



Episode #1: DEI at Legacy (1/3)

Host: Jonathan Stephens

Guests: Tae-Sun Kim, Simone Carter

**Jonathan:**

Hello. We are here.

I'm not sure if you've  
heard, either on front page  
or just word of mouth, but Legacy Health  
has a podcast by the name  
of Engaging Our People.  
Today, I'll be the host.  
We have more of a rotating host set up.  
I'm Jonathan Stephens.  
I'm the host for this episode.  
I work in the marketing department.  
I am a creative project manager,  
and I've been with Legacy  
for almost seven years.

**Tae-Sun:**

Hello, I'm Tae-Sun Kim. I'm Legacy's inaugural  
Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer,  
and I've been here  
now about nine months.

**Simone:**

And hello everyone, my name is Simone Carter  
and I'm the DEI Program Manager  
and I've been at Legacy  
Health for 24 years.

**Jonathan:**

Cool deal. Well, if either one of you can break down what DEI is, or what the purpose of the work that you do and why it's important to Legacy, or maybe just like kind of give an intro to the folks of the type of work you do and what DEI stands for.

**Tae-Sun:**

Sure. So DEI, the acronym, stands for diversity, equity and inclusion. And all of those letters have very discrete definitions attached to them. But in general for Legacy, and I would say in healthcare generally, diversity is usually focusing on the importance of a diverse workforce and a recognition that our patient population is also very diverse. Meaning we are not monolithic, there is no standard history or context that can be "one size fits all," so to speak. And that diversity is something that is rich and valuable and not necessarily a problem to be fixed. Equity, that is a concept that people and conditions and treatment is based equally across populations. And that if there isn't that equality, that every effort is being made so that that kind of equity is created and those conditions are created across diverse populations. Inclusion is really focusing on process and culture of an organization so that, you know, you could technically have a

diverse workforce, for example,  
but certain peoples in that workforce  
might not actually feel or know that  
they're not included  
in decision making.  
They are not included  
in the room when important decisions and  
processes are considered,  
or they don't feel included  
in terms of their experiences  
as fitting into the  
mission of an organization.  
So inclusion is one of those principles  
that really have to do with the way  
that we actually treat people  
and how those people feel about  
being a part of the organization.

**Jonathan:**

I appreciate that, that information. Simone, did you  
have anything to speak to  
just in regards to DEI itself  
or why the work is important?

**Simone:**

Yeah. I can just, you know, talk about my work as  
a DEI program manager, and what I manage at the  
areas in Legacy Health.

**Jonathan:**

Okay.

**Simone:**

The areas that I manage in Legacy Health  
is diverse employee groups such as  
the employee resource groups,  
also known as ERG groups.  
I also manage the emergency  
food support program  
for our employees, and I assist  
in the bilingual competency program.  
And I also do individual

confidential consultations  
in the area of workplace harassment,  
bullying, and discrimination.  
So, as you can see, Jonathan,  
that's a full platter, right?

**Jonathan:**

I've known you for quite a while  
since I've been here and I didn't even know,  
until now, I have not known  
everything that you do.  
And just hearing you say that,  
you wear many hats and you do much.  
Is it accurate to say that you two  
are the first DEI officers to serve  
in this capacity  
at Legacy?

**Simone:**

Oh, oh no Jonathan, that's  
not the case at all.  
It actually dates back to 2010 when  
Sheila Murty was the Director of Human Resources.  
She actually formed the  
Diversity Advisory Council,  
which is also known  
as the DAC Council.  
And she also formed the  
employee resource groups at that time.  
During that time she  
mentored Pamela Witherspoon.  
I'm sure you all remember Pamela  
when she was here at Legacy Health.  
Pamela was a community  
relations specialist.  
And Miss Sheila Murty actually  
mentored Pamela during that time,  
when Pamela was in that role.  
Fast forward, Pamela became the first  
black Employee Resource Chair  
for the Black Employee  
Resource Group.

She also, believe it or not, was the first DEI program manager.

**Jonathan:**

Yeah, I remember that. Because she got that role like, just before she left Legacy, I believe. Actually her office was right in that corner right there.

**Simone:**

Exactly. Yes.

**Jonathan:**

Yeah no, and not to go too far back, but you mentioned Sheila and you said something about a DAC?

**Simone:**

Yes, yes.

**Jonathan:**

So, what is a DAC?

**Simone:**

So the Diversity Advisory Council was a, or is a, council that actually set precedents for DEI work within the organization.

The members of the council came, basically, there was some management up, there were the chairs and co-chairs from the ERG groups that sat at the DAC council. And that's kind of where all the DEI work, actually the framework, came from that council there.

**Jonathan:**

Wow. Interesting. Thank you for that information.

