

Jerry Colonna:
David McQueen, my brother.

David McQueen:
Sir, my brother, Sir Jerry Colonna. That's how I'm always gonna call you Sir, right? Doesn't matter, forget the Queen or any other role. You're my Sir. Ha ha ha. But yes.

Jerry Colonna:
Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:
Well, you're my sir. So there's nothing we can do about that. We're each other's sirs. It's such a delight to have you back on the show. And we're here to talk about your fabulous new book, *The Brave Leader*. I have to make sure that I remember the V, the article at the front of the title.

David McQueen:
Thank you.

David McQueen:
Yes.

Jerry Colonna:
And I just want to start off by thanking you for writing this book. I think it's a really wonderful book and I'm super excited to talk about it. But maybe before we dive in, give us a little bit of an intro. Who is David McQueen now?

David McQueen:
Ooh, so now I have a set in mind. Let me go with that one and then we'll play with it. So I'm the husband of one, the father of two and the friend of many. And I always say that because I really want people to know how much family is important to me. And whenever I do these things, whenever I speak, the essence of what I do is my family. But in addition to that, I believe I've been gifted with the skills of listening and the skills of trust and I've also believed I've been gifted with the ability to put people at ease when we're having conversations about things and that's why I believe in being able to write this book at this for this point in time.

I'm leaning into those things and this one's about leadership. It could be about fatherhood, it could be about masculinity, it could be about any of the other things that I can think about. But just being able to be at this point in time, bringing the energy of my family into this space and being that person who I know has been gifted and been told by many people that you are good at listening, trust you and I love the way that you communicate. That's what I bring to the table. That's who David McQueen is right now.

Jerry Colonna:

I think that's beautiful and if I could add one thing, David McQueen is also an author.

David McQueen:

Oh my god, yes. Ha ha

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah, yeah. You know, before we started recording, we were both enjoying the deliciousness of what it feels like to have that totem in your hand of the labor of love coming out of the printing press. And we both confessed to the incredible warmth of smelling the book in our hands. So my hearty congratulations. And so, well, let's dive in and talk a little bit about leadership and more specifically, brave leadership.

And one of the things I enjoyed about your new book...is that you don't make assumptions that we have agreement about certain things. You take the time to define what you're talking about. And specifically, you take the time to define leadership. And a little preview, you also define followership. So I'm going to read to you your own words, and you tell me what you mean by these.

You said, "For me, leadership focuses on guiding, influencing, and inspiring others towards the achievement of common goals." And this line I love, "It involves making sense of the world around you, making decisions, providing direction, and motivating individuals or teams to work together toward a shared vision."

Now, there's a lot in there, in that packed little paragraph. But the thing that really spoke to me most was it involves making sense of the world around you. Tell me what you mean by that.

David McQueen:

I love what you said around the point around the assumptions and parking assumptions. And a big part of my leadership journey was recognizing that so much of the buy-in I got was around clarity. And there were times where I would go into a space assuming that because somebody was in this room, because they were a leader, that they knew exactly what I was talking about. And I realized very often that they didn't.

David McQueen:

And so I pulled it back and said, okay, how do we make sense of what it means to be a leader? How do we make sense of a very rapidly changing world, which, you know, I think so many of these executive leadership and MBA and all these advanced programs who are, you know, encouraging people to do stuff in a certain way and work, I think the world moves so quickly that it's almost not recognizable anymore from what you may have been taught.

So I really wanted to tap into that innate sense that we have of, I may not have all the answers right now, but how do I make sense of the world around me? And once I've started to move in that direction of making sense, I can then communicate that to others. Here's my reason why.

This is why we're going down this route. This is why we're doing this, for good or for bad. And that sense-making piece is critical and I talk about it later in the book, as to how we make decisions. We don't understand it and if we can't make sense of it, how can we make decisions that we can really stand by? And that was the essence behind it.

Jerry Colonna:

I deeply appreciate that response. And what comes up for me is, you know, the subtitle of the book, which, you know, having written a few books, I know that we labor over things like subtitles because we're trying to convey something. And the subtitle is "More courage, less fear, better decisions for inclusive leadership."

