm young, and this is not good. This is unfair. Whatever." Turns out though, after the first when we got back our first exams and people are looking and talking about grades and all that, and I was a straight A student and people found out that from each other that, "Okay, so and so has this and so and so, has that." Suddenly I have people wanting to be in my group, I mean, it's almost like I had improve myself. Now we can trust that, you know, when you're talking about [Inaudible 00:19:52], you know what you're doing.

Lily Rice: And they were young and you know, that was a learning moment, right. [Crosstalk 00:20:01] That's what we do when we hear someone with an accent or we hear someone talking a certain way or you know, maybe someone looks different than we do. We put up a wall really quickly and make judgment, make judgements, and don't give them the opportunity to

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actually do whatever they're supposed to be doing. Let them speak with, let them be who they are.

Pilar Thompson: It's quite entertaining because my grandparents were immigrants themselves. So they went from Europe to Latin America. Then my parents went from Latin America to the US and then I have been traveling around the place with my own family. So I always feel that there's, it's that odd relationship of which party is judging who or who's bringing one sort of like, you know, who are you and what do you do? But I'm quite sensitive about that and I have a pride too many anecdotes.

Pilar Thompson: One here at Cornell that I thought was interesting and it shows again, that level of cultural competency, right? And not jumping the gun. And, having those judgments was a faculty member asked and said, "Pilar, can you really, really just help out? Just can you sort out what these people need and what's going on." And I said, "Can you give me some background? You know, I don't know. And no, no I don't. I don't know." So I said, "Okay, just send them." This was, they were downstairs, let's say, in one of the other offices they come up to to me.

Pilar Thompson: So I started asking questions and I, and I sort of dove and I got, I'm like, "Okay, that's what you wanted. Okay, did you need this?" So we go and get it done. And it was a simple tour and some information about specific programs. And so we're done. And then about a week or two later, I run into that same faculty member and she goes to me, "Pilar, thank you so much for taking care of those individuals." I'm like, "Sure, no worries whatsoever." And she goes to me, "You know, I did not know you spoke Japanese."

Pilar Thompson: And I looked at her, and I said, "You know, I don't." She's like, "So how did you figure out what they wanted?" And I'm sitting there going like, how do we respond without them making the faculty member feel bad? Right? As well as the fact of clarifying. So, and again, I've learned many of times to sort of take a moment before I respond to things. Because how is that going to receive? So I just said, "Well, it took a while. Let's give her that one." I said, "But actually I, I just asked them."

Sherron: Imagine that. And you listened.

Pilar Thompson: I know, and I said, and she is... Again, I said, "It did take a while." I said, "so we figured out this is that what they needed? And that's what we give." She just sort of looked at me went, "Oh good, I'll send you all the others like that then." But you know, you sit there and you go, "Guys, I know it takes a while. You gotta just take a moment, ask maybe a different way and be prepared to hear something in a different sort of package." It's not going to come to you with that perfect accent. It's going to be different. Try to broaden how you expect that response to be.

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- Pilar Thompson: And that's where again, how are we preparing our front facing staff that work with the international community to do that and hopefully we're, we're improving. And hopefully we're getting better, but it's a difficult task. Mind you, don't get me wrong. When I was going through my permanent residency and naturalization process, I honestly had to constantly explain to the UCs officer. US Customs Immigration Services. No, I am not American. Yes, I swear I do not have citizenship. No, I have checked because I sounded too American. [Crosstalk 00:23:33]
- Sherron: I didn't know what to do with that, because I just became a citizen myself less than five years ago. And it was, it was complicated. I'm not going to go into the whole story, but thank goodness that the person was just like, "Here you go." It's almost as though the test and all that, all those questions it wasn't even necessary. And that is another way where I got to use my privilege and being an English speaking person, a person who I, some people say I have an accent, some people say I don't.
- Sherron: Whatever the case is, that person recognized, "Okay, you've been here a long time so I'm just going to slide you through." So that is a way where, these things matter to other folks. In your case, they were challenging you, because you said, "I'm too American."
- Pilar Thompson: No, they thought I was American. So they were like, "Why do we have to do this? Like can we avoid doing it?" And I'm like, "Oh my God, if I could and I'll pay you the money I need too."
- Sherron: Hundreds of dollars.
- Pilar Thompson: Thousands.
- Sherron: Thousands.
- Pilar Thompson: We were five individuals. So, thousands and thousands of dollars. And that's what the support at Cornell as you said, "What are those costs?" Or what is it actually take to, bring this international person here at Cornell, whether it's a student or a faculty or research staff, academic. So it costs money to the institution already. But there's other certain costs that then for yourself, you're going to be paying. You're going to have to be dealing to go through that process and you're talking about thousands and thousands of dollars to play with and it's just not, it's not pleasant for anyone. Mind you, it is easier that we have a Cornell Association
- Anthony: Pilar, what I love in your example too is that, from what I gathered too, is that it really emphasizes the piece that helping other folks kind of navigate resources. It's not just one person's job. It should be everyone's job. If they're your coworker, if they're your colleague, and instead of just redirecting them to the HR rep or the HR person, it should be everyone's responsibility to help them feel like they're being acclimated, feel like

