

Episode 9: What's Going On? Working Across Generations
Released on August 19, 2019

- Anthony: 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 Anthony Sis and you are listening to the Inclusive Excellence Podcast.
- Anthony: Welcome back. Thank you for joining me and Sherron on another episode of the Inclusive Excellence Podcast. Sherron, how are you doing today?
- Sherron: Today I am doing very well. Very, very full and active summer. Summer in Ithaca is everything and I'm enjoying it to its maximum.
- Anthony: I'm also just really excited. It has been a very busy summer. I'm really excited to not only embark on these new projects, but then also be able to share it on the podcast.
- Sherron: Oh, okay.
- Anthony: Before we get started, I want to thank everyone who has been listening to the podcast thus far. It excites me and it makes me very happy to know that people are actually listening to the podcast via our diversity website. It's one of the top 10 links that people now visit. I just found this out today.
- Sherron: Yay.
- Anthony: Yeah, so thank you all.
- Sherron: We're doing it well. Yes, we're getting it out there. We're getting the message out there. That is exactly what we intended to do when we started doing the podcast.
- Anthony: Right. And we just hope that it'll increase with more podcasts that we do, the more people listen. And so on behalf of the do team, I just want to say that we have heard from those who are listening about how much they've enjoyed listening to the podcast. And I think it really means a lot for us in particular, as well as for our team to know that not only folks are listening, but that folks are also discovering and finding out new information that we provide to be valuable and also very useful.
- Sherron: I got to tell you though, Anthony, something happened not too long ago regarding the podcast. So I took the bus to New York City. I was on the campus to campus bus. I went to New York, I'm coming back, and as I was getting the luggage out of the bottom of the bus there, the bus driver approaches me. And he says to me, "Are you Sherron Brown?" I said, "Yes." He says, "Do you do the podcast?" I said, "Yes. Did you recognize my voice or something?" He's like, "No, your name is on the roster." Which is pretty cool.
- Sherron: But then the conversation went on and he heard the podcast about the hair affair when we were talking about hair discrimination in the workplace and he thought it was so informative. He loved that we brought up the topic and we were sharing our personal stories. So that was really exciting to know that the bus driver on the

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campus to campus bus is exactly the target audience because with the nature of the work that he's doing, he can't make it to our Inclusive Excellence Academy Workshops always. And so this is exactly why we started to do the podcast so that we can get other people in the conversation and give them information about what's happening in diversity and inclusion. So I thought that was a wonderful exchange.

Sherron: So let's see, what can I say? Today's my turn to do question of the day.

Anthony: It is your turn.

Sherron: All right.

Anthony: I thought it was, I couldn't remember if it was mine or yours, but I remember it was yours.

Sherron: Okay, good. Because I got one and it's not necessarily Cornell related, but it speaks to our topic for the day.

Anthony: Okay.

Sherron: All right?

Anthony: Bring it.

Sherron: So when you think about your circle, your inner circle or people who are close to you, are most of your friends older than you or younger than you?

Anthony: Most of mine I would say are older.

Sherron: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Anthony: Well it's interesting, I've been thinking about this a lot lately from a different perspective, but I'm also getting older, so I'm also recognizing that I'm having more younger friends.

Sherron: Oh, okay.

Anthony: But when I was younger, or even now I would say to this point, I've mostly had older friends and I attribute a large part of that to my sister being older. So I have an older sister, she's nine years older than me. And so when I was younger I would go out with her often and she would just kind of bring me along. So she would go out with her friends. And really through my sister I was exposed to a lot of things culturally, musically speaking, exposed to different genres of music through her.

Sherron: Oh, okay. That's really good to know. And for me it's the opposite. I thought about it and I realized that a lot of my friends, I've acquired friends through work and when you work on a college campus, you are aging, but the population of

people that you're working with, they are getting younger and younger. So, and it's interesting because the way people who are younger than I am, see me in the world, they probably see me as this person who has all this wisdom and I really don't feel like that. But in some instances where a person may ask for some insight about something or why do people whatever, fill in the blank and actually have an answer, they think that I'm so smart and I'm thinking, it's just life. I mean, once you've been on the planet long enough, you just have answers to things that sound reasonable, whether or not it's right, it's just more ways to consider a situation. So I do find that a lot of my friends are younger, but not drastically younger. I'm thinking like maybe three or four years or something like that.