David McQueen:

Yes.

Jerry Colonna:

And when I saw this line, making sense of the world around you. I immediately connected to this notion of more courage, less fear, and by extension, brave.

David McQueen:

Yes.

Jerry Colonna:

What is the relationship between or what happens in a leadership experience in that relationship when those say who hold power, which is a traditional notion of leadership, when those who hold power are making decisions out of fear or perhaps responding to a world that seems difficult to make sense of. What happens in that environment?

David McQueen:

So just before I answer this, I'm going to tell you about the subtitle as well. My original line was "The no BS guide to inclusive leadership" and the editors were like, okay, you know you talk straight Dave, but okay, let's just rein this in now. Let's absolutely rein it in. And then I really thought about it. There are lots of people who are making decisions which aren't rational, which very often are very emotional or...steeped in a so-called tried and trusted way of doing things, which may not be appropriate. And very often they do that because they're afraid. And I wanted to say, well, how do we park that fear and get people to think, all right, if I'm gonna make a decision, let me make it be courageous. And the, I know we obviously, you know, talk offline of hair.

And one of the things that you may remember is I first started writing about this in 2020. And we're in the middle of this pandemic, in the middle of Black Lives Matter and all these things that happened. I remember a number of clients really wanting to just have responses because they wanted to be seen as doing the right thing. And I was like, don't do it. Do things that are going to be sustainable. Don't put up black squares. I mean, one of the popular phrases that people will

say to me, they remember me saying, and I say, don't write checks with your mouth that your body can't cash. Just don't make those promises just because you're afraid of thinking of how it may happen or how it may be perceived.

And now we're seeing the backlash of what that's actually happened. We've seen people really like respond like on the state side. We've seen people going in for affirmative action and going in for race-based funding for underrepresented individuals. We've seen the way that people have gone after, I can never remember her full name, but the Supreme Court judge and the carrots of assassination they placed on her. And also the Harvard president. And again without narrowing it down, because it's very easy to get objections if I narrowed it down to just a small racial sliver, but you just see how individuals who felt that their protected space was being impacted by a story they had created in their mind, used what is in fact a word, so used the word woke, to verse that to their own kind of meaning and really start doing all these things out of fear. And I'd always said, you know what, I'm a strong believer that whilst race is a social construct, we have a choice as to how we're going to respond to that.

And if we start from a...Both of us have got backgrounds in finance, right? So if we start from a liability base, how do we ever start to see things through the lens of an asset base, where we're adding value, where we're doing things differently? And so I wanted to really carefully choose the words that I had to say, this is about being courageous. Thinking about that decision that you make, whether it be around the way you develop a product, hire staff, do your branding, think about people with different protected characteristics who are part of your customer base.

I want you to just think about it through the lens of humanity. And don't be afraid to make a decision just because it may not seem right with someone else. Think about the rationale that you have. And when I say inclusive, what I mean is, have you actually heard that person and what they're actually looking for from what you're providing? And so if you're going to do that, how do you be courageous? How do you be brave in order to make a decision around that?

Jerry Colonna:
Yeah.

David McQueen:
So yeah, it was, in all honesty, and I can always speak honestly with you, this book started off a lot angrier than it ended up being. A lot angrier. And then I took a step back and I was like, but if I want somebody to take an action and not be afraid and not think, oh my God, is this guy coming for me? How do I do it that empowers that person to then go, right, I feel a bit braver about this and I'm gonna take a chance.

Jerry Colonna:
Yeah, I think that that's what you're touching upon. And I want to reflect it back to you. But what I think you're touching upon in this book, which is very important in this time, is in a time in which, in the United States, the phrase we would use is DEI - diversity, equity, and

inclusivity...sometimes the phrase is JEDI - justice equity diversity and inclusivity - when movements that are designed to create a more equitable environment are being recast as the problem and not a solution.

David McQueen:

Hmm.

Jerry Colonna:

What I thought you did particularly skillfully was make the connection that the debate around these actions, more often than not, is filled with and comes from a place of fear. And that what is required of true leadership, leadership that helps make sense of the world, is a kind of courage, is a kind of bravery.