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they're getting a sense of belonging from the team to help them get those resources, right. And so that's what I love in that example too, is that it puts that on. It's not just on you in terms of your role, and what you do or any particular individual is everyone's job.

Pilar Thompson: Right. And I think it becomes quite, I'll use the word dangerous when you know an office, for example, one of my roles is inclusion and diversity. And when an office puts all the responsibility on that one person, then it's dangerous because like you're saying, you know, Anthony, I don't think, I know that it's everyone's responsibility to make everyone else feel included and that they belong to Cornell. So it takes intentionality. You have to intentionally want to spend that time with someone from whatever background...

Sherron: And actually make the time. It might take you two minutes, it might take you 10 minutes, but guess what you will have learned something new, something different about someone else that's, different from you and that's, that's beautiful.

Pilar Thompson: Regardless of where you're going or regardless of your, of your opinion on the US immigration process or whether it's difficulties, it's restrictiveness. There is no country that has a fantastic immigration process that makes it like, "Oh my God, it was so pleasant. I also enjoyed that going through." So there is already an aspect of discomfort, of stress, of a complication to any immigrant movement."

Sherron: Not to mentioned vulnerability.

Pilar Thompson: Completely so then you're, you're looking at that. I don't think that is normally connected to our international community, right? Cornell is already difficult. Cornell is already a high level Ivy league institution where the stresses are felt even by our own students in our own faculty and our own staff. You look at them, that person who has either traveled in the past before or has never gone through this process and is being given a humongous level of stress due to their status due to the sponsorship, the support that, that connection that tie-in to that sponsor your livelihood, your family's is tied to this.

Pilar Thompson: No one makes it easy for you. So then when you're dealing with that community, you have to take that into consideration when they are speaking to us, when they're asking for help, whether they're trying to navigate the Cornell system, I think that's where it's an important thing that must be highlighted and really should be part of the training. Any of our employees or our service providers need to be sensitive about, need to be incorporated for that because it is something. Since we have had our new political administration, there have been very minimal changes to the law.

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Pilar Thompson: There have been a few executive orders, but there's been very limited changes to the core law of immigration. But the executive orders, the mindset that has trickled down everywhere from a consular office and a consular agent, to a CBP Custom Border Patrol agent to a UCs officer. All of that has changed, right? So our international individuals have had a change and a sort of step up in the stresses as well as their own insecurities and discomfort of being wanted or felt welcomed in this institution that I have seen a spike in the amount of our foreigners needing to talk.

Pilar Thompson: There's so many different also visa categories. We're very lucky that as a, as an institution we're a higher education institution. There's not that many out of the alphabet of visas that we use. There's a core set of visa types we have, but quite a few of them are very restrictive towards your dependence. So you have some times families, partners, spouses, they're making decision to come for Cornell for one reason or another. To participate in the community, study, research, teach, but they're accompanying dependent sometimes are really, really in a not positive and productive environment.