Anthony: Well, that's exactly how I feel now when I talk to a lot of people who are younger than me and a lot of them will say, Oh they look up to me and I'm just like, why? [crosstalk 00:05:10] I'm like, why?

Sherron: It's just me.

Anthony: I've only been on this planet for 27 years. Right? But I think it also kind of speaks to this piece to me around how I think experience speaks more than your age.

Sherron: Right.

Anthony: Age is really nothing but a number in many ways because the experiences that we have in our life grants us the opportunity to really impart some wisdom onto other people. Right? So I think about this a lot with people who are younger than me who are like LGBTQ, right? Given some of the circumstances in my life, I feel like a lot of times I, it's part of my responsibility, I feel in many ways to share that wisdom and say, things are going to be okay. I know there's going to be these rough patches, these rough moments in your life because I've been there and as somebody who at a young age realized that there was something different about my own identity. So it's funny that you say that because that's exactly how I'm feeling at a different age, right?

Sherron: Yeah. The age difference between you and I, even that's a large age difference. But our experiences, there are a lot of parallels. So there are some areas where we are definitely eye to eye. And then there's some times when you share something with me and I'm like, well what is that like? Because my experience 20 years ago when I was your age, it was a different thing. So yeah, it's really cool.

Sherron: I got to tell you though, Anthony, years ago when I was probably in my early or mid twenties I worked with a woman and she said she lost her mom at a very young age and she had younger siblings. I think she said she lost her mom when she was about 11 or 12 and at the time she was probably 30 and I'll never forget what she said and it really stuck with me. She says, responsibility ages you. So in addition to what you're saying about experience allows us this wisdom. I think the more responsibility we have, we have to age, we have to mature in order to handle it, to work through that responsibility. She had younger siblings, she lost her mom at such a young age, so she was the one that had to get up and make sure her younger siblings had breakfast and got off to school and did their homework.

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Sherron: So just those types of responsibility over time. By the time she was 30 years old, she had raised I think two brothers and a sister or something like that and that is really impressive because honestly she knew that responsibility aged her and I just think that is so insightful of her to be able to say that about her own life. I think it's very true. If you meet someone who's younger than you or the same age that has more responsibility, maybe they have a child or maybe they're taking care of an elder parent. They're the same age as you are, but they will present differently in the world. Because they have to, they have to plan ahead. They can't be as spontaneous. They have to make sure all the details are taken care of and all of that, just having to process the world that way, it is something that matures you faster than if you didn't have to do it at all.

Anthony: Then it fits into what our topic today is going to be, right? Around talking about generational differences in the workplace. I think there's a lot of assumptions and ideas and generalizations about people who are a part of different generations who are entering the workplace, but I think that's something that has come up as a topic of interest among people who have participated in the Inclusive Excellence Academy, and I know it's something that other staff members have had questions on about how do you communicate across different generations. So we're going to talk briefly about that today.

Sherron: Right, right. But what I'm going to do is offer you a quick explanation or definition, if you will, as to what a generation is. When we say a generation, we mean a group of people who grew up within the same time period as you did. Even though every individual in a generation may be different, generations typically share a lived experience based off certain trends like technology or culture, economy and so on. There are a lot of research that tries to determine the patterns of a generation based off these trends, such as maybe how a generation navigate their careers or how they vote or even how they communicate with other generations.

Sherron: So the five generations that we are going to be referring to, there are traditionalist, baby boomers, generation X, millennials or generation Y, and then there's generation Z. Okay.

Anthony: Generation Z.

Sherron: A.

Anthony: That's the big one right now.

Sherron: That's right, that's right. So traditionalists are the silent generation. Those are folks born before 1945 and they're about 74 years old now or older. Then we have the baby boomers. They are born between 46 and 64 and today their ages are between 55 and 73. Generation X, we are born between 65 and 76 and our ages range between 43 and 54. I can't believe 76 seems like it was just yesterday, but I digress. [crosstalk 00:09:55] Millennials or generation Y, those are the individuals who were born between 1977 and 1995. Oh my God. That really seems like yesterday and they are now age 24 to 42.

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Anthony: That's me.