And that the result is inclusive. Or the result is that the followership, which is part of what you're talking about, creates an environment where the totality of people, to use a phrase that I'm particularly taken with right now, smitten with, that sense of belonging. The sense of "we" are all here. And I'll say one other thing. In reading the book, there's a line that a good friend of mine, Justin Scott Campbell, gave me after reading my first book, *Reboot*. And I quoted extensively in the new book. And the line is, inclusivity is the felt sense of love, safety, and belonging.

And what I love about both observations, yours and his, is that it steps away from performative action. It steps away from, as you put it, putting up black squares on, say, your Twitter feed or your Instagram feed to show solidarity with a particular movement. And I like your challenge of sustained inclusivity based effectively on those who hold power, being brave, brave enough perhaps to try to make sense of the world. Am I getting this right?

David McQueen:

100% and it is and I love the quote you made about the love, safety, and belonging because there are you know a lot of the pushback that I mentioned before that's happened in the US and you know what they say when the US sneezes the UK catches a cold so we're not far behind a lot of that reaction has been around...rather than challenging systemic behaviors, looking at outliers or exceptional examples to say, well, look, this is the reason why it's here. Like, you know, one of the quotes I remember, I think it was, I can't remember if it was Elon Musk or somebody who was saying, you know, the reason why we don't like DEI is because it's racist to white men. I'm like, and I'm looking at this thing going, like, dude, go and have a look at the richest people in the world. And let's break it down and let's look at what it, let's look at that demographic.

Let's go now and look at any board on one of the most powerful companies in any North American or Western European country and let's go and have a look at that board. You honestly think there's a shift in the power here? Or are you afraid of losing a little bit of that power? And what are you so afraid of being able to share that stuff?

And so what I realized is that in so many instances and to be fair, I mean I didn't mention it in the book, but to be fair I know that there are a couple of people, even when I've defined inclusive leadership the way I've done it and we'll talk a bit more about this, who have felt that my definition was exclusive and like you I'm like love, safety, and belonging, I want people to come in there and be okay with what they're doing and you find my definition exclusive and it intrigued me because I'm always curious as to what does that mean? Break it down to me what that actually means and be courageous enough to have the conversation.

But the key thing here is the conversation. I want to keep it going. I'm not here to, you know, I was part of a debating team in school, right? So I know the back of my mind, if we're going to have a debate, I'm coming for you because we were taught, we were taught, right? We did debating, we were taught...know the opposition's argument as strongly as you know yours. So when they come for you, you're able to respond. But it's not about a win or lose situation here. It's about understanding. It really is about understanding.

And I know you mentioned it earlier, but it's that it's also making sure that there's a sense of accountability. And that's why I talk a lot about followership piece as well, followership piece, because it's so much about that accountability around the safety around a sense of belonging.

Why would I want to go and work for an organization or why would I want to be part of a civic movement of activists or what have you if I didn't feel that there was a sense of belonging in there? That makes no sense to me. Why would I want to be part of a movement where I see leaders in whatever position that they are and they don't see me? No, that makes no sense to me. Made no sense to me. So that's why I was trying to get out through that.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah. So I take it from that that, because we all carry our own internalized definitions of things, I take it from that there is that's part of your definition of inclusive and inclusive leadership. Is that right? Yeah.

David McQueen:

Yes. Yeah, definitely. And it's not fixed. You know, some new piece of data or evidence may come up that makes it either expand or contract or look at it slightly differently. But for right here right now, in terms of the conversations that I want to have and the understanding that is a definition that I have. So yes.

Jerry Colonna:

So to give some guidance into the book, I think you cleverly, wisely turn the word brave into an acronym. And that makes it, as like a mnemonic expression, it makes it easier to recall. Take us through the acronym, not just the word.

David McQueen:

Yeah. Yes. So I recognize a lot of people would know it just as the verb to be courageous. And I

think it's brave than now. I think there are other parts of speech, but I know that there's something, there's a pattern we have in our mind when we do have things like mnemonics, a way of being able to remember things.