Pilar Thompson: They are tied legally by immigration to what can do and the stress that sometimes occurs on the core, main sponsored international individual will affect their work, their study or the research. If that family is not, really getting into the Ithaca community outside of the fact of just monetary outside of the fact that you know, you're going to be with one salary for X amount of years until something changes. But there's everything else. You have partners that sometimes they always worked and were independent and now they feel dependent on that other one and they're sitting there going, I, I, they start questioning their own identity. "What am I doing? I don't even have kids and I am stuck in the house."

Sherron: Not to mention isolation.

Lily Rice: Right.

Pilar Thompson: Completely. That we already faced with whether sometimes that we have, but think about that. You legally can't work, right? You can't do anything. Your English may or may not be that fantastic and you know that you're just looking around going, "So what am I going to do?"

Lily Rice: You probably cannot drive for a while unless you get your paperwork until you get your, paperwork. A lot of barriers.

Sherron: You are not basically, you are absolutely dependent [Crosstalk 00:30:48] with everything.

Pilar Thompson: That that's a very interesting sort of situation that creates an environment for that core person. I don't think that that a lot of, I do think some, I mean

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we have that discussion when a department chair for example, is looking out, we're going to hire, we're going to post this position. We're thinking it's a foreign national and I have that discussion. Do we have dependents? Do we have families? What are we, you know what I mean? And highlighting, let's remember that in this status, this is what's not going to be doable or what's going to be doable.

Pilar Thompson: Because I remind them like, "Okay, let's, let's always think about that." So when you have your new lecture and they're stressing out because their husband is now stuck at home and completely unable to do anything, you understand why your lecturer is freaking out.

Sherron: Pilar, thank you so much for sharing that insight. So after we're hearing so much about the challenges that not only the person who is employed with Cornell university faces, let's talk about some of the benefits that having having an international workforce brings to the university.

Pilar Thompson: So I think one of the ones that I like to highlight often is the fact that even though Martha Pollack down through this court and have wanted to incorporate an internationalized curriculum, make it sort of, an idea that at least X amount of our percentage of our students have an international experience because of that, that global benefit for them of having that global effect. We know those numbers aren't there. We know that not all our students are going abroad or living abroad.

Pilar Thompson: And so what can happen is you can use that international flow that's coming to us as the perfect opportunity to give a cultural experience and exposure to our students that are matriculated here. So if you engage that new researcher, that new faculty or those new students to present what their home, or institutional, or country way of working way of living to those around them. Then you're going to have the individual that may have never traveled, may not want to be travel, suddenly open their eyes up and go, "Oh, so you mean you do this experiment that way? Because over in your other lab, you guys did X, Y, and Z. Wow." You know what I mean? "Or that curriculum is not presented that way and you teach and learn these different courses."

Pilar Thompson: It opens their eyes up in a sense of someone that is, has had that opportunity to then expose it to say it. So I really, really highlight, because I run the visitor program as well. So I support all the incoming, just even people who are doing like an internship and I make an effort to say, talk to the other students that you're going to be, exposed to or rotating through with or in the lab, tell them how you do things at home, tell them how you see things. So that exposure is like a two way lane.

Pilar Thompson: Instead of just one way that they're coming here to suck information or resources in Cornell. So I think they can be used as an opportunity for the individuals that do not have the money to travel, perhaps the time to travel as well and just be given a global exposure.

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Sherron: That is an excellent example of the benefits. Lily, what do you think about some of the benefits that international workforce can offer?

Lily Rice: When I think about that question, I think about how we now more than ever live in a global village. Where graduating students that are joining the global workforce and a lot of employers are looking for students who have been exposed to different cultures, are appreciate different cultures. Pilar just mentioned that she speaks five languages. I speak five languages too and I can...

Anthony: And I speak three. So that is 13. Then Sherron's English, that's 14. [Crosstalk 00:34:32] 15 languages among four people. That's pretty awesome.

Lily Rice: I think that it is our responsibility as educators to show students that or teach students or expose students to this environment where they're learning different languages, they're learning about different cultures, they're learning about different foods even. Both staff and faculty as well as students. It is important. If I leave Cornell and I've been exposed to just in this, within this room we have how many languages? I mean about 15 languages. And I'm exposed to that. And I'm learning about those different cultures and different languages and I go to another institution, I can speak to that and that is valuable.