Sherron: That's you.

Anthony: And generation Z, born after 1995. Wow. And those folks are 24 years of age at maximum. I cannot believe people born after 95, if everything went smooth, they have graduated college. I cannot believe that, 95 really seems like not even yesterday, that seems like five minutes ago. It really does.

Anthony: I was just as startled when I started finding out that college freshmen were born after the year 2000.

Sherron: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Anthony: And that now college students, the average, I would say the traditional age college student, right, between the ages of 18 and 20 what, 21, 22... They were born after September 11, 2001.

Sherron: Oh my gosh.

Anthony: Yeah. Some of them. Which...

Sherron: Wow.

Anthony: I think-

Sherron: I think I need a moment.

Anthony: Let's take a moment. Let's take a moment. This is some pretty-

Sherron: Just to take that in.

Anthony: Yeah.

Sherron: Oh my gosh. So basically at this point, more than half of my own life is found in history books. It's no longer current events. It's history. That's amazing.

Anthony: Yeah. Why did that brings up a nice kind of way to start this conversation when it comes to generations and particularly in finding this common ground across all generations, right, is that there's always this one particular moment, a significant mark on how people grew up, how people were socialized and how they adapt to their environment. There's always this kind of one significant or several right? [crosstalk 00:11:44] Cultural events or historical events that happen.

Sherron: Okay. So like where were you when Kennedy was assassinated?

Anthony: Right, right.

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Sherron: That was the question probably for the boomers.

Anthony: Yeah.

Sherron: Does that make sense?

Anthony: Yeah.

Sherron: So for my generation.

Anthony: Yeah, Sherron.

Sherron: My generation X, it was probably who shot JR in the Dallas TV series.

Anthony: So a cultural event.

Sherron: Cultural events. I think that was a big one. Like who shot JR and if you don't know what that means. Wow. I am old. I am totally aging myself.

Anthony: In full transparency, I don't know.

Sherron: I know. Gosh. Just Google it.

Anthony: I've heard of the show Dallas. I just don't know the character.

Sherron: Just Google it. That's all I can say.

Anthony: JR. I think that's our best resource for all generations.

Sherron: I know. I know. Wow. The invention of Google. I was driving yesterday and I thought to my myself, I was like, Oh my gosh, where would we be without GPS technology? Just getting from here to there, living in rural America, like if, yeah, I can't even imagine pre GPS days.

Anthony: I do remember that.

Sherron: Okay good.

Anthony: MapQuest and then you had to print out the MapQuest and have the maps in your car just in case the MapQuest directions were leading you down the wrong path, you still had maps in your car to help you navigate where you were going.

Sherron: Yeah.

Anthony: Yeah.

Sherron: I have an Atlas. It's in my trunk.

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Anthony: I do not.

Sherron: A big Rand, is it Rand or Rand McNally Atlas or something like that?

Anthony: Yes, yes.

Sherron: It's still in my trunk in my emergency stuff, which you know what? You probably don't have a little crate in your trunk with emergency stuff because you have a cell phone.

Anthony: I actually do. So there's some things that my parents shared with me, one of them being one of those emergency kits in the event, it's actually a really nice one too. It has tools. It has a flashlight, has an emergency triangle in the event that I need to stop off the road.

Sherron: Okay, right.

Anthony: So that is something that I do carry with me in my car at all times, in my trunk.

Sherron: I don't feel so old having the little pink crate full of antifreeze and oil and a Rand McNally roadmap.

Anthony: But I don't have a map. I don't have a map though, surprisingly. No.

Sherron: All right. Okay. So there you have it. Generation X meets millennial. Is that what you said you are?

Anthony: Meets millennial. Yeah. So I think for me, when I think about significant events, definitely the invention of the cell phone. I remember when my sister and my mom still had black cell phones that were not flip. This is pre, so I actually remember this because my sister had the very first color cell phone in the early 2000s and it was by a company called Nextel.

Sherron: I remember Nextel.

Anthony: The walkie-talkie, the beep, beep.

Sherron: Oh beepers?

Anthony: Yeah, the beepers. So, so my sister had a beeper and then I remember she upgraded to the very first color cell phone, which was Motorola.

Sherron: Motorola, yup.