**Tae-Sun:**

I'm really glad that Simone shared that context because often time, there is this perception that when a DEI department or a chief diversity officer is hired, that it is at that point that DEI work is beginning. And that's rarely the case. There are folks that have been doing this difficult, challenging work even before the acronym DEI was even a thing. And so I'm just really glad that in preparation for this podcast, that Simone and I were able to reach back and interview Pamela. And I had spoken to Sheila quite a few months back when I got here, knowing that I couldn't have possibly been the first person to do this work.

**Jonathan:**

Yeah, yeah. No, I'm glad that you did do that, because history, all of that stuff is good. Just for like context. Because again, I didn't know her. I thought Pam was the first and the only that had ever done anything DEI-wise at Legacy, so definitely good to know. So how did we get here? If we had these two individuals driving DEI work in 2015, why do we need a Chief Diversity Officer, a DEI program manager, and if I'm not mistaken, you have like, three additional team members that you're bringing on, correct?

**Tae-Sun**

That is correct. Thank you for asking that question.

You know, a little bit more context here, you know, chief diversity officer positions are relatively new in terms of healthcare, even in executive positions at organizations.

I, myself, have had a lot of experience with diversity officers in higher education and I'd like to think that that's an area that has really incubated this executive position, and has done quite a bit in order to restructure and just change the culture of higher educational institutions that were not prepared to have such a diversity of college students and faculty so it's really quite exciting work.

But in healthcare, although there were CDO positions throughout the nation and healthcare and hospital systems, it really wasn't until the murder of George Floyd, plus the COVID-19 pandemic that really kind of escalated the need for many of these healthcare systems to create, or elevate, DEI work so that they would hire a Chief Diversity Officer. I myself was not in Portland in 2020.

So I want to just kind of turn it over here to Simone, where she can share a little bit about how all of the things, very, very similar things that were happening here in Portland and the crucial conversations that were happening

at Legacy helped to even  
create the portfolio  
that we have. Which  
yes, includes additional  
team members that  
we'll be bringing on.

**Jonathan:**

Right on.

**Simone:**

Yeah. Thank you, Tae-Sun.  
In 2020, there was a lot of different  
things going on in the city of Portland.  
Not just in the city of Portland and state and  
actually across the United States, right-  
due to the murder  
of George Floyd,  
I should say in reaction to  
the murder of George Floyd.  
In the city of Portland,  
we saw a lot of protesting.  
You know, a lot of the  
Black Lives Matter movement,  
had kind of took its form and was a lot of base  
of a lot of protesting that we saw during that time.  
However, you know, you've  
seen a lot of folks taking,  
when I say folks, organizations, large and small,  
taking a stand against racism publicly.  
And that's something we had  
never saw prior to 2020.  
It was amazing to see actually.  
It was very, very clear during that time  
that silence was  
not an option.  
You know, you had to either  
speak against racism, or not. Right?  
So in June, also,  
Legacy's Health President,  
she actually sent a email  
out to the organization  
that stated that Legacy  
condemned racism.



And that was a  
huge, huge thing.

**Jonathan:**

Yeah. That was very huge,  
I remember that.

**Simone:**

You were there, you know,  
do you remember  
that email?

**Jonathan:**

Yeah, I remember because things  
had happened prior to that.  
So I wasn't here when like,  
Trayvon Martin, or you know,  
but the George Floyd,  
this wasn't the first time  
that something like  
this had happened.  
And out of any time that  
I've seen that happen  
while I was at Legacy or  
just any kind of like,  
police brutality, it was one of those  
things that just wasn't spoken about.  
Like, you come to work, you know,  
you do your job, you go home.  
But, you know, political things  
like that, we didn't really discuss.  
So for Catherine, you  
know, at the top of the top  
to send a very clear message to everyone  
that this type of behavior will not be tolerated,  
you know, and things like that.  
To me, I felt, as a person of color that works for Legacy,  
I felt empowered, I felt seen, I just felt like I mattered.  
Whereas I feel like before, that was something that I  
would just have to kind of  
keep to myself and, you know,  
speak with my wife about  
when I got home or, you know,  
one of those kind of things.

But I didn't feel like it was a conversation to have at work until Catherine sent that email.

**Simone:**

Yeah. That email was very powerful.

I, as you share your reflection,

I reflect back to, you

know, the BERG leadership,

the Black Employee Resource

Group, which I am co-chair of.

And during that time, I

remember us having discussion

around the email and we

really appreciated seeing

our leadership take

that formal stand.

However we felt they

could have did more.

Right? Something more

needed to be done.

And I think that's the time when we,

when I say we, the chairs and the co-chairs

of the Black Employee Resource Group,

we kind of sat back and identified

the climate and what was

going on in our community.