Sherron: Absolutely. Not just valuable. It's actually priceless.

Lily Rice: It is priceless.

Sherron: While we're talking so much about the student experience, it also reaches out to the staff and faculty experience as well because when we are institution that welcomes international students. It would be good that the faculty and staff reflect that.

Lily Rice: That is exactly what I was thinking. You know, if you have students that see themselves in the staff and faculty population, then they know that they can go to someone if they have a question or they have a need and they can interact with that person. Because, that person was an international student like themselves or international, as a staff member. So that is again, that's very powerful.

Sherron: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Anthony: And last but not least, I feel like this conversation can go on for well over this timeline of this current episode, but I really appreciate it. I've learned so much about just even the resources here at Cornell and about people's experiences and 15 languages. I will not get over that. That's awesome. But just to wrap up this conversation, what do you all recommend are just ways in which staff and faculty specifically here at Cornell can serve as

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better advocates and better allies when it comes to supporting our international workforce?

Lily Rice: I think be okay with being uncomfortable. So when someone comes to you, asks you a question, take time to answer that question. There's no perfect way of answering any question, actually. I mean, someone asks you a question, take the time, listen to them, ask more questions. There's no foolish question, right? There's no stupid questions. Right? So that's one thing that I would say. The other thing I think that I appreciate as someone who's worked in abroad and has lived abroad in is a national. Consider myself. Actually, I consider myself as a global citizen. [Crosstalk 00:37:12]

Sherron: ... Pin in my office, global citizen.

Lily Rice: The other thing is, share your experience, talk about your life, your background. You will find like we just did that everyone has a story and not too many people say, "Hey, tell me about, tell me your story." But then go out for lunch with someone that's different from you and different country, different whatever, and just listen to them talk about their culture but also share your story because it's going to be intriguing to them as well. Last but not least, help to promote an unbiased environment by checking your own biases. [Crosstalk 00:37:54]

Lily Rice: We all have biases and when you hear someone saying, or speaking in a way that's a little different from how you speak or acting or eating food that's looks different from what you see...

Sherron: International food.

Pilar Thompson: that's a whole different episode. [Crosstalk 00:38:12]

Sherron: It's big.

Lily Rice: Right, and so we have those biases and so we need to be checking our own biases. As we get into these conversations with people that are different from ourselves.

Pilar Thompson: I think for one of the main things that I like to say. Whenever I'm being asked that question... There isn't like one specific answer like, "Oh, here's this magic bullet of do this and it's going to work for everyone." But one of the first things I say is just how we need to get it. Get staff and faculty understand that you need to be open. If you go into those conversations or situations with an open mind ready and knowing that they're probably going to come to you from a different perspective.

Pilar Thompson: And be ready to have it become an exchange we shouldn't require or tell, if you want to say you're not diverse. "You're an Ithaca born white person

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and you need to be ready to deal with the diversity coming towards you." No. What I like to say is you're coming from this place, this experience, those, sets of knowledge and skills. This one's coming here. Let's have it become a conversation. Be ready to ask them where they're coming from, what they need, what they're bringing to the table.

Pilar Thompson: You also be ready. Tell that employee in that faculty member, be ready for you to teach them about what your experiences have been. What is it you know to be from Ithaca and be an and have it be a dialogue. So it's not just only on one party to have to feel that they must change their behavior. It's not all of us have to be able to engage in a constructive and proactive way that we learn from each other. So to me it really is just make sure that everyone is willing and able to work in an open forum when we're dealing with the different groups.

Sherron: Thank you all. Thank you, our guests. Thank you to our listeners. Thank you everyone for listening to today's episode of the Inclusive Excellence podcast. If you liked this episode, please leave us a comment and like us on SoundCloud to let people know about the podcast. Also, if you or a fellow colleague would like to be interviewed for an upcoming episode, please email us at ie-academy@cornell.edu my name is Sherron Brown.

Anthony: My name is Anthony Sis. Thank you for listening to another episode of the Inclusive Excellence podcast. A special shout out and thank you to Bert Odom-Reed, our sound engineer from the Cornell Broadcast Studio for making a sound wonderful each and every episode. Thank you, Bert.
[Crosstalk 00:40:49]