Anthony: Through Nextel. She had one through Nextel and I remember just being like, Oh my gosh, that's so nice. Let me see it. Thinking it was a toy right, because I was still pretty young. But yeah. So I think definitely the kind of just advancement of cell phones right, when the Razr came out, I remember that was a huge, everybody had a Razr. This is the pre iPhone era. Also the iPhone was a pretty

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significant cultural event where the iPhone really, I mean the fact that you can do so much on an iPhone now...

Sherron: On any phone, I mean...

Anthony: On any phone now, but when the iPhone came out, I mean the fact that you can listen to music, check your emails, go on the internet. And now like even just thinking about the advancements of the iPhone as well as with other devices. I mean it's literally a little computer in your pocket.

Sherron: It is, it really is.

Anthony: You can do anything. You could pay things with your phone now, you can pay things with Apple Pay or any other kind of application. I mean there's so, it's endless, the amount of opportunities. You can listen to Podcasts.

Sherron: Anthony. I'm about to blow your mind, I'm about to blow your mind.

Anthony: Uh-oh (negative).

Sherron: I'm about to blow your mind because I remember when a CD player was a big deal.

Anthony: I have CDs, I still have CDs.

Sherron: I know you have CDs-

Anthony: And cassettes as well.

Sherron: I remember when the main way to get music and entertainment was either the radio, it was, Oh dear God, I'm going to say eight track because I remember one was in my dad's car, my dad's LTD. But that's another conversation. And I remember cassette tapes and listeners out there, if you remember when Prince released Purple Rain on either the album or the 45, the actual record was purple. That was a first. And it was mind boggling like, Oh my gosh. So, and then when CDs came out, it was such a commodity to be able to have a CD player and it was all the talk about the sound quality, how much it was so much more improved over the sound quality of records. We can go on for hours about the inventions and not within our lifetimes.

Anthony: September 11th event, right? That's a millennial.

Sherron: That's another before and after landmark in our lives.

Anthony: Right. I remember where I was that day and I was in Chicago because I grew up in Chicago, so I just remember hearing a lot, the news cycle that day was just nonstop 24/7, right, about the world trade center, the towers being hit. And for me as somebody who didn't have any connections to the Northeast necessarily or anybody who worked at the world trade, I was just kind of like, okay so what?

That was as a 10 year old, because I was 10 years old when it happened. That was my mentality. Then I came home, I remember from school and my mom, she was crying like uncontrollably and it was just, she was like, I can't believe this is happening. And it wasn't until I actually went to, it happened a little bit before I went to college, but when I went to college in Connecticut, where I really understood kind of the significance of September 11th for a lot of folks in the Northeast where I went to school with a lot of people who grew up in New York or knew people who knew people, it then kind of hit me like, wow.

Anthony: Years later, even though I knew the significance of it from the politics and the fact that it was a terrorist attack and all this stuff. But to hear personal narratives for me was really like, it hit me really hard. Wow. Like this is something that particularly I think about the millennial generation. We grew up with that, and it's so, I feel like it's so ingrained and kind of like our understanding of the world now, that something like that could happen where I feel like where with other generations, they remember a world where attacks happened, but not to that extent.

Sherron: Right. It happened to a distant them. It didn't happen to us. It didn't happen to the US on US soil. And I got to tell you, I remember where I was on the day 9/11 happened. I was already living here in Ithaca. I did grow up in Long Island, so I knew a lot of people in New York and in Manhattan. But by then, luckily both my parents had retired and moved out of New York state. They're both living in Florida and also my immediate family didn't live in New York state anymore. I was the only one still living in New York state. But my one sister lives in New Jersey and she commuted into Manhattan every day to work. And when it happened, I remember I was already at work here in Ithaca and one of my coworkers came in late and she says, Oh my gosh, are you guys able to listen to the radio? You're not going to believe what happened? An airplane hit the tower and another one, two planes hit the tower or whatever she said at the time, and it just seems so farfetched, like close to impossible.

Sherron: So we were listening on the radio as much as we could throughout the work day and at the end of the day I actually, that was one of the few days I actually walked to work from where I lived in Ithaca to where I was working at the time. It was a walkable distance and I'll never forget walking home from work that day, it was warm enough where people had windows open and as I pass these homes in the downtown Ithaca area, I could hear things coming from their televisions, coming from the houses and I hadn't seen any pictures yet. This was all radio and what I'm hearing, the reports and I'm just getting more and more afraid the whole time.