You know, 'cause during that

time, a lot of black folks

in our community, they were

experiencing generational grief.

You know, because as

you said and stated,

that George Floyd's murder

was not the first murder that we experienced

in our community.

You know, this is

something that we've seen

year after year after

year after year. You know?

And so the generational grief was real

during that time, in the black community.

And so being a co-chair of

BERG, I was very fortunate,

and we were very fortunate,

to be able to lean on one another.  
And I think that's why ERGs are so  
important because you can come together  
and share your  
experiences, right?  
And in a safe place, right?  
And so that's what we did, you know,  
the leaders of BERG,  
we shared our grief  
with one another, right.  
However, during that time  
of reflection and sharing, we thought about  
the other black employees at Legacy. You know?  
And if we were experiencing generational grief,  
many of them had to be, right?  
And so that's when we reached  
out to Legacy's leadership  
and said, "We're experiencing  
generational grief  
and we know black employees  
are, and we need to do more.  
We need to check in on them  
and see how they're doing.  
We need to line up  
our actions with  
our organization's mission and our patients,  
our community, our employees, in good health.  
And right now your black  
employees are not in good health.  
So we requested to host an event,  
and the event we named it Take a Knee.  
And the Take a Knee event consisted  
that we all come together in unity  
and stand collectively  
against racism.  
So our leadership, they  
supported the event.  
The event- and I believe you  
actually attended the event, Jonathan?

**Jonathan:**

Oh yeah, yeah. I was there.

**Simone:**

You know, we started  
off in the atrium.  
There was supposed to be one location  
in the atrium at Legacy Emanuel.  
And we were all going to  
collectively come together as one,  
all employees who wanted to  
participate. It was optional.  
And we would stand and take a knee  
for eight minutes and 46 seconds.  
And in the flyer, I remember, we were talking, we  
were grafting the flyer  
and I was saying to the  
co-leads and the chairs of BERG,  
What if you can't take a knee?  
I got a bad right knee.  
But I want to participate, right?  
And so I think it was either  
Vicky or Melody who said,  
oh, well, that's easy.  
We'll just put it on the flyer.  
You know, hey, if you  
want to sit down in a chair  
for eight minutes and  
46 seconds, that's fine.  
If you want to bow your head  
for that time period, it's fine.  
If you want to lift your  
fists, that's fine.  
So I thought, oh yeah, that's cool.  
That covers everybody right?  
So we put that on the flyer.  
So it was interesting how it took off  
because the word got out  
about Legacy Health.  
The word got out and it was interesting  
because one location in the atrium  
and one day in June at noon at one location,  
turned to all Legacy Health locations  
and people participated  
system-wide.

**Jonathan:**

Did you see the photos? So there were,

and not to cut you off, there were photos.  
You know, sometimes Legacy Health, they have  
the screen savers or the kind of come up?  
Well they had photos of everyone's  
Take a Knee event at the different sites.  
And that was like, the  
screensaver for a little while.  
But I don't know if  
you've seen that or not.

**Tae-Sun**

No, but I would love-

**Jonathan:**

Yeah, yeah, it was beautiful.  
I mean, 'cause it was just like,  
right after that one at  
Emanuel, just boom, boom.  
Like every site, clinics,  
just all system-wide.  
I wish I was over at Yammer then, 'cause  
then I would've been, you know,  
sending those pictures  
out that way just so  
everybody throughout the system  
could see just how impactful it was.

**Simone:**

Oh, that's amazing. I didn't get a chance  
to see that, I would love to see that.

**Jonathan:**

Yeah, I have to see who was responsible for that, I'll  
try to find those photos.  
Because that is, I mean  
that's something that we  
could even bring up you know,  
at an event or, you know,  
just, it's a historical powerful  
moment that I feel like,  
could be used for  
educational purposes.

**Tae-Sun:**

Absolutely.

**Jonathan:**

that Legacy has had.

**Simone:**

And I mean, that Legacy

Health has, right, the growth?

But that's part of our legacy. You know, that moment, that event, that Take the Knee event, so.

I would love to see

those photos.

So fast forward, I got to give you a lot of information in a short period of time, Jonathan.

But fast forward, you know, after the Take a Knee event,

it was more than

just take the knee.

That was an opportunity for some black employees, like myself and Melanie, to share our personal experiences working at Legacy Health.

And it was also a time, again, that we asked everyone to stand in unity for the Take the Knee event.

And then the last thing

at the end of the event,

we wrapped it up with a

call to action, right?

We requested that all leaders within Legacy Health check in on their black employees.

Because they were hurting. And I remember

sharing with the group in the atrium

that they needed to understand that

many black employees were experiencing

the generational grief and

they actually felt like

there was a knee

on their necks.

