



Episode #2: DEI at Legacy (2/3)

Host: Jonathan Stephens

Guests: Tae-Sun Kim, Simone Carter

Jonathan:

Welcome back to
Engaging Our People.
I'm your host for this
episode, Jonathan Stephens.
We were just talking with Tae-Sun and Simone
about the Take A Knee event.
Let's continue the conversation
with Tae-Sun and Simone
as they get into their team and
their roles here at Legacy Health.

Jonathan:

So, Tae-Sun, with the announcement
of your role, you being a part of Legacy,
what happened after
you joined the team?

Tae-Sun:

Yeah. So, President
Correia had asked me
to spend the next 100
days in observation mode,
and that's exactly what I did,
in addition to other things.
And within that time I reviewed existing
documents of what we knew,
for example, all of documents about
the DAC, about the ERG work.
I also received the recommendations
and the notes from the listening sessions.
I also gathered as much
data that we had

that could be considered
diversity, equity, and inclusion data,
for example, turnover and hiring data
for diverse workforces,
looking at health equity
reports and tools that we had.

And then also going on
my own listening tours
with DEI champions, who are
providers and employees,
meeting all of the
chairs of the ERGs.

So, I felt pretty good
that I did my due diligence
in observing within
the hundred days.

And then I made some observations
with this source material,
and some of those observations included:
number one, that broadly speaking,
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?

I looked at the data, and we actually had quite a
bit of DEI and anti-racism data,
but some of it was incomplete.

A lot of it was under-analyzed,
and the data that we did have that was quite
telling was just not broadly made available
and interpreted for leaders to do
anything actionable about it.

A lot of the listening sessions with DEI champions
and ERG members, especially employees
and providers of color, is
that there was a lot of concern

that some of our hiring and promotion processes were biased. And that's something that they had experienced quite a bit of. There was also a recognition, for example, that there's a lot of racial bias and violence towards our providers and employees and confusion about how exactly to report them, because there's inconsistent reporting and experiences from doing that. There was also broad recognition that once we do know the areas that we can improve upon, whether it's in hiring, promotion, culture work, eliminating health disparities in our various locations, that we need to train employees quite regularly as well as providing the kind of DEI competency materials that all employee groups should have easy accessible access to. So with all of that, I went ahead and shared that with our leadership, our board, with President Correia. And the good news was ,they're like, "Yeah, that sounds about right." Yeah. Very good. What we were suspecting, you have been able to confirm. And so, the long and short of it is that the four FTEs that I was eventually approved for represents individuals and skill sets that will specifically focus on these observation points that I was able to make.

Jonathan:

Wow-.

Simone:

During that time, a lot of different folks
from different departments,
and they really wanted to know,
they wanted to see the direction
they wanted to see the footsteps
of Legacy's leadership, right?
And it wasn't formulated to where they
could do that, right until you came.
And so I think this program, this
podcast with me sharing how it began
from George Floyd because
that's a historical email
that everybody, that's really
what got it going. Right?
But everybody did not
participate in the Take The Knee.
And everyone that participated
in the Take The Knee
didn't understand
what happened after.
So, this podcast is going
to give them the journey
of what happened after and how we
end up with the DEI department. Right?
And so, that's
what I was thinking
in the back of my mind when
we were working on this because BERG had,
we were just flooded with
emails and phone calls
about check-ins, check-ins,
check-ins, and what can I do?
You had folks just feeling guilty
about their white privilege
and gimme something to read.
I need to clean myself and go get
baptized just so I get clean. Right?
And then we were working with leadership
and we can only share so much.
Because we wanted
to be very careful
because BERG knew that

this was the first time
that we were at the
table on this level
that could make movement
for black employees,
which really helps all employees, right?
At the end, then go.
Anyway, because everybody's happy.
Black employees are happy.
All employees are happy.
If you have people on your team not happy, then
you can't have a good cohesiveness
within the environment.
The work environment.
So anyway, so I think
this right here, Jonathan,
this podcast is going
to give the listeners
the rest of the story
that they never knew.
All the different steps that happened
after the Take The Knee event.
And how leadership
supported this.
If I was leadership, I'd be
off the top to hear this going.
Seriously- Because in the
culture of Legacy,
prior to BERG being able to
sit at the table with them was,
they don't even know who we are.
They ain't going to do nothing.
I mean, talk to who? You know what
I'm saying? It was like that, right?
And the recommendations
we shared with them
was based on what we
heard from the people.

Tae-Sun:

Well, what I like is you
gave the recommendation
and the leadership did something
you were actually not expecting.

Simone:

Exactly.

Tae-Sun:

They went above and
beyond what you asked for.

Simone:

Exactly. And we were shocked.
We really were shocked about that.
We was like, What you
saying? We got to what?
Now let's get a good one. Because again,
we didn't want window dressing
and we didn't want to settle.

Jonathan:

-That was my fear.
My biggest fear was, do not hire somebody.

Simone :

-Just because they looked like us.
You know what I'm saying?
Or from the
Brown community
and then that's all good and
they're not going to come in
and have the
crucial conversations
because we've had a whole lot of those.
So, that's why we were sitting.
That's where it's always
been a huge disconnect within our organization.

Tae-Sun:

-Well, and that is in itself
another podcast, right?

Simone :

-Sure. It is.
Because you came on
the scene, honey,
when I first was in the

first meeting with you,
I said, Oh my goodness,
this one right here. She, yes!

Tae-Sun:

-Yeah.