Sherron: So I finally get home. It was probably about a 20 minute walk and I get home and I turn it on and I saw those images and I thought for sure this was just a really elaborate hoax. I'm like, this is not New York City. This is not the Manhattan that I knew. This is not where I went to see Cats for my 18th birthday. You know what I mean? This is not this, this is some Hollywood set. That is a landmark event in our lives and to know that there are people who are entering college today who weren't even here then, that's amazing that that was 2001 and here we are 2019,

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so 18 year olds would not have experienced that. That is stuff that's history to them and it feels like just yesterday to me. That's amazing.

Anthony: That's so true. I do think though that it's interesting that even though we come from two different generations, that we have certain events, right, that still link us and across many different generations. And I think what's important to note with any type of historical event or even cultural event, is that each generation kind of interprets it very differently. And when we enter the workplace, those particular ways in which we interpret these events, that are also then alternatively linked to how people who are part of those act in the workplace or act in their personal life. And so we'll touch upon some of these general characteristics, but then also looking beyond those characteristics, how do we communicate and collaborate and work together across those differences with each generation. So Sherron, why don't you tell us and start us off with a little bit about the traditional generation and some of the kind of characteristics that folks who are part of this generation may have.

Sherron: All right, so the traditional generation, like you said, the people who are born between 25 and 45, they were shaped by the Great Depression and World War II. The traditional generation, they prefer consistent top down management and longterm employment. They are loyal, they are self-sacrificing people. The traditional generation, they also value family and patriotism. That's what the research has shown.

Anthony: All right. And we're talking about baby boomers next, so baby boomers born between 46 and 64. Some of the defining events is really around this idea of prosperity. It was a very prosperous time when it came to the economy, 1960s youth culture and the Vietnam War. So particularly here in the US and also the impact of the war in other countries. And so some of the traditional characteristics of this generation is that they remain loyal to an organization, are idealistic, optimistic, and driven, consistent of diligent workers, which I think is very interesting note characteristic that the research has shown, value organizational power, focus on consensus building, are filled with excellent mentors, which is also another very interesting characteristic.

Sherron: Yeah, we can use that. We can use that mentorship in the workplace.

Anthony: Yes. And it's something that's been identified as a need more so than the workplace.

Sherron: All right. So for generation X, they were born between 1965 and 1976. These individuals are shaped by organizational change due to globalization and technology. It also says generation X is pessimistic and individualistic. Okay generation X, you're not looking good according to these researchers here. [inaudible 00:22:54] thing is that you are comfortable with change in diversity, but you rarely remain loyal to a company and they value personal and professional lives equally.

Anthony: When we're talking about millennials or also known as generation Y, folks of my generation were born between 1977 and 1995. Our generation or my generation

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rather, was shaped by the personal computer, economic expansion, and the uncertainty following the 9/11 attacks. So some of our characteristics defined according to the research is that we are comfortable with change and view job security as unimportant. We're also considered to be self centered and narcissistic, alienated, cynical, individualistic and self-serving, inherently social, value input into decisions and actions. Our generation is also known as having high expectations, high need for praise, difficulty with criticism, demands creative opportunities, job hops, abhors ethics scandals, and prefers casual dress. This is all according to research, and favors inclusive management.

Anthony: Moving on, we just want to mention some because we're currently in the generation of gen Z, so there's a lot of characteristics that are noteworthy to mention when it comes to generation Z, which are the folks who were born after 1995. So media consumption habits differ from previous generations, even with millennials. And so gen Z follows millennials closely. They're not entirely identical, but they do visit social media networks, devices that they can look and watch TV from, right? That's something that's very different with gen Z compared to millennials. They prefer cool products over cool experiences. This is another characteristic.

Sherron: Oh, that's loaded.

Anthony: Yeah, so that's a very interesting one. So it says, many studies have suggested that millennials are looking for great experiences but not great products. But for gen Z, that's the opposite. Expectations from the brands are higher and they differ from what millennials are looking for. So let me ask you this Sherron, around what of these characteristics stands out to you and resonates with you as somebody who is a part of your generation and which ones are kind of ones that you think are a little far reach?