And so the five pillars of brave for me are for B is for bold. And this is about getting individuals who are in positions of leadership wherever they are in an organization to go, when I am making a decision about this, do I have the courage to make it? Am I afraid to make it? And even sometimes you might be a little bit afraid, but be bold enough to still stand by the principles, the ethics, the business case, whatever it is that you're using as part of your decision-making tool, be bold enough to stand by it. And there will be some times where you...It feels like you're very alone and you're on your own, but if you've understood why you're getting there, be bold enough to be able to say it, but also be bold enough to be able to deal with any kind of objections and pushback that you may have on that as well.

The second one, R, is resilience. And the more I think about resilience, it's innate, resilience is innate in us, right? We get into a...I didn't learn how to swim until I was 30, because I was absolutely terrified of the water. But my wife threatened me and said that if I was ever out there drowning in the pool, and she wouldn't be with the kids, she's going to be with the kids and she'd leave me. So I had to build resilience and learn how to swim. But it is that going in the water and recognizing that. And this is the most powerful thing I found out when I learned how to swim. The water will carry you. That's insane, that's insane. The water will carry you.

Jerry Colonna:

Right. If you let it, if you let the water carry you.

David McQueen:

But imagine if you've grown up in an environment where you've been told, oh, your bones are too heavy, your dents will sink to the bottom. You start to buy into that, so there's that resistance. And so resilience is around being able to go, right, there may be a stressor, an external or an internal stressor, but we have an innate ability to be able to respond to that stressor.

And what I wanted the resilient piece in here to be was a combination of how we are resilient as individuals but also how we build resilience as a community, because then we carry each other rather than it just being that one person.

The third one was Agile. And again, as I said earlier, the world is forever changing, right? Everybody is in the tech space now, is hyped up about AI. Last year it was crypto, the year before that it was NFTs, the year before that it was blockchain, whatever it is, everybody's in there, and oh my God, the world's gonna change because...And you realize in those moments that people will be pulled along by the media, the zeitgeist at that point in time is to say, this is what we need to do. And so for me, I'm saying to individuals, look, still be bold, but have a sense of agility that sometimes you may need to respond to a situation. So what do you have in your toolkit that allows you to be able to be that responsive?

The fourth one is visionary. And that's a big thing for me. I think as a leader, you have to have a sense of a vision about where you're taking people, what are you going to do? And one of the things I find, and I'm sure you've seen this as well in our work as coaches as well, very often you have people who are functioning leaders and they're just doing their stuff, but they have no vision. They're doing it because they've been given a title rather than given a sense of, okay, where are you taking people? And that visionary piece is important for me.

And then the last one, which is the last pillar, I think is so important, is ethical you know, when we are making decisions, how ethical are they? And it's the one way I realize a big part of my work as a coach and a facilitator, it's the bit where I get a lot of resistance because people don't understand it. So sometimes people get confused between moral, which is our individual choices of where we stand and ethical, which is that collective choice of the values and beliefs that we have together and what we're going to do. And for the, and when I say ethical, it's around for the better of us as humans, right? So sustainable, being just, being fair. And it scares me, I'm gonna use that word, it scares me that there are lots of individuals who are in positions of either attributed power or have the label of leader thrust upon them who do not act in any ethical way whatsoever.

Jerry Colonna:
Yeah.

David McQueen:
And so I just wanted to remind people that, you know, if you are going to be a lot more inclusive around how you deal with your stakeholders, you have to sit down and think quite ethically about the decisions that you're making.

Jerry Colonna:
I'm really pleased that we sort of landed here right now because part of what I think we both experience, you know, in a world that is sort of pushing back on actions that are affirmative, or actions that are affirming. And by the way, I broke that up so that it takes it out of this shorthand expression so that we remember what it is that when we have a program that is designed to create more equity, what we're doing is trying to lean into creating not just a more inclusive world, but in some ways a more fair world. But more specifically, I think, and this goes back to your own definition a more ethical world. See, from where I sit, I've been out on the road talking about my new book, Reunion, I've been out, you and I were writing in parallel because I too started during 2020.

David McQueen:
Yes.