And the good news is,
and I say this all the time,
I'm like, if you hired a VP of
diversity, equity, inclusion,
but I'm also a really,
really good data person.
I'm also somebody who really
understands health equity.
I'm also an anthropologist,
so I understand culture of
fear, culture of engagement.
I also feel very, very
comfortable going out
to our diverse communities
because I'm from Portland.
And that's not a problem for me.
I'm not intimidated or worried,
if I get invited
to a town hall
where people are really really
upset like what Legacy did.
I'm not really
intimidated by that.
So, just like with Simone,
yeah, she is a DEI program manager,
but she's also somebody who
has trust in the organization.
We were just talking, I think
Megan, when you first came on
and we were talking about if the
food and security program for patients
and employees takes off, you already said,
Well, are you plugged in with
our Black Farmer's Network?
And she's like, I didn't
even know we had one.
So, the organization gets so much more
than just the DEI title in us.

We are exceptionally competent
in a variety of areas
whether it's nurse
training, whether it-
even our EEO and
restorative justice officer,
yeah, he will be coming in
and really helping us identify
harassment and discrimination
when it happens.
But he's also a
great trainer,
so that when you're a new
employee, he helps you,
he's going to change the way
we do mandatory education
so that all new employees are told,
oh this is our standard.
This is how you report
harassment and discrimination.
And if you're too new and
you're afraid to share this
with your boss, you come to me.
So, we're able to get the new folks
as well as build trust with
those within the organization
that have always been afraid
to report things, right?
Everybody in my portfolio,
everyone in our department,
we are just experts in more
than just DEI, which is great.

Simone:

One of the things we gleaned
from the listening session
and it just ringed
out really loud,
and as you shared, Jonathan, you had participated
in one of them, was having a safe place.
Having a safe place to
share their experiences.
And that's something that black
employees at Legacy did not have.

And it was really important
on who they shared their
experience with, right?
Someone that looked like them,
someone that came from the
community they came from, right?
And so, I think our department,
who I know from my
experience at Legacy Health
in co-chair the black
employee resource groups,
and really having my pulse on interacting
with co-black employees
that this department is very crucial,
because that's what it is. It's that safe place.
That doesn't represent
authority, leadership,
I'm going to get in trouble,
there's going to be retaliation.
Our department is a place where
they can come and share it and feel safe to do so.

Tae-Sun:

-And what I would also add is
it's really, really important to me,
and I've said this to Simone many
times and I'm going to repeat it.
My department, which is very new,
I want us to model what a
department of at least five, right?
We are a department of five,
where we are so diverse, right?
And yet we do really
stressful work
and we can do that and
still care for each other.

Jonathan:

-Oh, yeah.

Tae-Sun:

Be highly effective and we're not assimilating
to any kind of single culture
where we can still maintain our diversity

and not be at each other's throat,
not be unethical, not be abusive.
I want to model the way for us.
And so, a lot of times we talk about
how black employees don't feel safe
about addressing the
topics that concerns them.
There's also white employees
and white supervisors now
that are afraid
to say,

Simone:

-Yes

Tae-Sun:

I didn't know
I did that.
I don't even know what I don't know.
I have been so ignorant all my life
and now it's not okay.
And so, I'm afraid that I'm so behind.
So I want everyone on my team,
when I say this is a safe place,
we are a department where our white colleagues
and leaders can also feel safe.

Simone:

-Exactly

Tae-Sun:

Talking to us and confiding in us
and knowing we're not going to shame them
or embarrass them, or
you know what I mean.

Everybody learns at their own pace.
But what we value is that
you have a love for learning
and we are going
to encourage it.
We are not going to shame anybody
because they don't know the right words
or the right authors or the right movies.

Simone:

-Yes

Tae-Sun:

And it's not just
white employees,
but I think they're the ones
they are in the majority.
And so oftentimes,
they will learn about their bias.
They will know that
something has been done
in a way that perpetuates
in-group bias.
And then they will,
rather than figuring it
out on their own, doing
their own research,
especially if you're a leader,
if you're a leader,
you should be able to
very quickly understand,
okay, where did I go wrong?
And how do I fix it?
But then oftentimes what they'll do
is they'll go to a person of color
who doesn't even have as
much power as they do,
and ask them to fix it
or to help them, right?
Even though it's their job.
And they're usually in a
higher leadership role.
And so then oftentimes what'll happen
is minoritized groups
will say, but that...
They'll get upset, and rightfully so.
Or they will feel exploited.
And so, that's where kind of the fear is
where the white leader will be like,
Oh my gosh, I stepped in it and again.
I didn't realize.
Oftentimes, they will

think the recognition
of what they have
been doing incorrectly
is in itself very
humbling, right?
Only to find out that even
in their seeking of help,
they may have also
reinforced their dominance.
And so there is this concern
that I know so little
I'm going to hurt somebody or
I'm going to upset someone.
And then they do.
They do.
And so they almost need kind
of the safe place to fall.
We like to call it
a DEI consultation.

Simone:

-Yes. Yes.

Tae-Sun:

They will call on us.
We will ask them to share with us
what is the problem that you
would like for us to help you with today.
And then they start peeling the layers
and that's when we perform our magic.
Help them feel
comfortable sharing
what they think they may
have done that created upset or inequality.
And then we help kind
of dissect what happened
and how they can repair
some of the harm,
in either an interpersonal
way or in a systematic way.

On part three of
Engaging Our People.

Simone:

This was the first time that our
organization actually utilized the ERG groups.
Prior to that, our
upper leadership,
I don't know if they even
knew what ERG groups were,
but this was the turning point
for the visibility and the importance
that ERG groups share in
the fabric of Legacy Health.

Jonathan:

This is your host, Jonathan Stephens,
signing off on the second part
from the first episode
of Engaging Our People.
Stay tuned for part three of this conversation
with Simone and Tae-Sun coming at you soon.