Sherron: For me because I am a generation X, I don't know, I don't think I said it earlier, but I am actually 50 years old. So I was born in 1968 and I know for sure that I am independent and self sufficient. That's one of the things that they said about generation X and I always thought it was because that's just how I was raised. Like I said, I have a large family and one of the things that I remember, my mom was always saying the most independent you can ever be is if you're completely self sufficient. So those are the one of the things that stand out for me that I find to be absolutely true for me and my experience in the world.

Sherron: And at the same time I am somewhat comfortable with change, but at the same time I am loyal to a company. I've been with Cornell University whether at corporate or extension or here on campus since 2003 and that's a loyalty that doesn't happen as much anymore. And it makes me very nervous when a friend tells me that they're leaving their employment to start their own business. And I don't know, I can't give up a shore thing for maybe that's just not how I'm wired. So that's, I guess I'm hardcore generation X that way.

Anthony: Yeah. And meanwhile I'm listening to you and I'm like, well, you leave the job if the job isn't working for you.

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Sherron: I mean, yeah, that's true. But if it is working, make it work, you know, do what you got to do to stay where you are.

Anthony: Yeah. When I look at the list for generation Y or millennials, the ones that really put me off guard the most are the ones about being alienated, cynical, high expectations, high need for praise, like there's, I feel like there's just so much talk about millennials being this kind of pest in the workplace, right? Of just needing so much, wanting so much. I do think that we're extremely comfortable with insecurity. I think that's a characteristic that for me, growing up in this generation, especially after September 11th and just seeing all the changes that have happened politically, socially speaking, and especially with the advent of technology and the iPhone, I mean it's every year now, we expect a new Apple device to come out. Right?

Anthony: And so that's just part of I think, something that I expect now. And that's something that the company has also put as like a standard, right? For technologies to kind of keep up to date with everything. And inclusive management, I think that's definitely a characteristic of my generation. But I don't think everyone is kind of going along with it too. I think there are still people who are resistant to it.

Sherron: Oh you're definitely going to find some people who are zealots for the style of existing, and then they're going to be people who resist it. So I think in every generation you're going to have people who absolutely are spot on as they are described in this research. And then there are people who are nothing like that. So I think it's really interesting. And you know what, I'm also, I was thinking about as you were talking, is all this research that exists today, what they're saying about boomers and the silent generation and things like that, I am really curious if any research was done before this? Like if there were research done in 1980s about what the previous generations were, how the research even varies in terms of characteristics of that generation. Does that make sense?

Anthony: Yeah. Yeah.

Sherron: Because I feel like a lot of this research is so new, like was anybody even researching it back then?

Anthony: Well, I think part of it, the advent of it, I think came about as a result of understanding the different dynamics that take place in the workplace. And one of those, aside from age, aside from race, and all these other identities is the generation in which we grew up in. And so I think for me it just brings up this interesting question of how do we work across these differences knowing that these characteristics exist? And also as you mentioned too, just because we're a part of these generations and just because there are characteristics attributed to our generation doesn't limit us to only these characteristics, right?

Sherron: Absolutely.

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Anthony: Our lived experiences play a role. Our identities. You talked about responsibility, how it matures us, right? What would you recommend to people about how do we look across generation?

Sherron: Well, for me, the answer to all of that is almost always going to be communication. It's just I'm asking for what you want. I'm a huge advocate for asking for what I want with the footnote of knowing I may not get it, but at least I put it out there, this is what I want. And I think that allowing people to be who they are and be in the workspace the way they need to be, I think that's most beneficial because you'll get the most out of the person when they are comfortable.

Anthony: I think for me, a large part of it, it's stems from this understanding that because people are from different generations, that they're, yes that they're different, but that there aren't going to be any similarities, right? So I think the way we started this conversation about talking about a historical event and then we both shared our experiences about where we were when September 11th happened. That's a common ground-

Sherron: Right, it is.

Anthony: For really establishing a conversation-

Sherron: Except you didn't know who JR is, but.

Anthony: Well, that was a cultural event specific to your generation, right?

Sherron: Yes.