And that's why it was

important to check on them.

You know?

To reach out and touch them, so.

**Jonathan:**

And that, I do appreciate that, too, because like right after that communication had went out, I had several people on my team in the marketing department just ask how I was doing. And you'd be surprised how that question can really make a person feel included or cared about.

**Simone:**

Yeah

So then the BERG, again, you know, as we shared our grief and we worked through that time and that season, we felt that we really needed to go beyond that and we needed to go personally and check in on the black employees at Legacy Health. So we went back to leadership and said, you know, we need to host listening sessions. We need to provide a safe place for our black employees to come together if they choose to and be able to share their experiences and what they were feeling at that time. And so they did. Initially we hosted two listening sessions, which turned into four listening sessions. We gleaned information from the listening sessions and we shared them with Legacy leadership. And upon sharing what we gleaned from the listening sessions we provided recommendations as well.

**Jonathan:**

And I remember, not to  
go too deep into it,  
but I remember the listening sessions  
and I remember during that period  
I learned a lot just about  
Legacy employees in general  
because, and more  
specifically, black employees,  
because at those listening sessions,  
it was all black employees.  
It was a safe space so that you didn't have  
to feel like you couldn't speak up or-,  
and a lot of people felt more comfortable  
speaking with other folks that I feel like  
they had like,  
similar stories with.  
And you'd be surprised, like  
as one person would speak,  
then another person would  
be prompted to speak.  
And by the time we got to  
the end of the session,  
we were almost running  
over time for the session  
because so many people  
had something to say.  
A lot of people realized that  
they had been experiencing  
some of the same things,  
even though they work  
in a different unit or  
at a different building.  
And so, just that connection  
and being able to connect  
with other people, I feel  
kind of trickled over  
into the BERG employee  
resource group attendance.  
Because for employees who don't  
have other people of color  
or even other people that look  
like them in their work area,  
they feel more appreciated  
when they're able



to come and connect with folks,  
even if it's just in the BERG meeting,  
and speak about their experience, how work is  
going. Just check in with folks.  
But again, sorry, I didn't mean to-

**Simone:**

No, no, that's what the listening sessions  
were for, you know? It was-  
They were well checks, you know?  
And they were well checks done by people  
that looked like the people  
that we were checking on.  
And so I felt honored to be a part of that  
and I still do then, and I do now.  
And I think it really helped a lot  
of people, black employees, get through  
that dark time in  
our community.

**Jonathan:**

Very much so. Very much so.  
It helped me for sure.

**Simone:**

Yeah. So let's fast  
forward to the good stuff.

**Jonathan:**

Oh yeah.  
With the listening sessions, what was the result or  
what happened after that?

**Simone:**

So the information we gleaned from the  
listening sessions, we put it all into a report,  
a PowerPoint presentation actually.  
And we presented it to  
Legacy's leadership.  
And at that time we also presented  
some recommendations  
based on the information  
that we learned from  
the listening sessions.

And then fast forward, we hear the news that Legacy's leadership had decided to hire a Chief Diversity Officer, which actually shocked us all. You know, because that was definitely a big move for our organization considering we didn't have anyone officially doing DEI work outside of the ERG groups.

**Jonathan:**

But was-, so was that a part of you all's recommendations? Like when you said you sent some recommendations to leadership, was that?

**Simone:**

Yeah, well, BERG's recommendation was a director in that role and what shocked us was leadership came back with a Chief Diversity Officer position. Right? And then following that, shortly after, Tae-Sun Kim was hired as a chief diversity officer and we were all over the top excited. A little while after that, her hiring transpired, she notified the organization that she would be hiring four additional staff and it would be a department.

**Jonathan:**

Oh, one quick question. You may have already answered it, but what's the difference, and either one of you can answer, between having a director that does DEI work versus a CDO?

**Simone:**

I'll let you go ahead and answer that..

**Tae-Sun:**

Sure!

So the CDO position here is at the vice presidential level, right? And so what that means is that you are at the table when decisions are being made about strategy, about employees, about the resources that you need. So you have not only the visibility, and some would say the authority, to do this work, I'm also sharing this information with other leaders in a very systematic way rather than a haphazard reactionary type of way.

**Jonathan:**

Gotcha.

Thank you for explaining that.

On part two of "Engaging Our People."

**Tae-Sun:**

The organization, in general, was broadly in support of us being a diversity, equity and inclusion-focused organization with an aspiration to be anti-racist in whatever way that we could. At the same time, there was also a lot of confusion about what it would mean. What are the goals? What are the metrics to ensure that we are a diversity, equity and inclusion-focused organization?

**Jonathan:**

This is your host, Jonathan Stevens, signing off

on the first episode of Engaging Our People.  
Stay tuned for part two of this conversation