Jerry Colonna:
Part of what I'm seeing is a debate around the form of the action, "DEI programs are racist,

right?” That statement. And as I sit here, having grown up as a white, straight, cisgender man, I'm not going to be on the periphery of this conversation for most of my life, I have been startled by the association of programs like this with the notion of it being racist.

I mean, to be fair, when I was a young man, there was a Supreme Court case, the Richard Bocke case, that alleged a kind of crazy term, “reverse racism.” And we've sort of come back to that. And what I like about your framing is, this happened last night. I was doing a book reading, and somebody said, well, what do you think about the pushback on DEI programs? What do you think about the pushback on wokeness?

Jerry Colonna:

And my first response was, this is a pushback on empathy. This is a pushback on seeing the other person as an extension of my own self, seeing your story, seeing my story in your story. And I'll go one step further. I think one of the things you do so importantly in this is... You make an important link that pushing back on this lacks ethics.

Because I think that what we're talking about ultimately is when we lack the courage to lead and to wield the power that we have, whether it's by dint of the body that we carry or the projections that are placed on us, inclusivity and equity. We lack ethics.

Now, I like your distinction between morality and ethics. Your personal morality, your personal values may lead you to devalue acting in an ethical way. But don't tell me that your pushback is in fact ethical.

David McQueen:

Yeah, yeah, 100%. It's interesting when I was there at one point when I was just before the editing stage and I didn't include it in the book but it was a thought that was going through my mind and it was around morality and ethics was just around the decision that was being made around what the overturning of Roe versus Wade I think it's Dobson is the new case I can't remember. And sorry it always fascinates me that in the UK we know so much about US politics and legislation. Probably more than we do, more of our own. I get it.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah, that's the collective narcissism of the United States, but keep going.

David McQueen:

I was having a discussion with an individual and I was making the distinction there. I was saying, look, you know, to me, the argument is never around whether somebody is pro-life or pro-choice, because as humans, we are more than binary. We are so much more than binary.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah.

David McQueen:

And when you just have pro-life, pro-choice, what you tend to do is you get two warring factions who will stick to their guns on what they're saying and to your point there's no empathy to understand what the other person is saying. So my personal opinion is that I'm pro-choice. That's the stance that I take but I will never take it away from somebody who is pro-life and I understand whether it's religious or whatever the stance is around pro-life, I totally understand it. But from an ethical point of view, my question is always this, what are we saying about the healthcare of the woman? What are we doing to provide sufficient healthcare and support for the woman and subsequently, if a child is born, the child?

Jerry Colonna:

Right.

David McQueen:

Because very often people can be in this discussion about pro-life and pro-choice. And then a child is born and no one wants to talk about that child anymore. And they don't want to talk about whether or not they're going to the care system or what happens to the woman's mental health. And a lot of this stuff doesn't get engaged because the binary argument stays over there. And so for me, the ethical part of leadership is thinking about the sustainable consequences of the decisions that we make. What are, what are those, what are the consequences in the, in the mid to long term of those decisions that we make now? And again, I think using the case of Dobson, thinking about those individuals who will now resort to more unsafe practices around abortion or who will be so terrified to leave a state to go to another one because they're worried that if an employee finds that they're going to another state to go and have an abortion, how does it affect my employee rights or how does it affect the way that I'm doing certain things if I'm from a state that is very, very pro-life?

And as with so many of these very difficult decisions, you recognize that there are...And sometimes I get a bit nervous about using this phrase, but work with me. There are so many people that are totally alien to another person's lived experience. They're totally alien to the way that somebody else navigates the world. And because they have a specific bias or an understanding of how they see the world, anything outside of that doesn't matter because this is what it is to make sure that the world is fair. And whereas I think it's a lot more complex than that.

David McQueen:

You know, there is no way that when you are making decisions as a leader that can have an impact on other people, that you can't think about that, that you can't embody empathy, and you can't not consider the journey that other people are going on. And so for me, the ethical part was saying, I understand your moral position, and I understand that our moral positions will be different, but as a collective, what we're doing ethically to make sure that it's just, it's fair and empathetic to anybody who's impacted by the decisions that we make here right now.