Anthony: But yet there are still certain events and anything that also applies to how we view workplace dynamics too. That there are certain things that, when we look at policies or we look at options such as working remotely and things like that, that keep us grounded in why it is that we're here. Why is that we're doing this work regardless of age. And so I think looking sometimes beyond some of those assumptions that we may carry or even biases too. Some people may have really heavy biases. I know sometimes I carry a bias when it comes to older folks that they may not be technologically literate. And then sometimes when I see somebody working in technology who is older than me, who is telling me how to use something, I'm like, Oh wow.

Sherron: Check your bias.

Anthony: Got to check my bias, my unconscious bias, right? Around what assumptions I carry based off of people's age, people's generation and making sure that I don't discriminate, right, as well because that's technically a policy 6.4 violation and protected status, all of that stuff. But aside from that, it's also just to help foster an inclusive workplace and help foster this sense of belonging and understanding that there are biases that I carry when it comes to working with certain generations and people of a certain age. But how do I look beyond that, right?

And how do I look at the person as a whole and looking at even just some values that we carry around respect and integrity and communication, right, as another value that I personally really value. So how do I continue to value that in a team with people who work across different generations who may prefer different styles of communication, right? But still acknowledge and respect that.

Anthony: If in the workplace you limit the opportunities that you give to your team or your organization based off of those assumptions, then that can also be a reason why somebody leaves, why somebody doesn't stay. So just also being aware and understanding that professional development opportunities are available. And if a staff member or if somebody says, they want to increase their competency, say in technology, regardless of age, it's like being open to those kinds of opportunities as well. And so I think also just not limiting professional development opportunities but opening them up and expanding them for everybody in your organization to take a part of.

Sherron: And as the individual it is, some of the onus is on us also to seek out some things, to go ahead and get curious about what is out there for you. So as an individual with an organization as large as Cornell, it is really important to get out there and get curious and see where the opportunities are that you can ask some questions and get some experiences in other areas.

Anthony: And I think that's where the nice kind of thing specific to Cornell is that we have the experiential development opportunities, the EDOs, where staff members can take a part of it and gets to explore a different part of campus that they don't necessarily have familiar, maybe work experience in or they want to kind of become more curious on. That's I think one of the opportunities presented here at Cornell that I think really allows people to explore that side of what does the transactional piece of HR look like? Or of another part of campus? And so different organizations have different resources, but it's nice to know, I know for me as somebody who came on new recently to know that that was an opportunity in the future during my time here to be able to take advantage of.

Sherron: And then in addition to that, if you know that somebody has been here for a while and they're maybe thinking about retirement and you just got here, maybe have some lunches and just learn about the history that this person may have in the area because they've been in the department for a period of time and you're brand new. Maybe there's some kind of formal or informal mentoring that can happen. You as a new person can learn from the person with more experience and vice versa. You're going to be bringing things into the workplace that a person who has been here for a long time may not have considered, so you're opening that person's eyes as well. It's a two way street.

Anthony: That institutional knowledge. I always, that's one of the first things I do.

Sherron: Priceless.

Anthony: That's the one of the first things I do when I start a new job is I look at the people who have that knowledge and say, Hey, I'm new, I'm curious, I would love to get to know you as an individual more in your experience here at Cornell, but also

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you as a person and kind of what shapes you, what interests you, what keeps you motivated at work, right? And so I think there's always something to learn across generations.

Anthony: So as you've heard, there are definitely many different ways in which we can approach how we communicate and how we work with people across different generations. So I think definitely the most important takeaway is to acknowledge that there are differences, to understand what those differences may be, and then to making sure that you connect people with the resources that are available to them across different generations and making sure that you're also not limiting those opportunities based off of age and generations because that is typically considered a bias. And we don't want to make anyone feel uncomfortable or unwelcome or not feel that sense of belonging here at Cornell, which is what we're striving to achieve each and every day.

Sherron: Thank you all 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 this episode. Also, if you or a fellow colleague would like to be interviewed for an upcoming episode, please email us at ie-academy@cornell.edu. That's 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.

Sherron: And a special shout out and thank you to Bert Odom-Reed, our sound engineer from the Cornell broadcast studio for making us sound wonderful each and every episode.

Anthony: Thank you Bert.

Sherron: Thanks.