Jerry Colonna:

I think you draw some really important distinctions and observations here. First, I want to circle back to a point that I think you made quickly, but I think it is worth expanding upon. Part of the divisiveness of our world today, part of the way in which we are, as I often say, at each other's throats stems in fact, I think from this binary stance that we have. You're either with me and my morality or you're against me and my morality. And the result is a reductionist fundamentalist, and I don't mean the adjective that is often applied to a religion. I mean a fundamentalist breaking it down to this lack of nuance.

And I do think that many leaders try to make sense of the world, but unfortunately, the way they try to make sense of the world is to reduce things, to lack nuance, to lack understanding. And so the result is greater and greater separateness, greater and greater divisiveness, less and less inclusivity. I'll take an example. I'm 60.

David McQueen:

Yes.

Jerry Colonna:

For probably 40 years of my life, Washington, the political leaders in the United States have failed to. have failed in many ways, but have failed to come up with a comprehensive plan that is humane, that deals with immigration. And I can point fingers at every single administration for failures. And the result is, whether we call it a crisis at the border or a humanitarian crisis, the result is, human beings are suffering and to allow that to allow our reductionist binary stances to prevent us from coming up with a comprehensive and humane solution seems immoral to my morality.

And we can apply the same thing to, the same kind of thinking to equitable interests into educational institutions...We can apply the same thinking to the availability of health care. The reductionist binary thinking pulls me away from my neighbor instead of drawing me closer. And closer in is where the solutions are.

David McQueen:

Yes, yeah

Jerry Colonna:

Here's a fact I heard the other day. There's a newsreader, a news host, Sarah Seidner on CNN. And she revealed in one broadcast that she has breast cancer. And she identifies as a black woman. And she made two statistical points that are worth bringing up. One in eight women still will develop at some point breast cancer, one in eight. And of them, 40% of women who identify as black are more likely to die than their non-black counterparts. Now, that's a statistical fact. What does that say about equity in our health care system? Forget your stance on DEI or wokeness. This is a moral imperative to ask ourselves questions. What's wrong with our healthcare system? What is happening in our society?

David McQueen:

Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

And I think that this, to my mind, is, to quote you, brave leadership. To ask those questions knowing that I may not be able to make sense of this. Does this resonate?

David McQueen:

100% and again it you know as you say there is a what I loved when you go that example is that you were able to bring through facts and what you realize is that a lot of bravery will lean quite heavily on facts but a lot of fear will lean quite heavily on opinion and a lack of understanding...

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah.

David McQueen:

And there are, you know, I call the phrases, I see healthcare as a wicked problem. I call that the wicked education and wars. And I see them as wicked problems, which on the face of it seem unsolvable, but they are unsolvable because of the systems that have created them or sustained them in that way. You know, very often I've heard people talk about healthcare in certain countries like the UK and the US and others as sick care because they say that it's never really about a preventative lifestyle, but how quickly can pharmaceutical and other companies get more money from, you know, instead of saying, eat better, we'll say, eat lots of food and drink and what have you, and then here's an antacid to help you afterwards. And it takes a very, very brave person to go, maybe part of the problem we have with obesity is the fact that we may need to rein back on selling such unhealthy food.

Jerry Colonna:

Right

David McQueen:

Maybe part of the problems that we have with the burden on the hospital system is that people are not as mobile as they should be, or we don't encourage health as more. You know, I think on the flip side of something like Singapore, as an example, Singapore doesn't have the kind of car industry or internal, you know, driving as they do some a lot of other modern nations and Singapore comes with its own problems right, don't get me wrong. The fact that they encourage that mobility and movement has a massive impact on the way that their healthcare system is. And we will still have issues where people get cancer and, you know, a lot of other degenerative diseases. But a lot of what we would call lifestyle diseases that are caused by the fact that we are sold a specific way of living and working, it takes a brave person in many of our cultures to be able to go, hold on a minute. We can actually solve this. All we just need to do is change X. And...I understand as well in many situations that there is a self-preservation. And I'll give a very

quick example about this. I remember speaking to a board and somebody had asked me, you know, look, David, you know, what's your views on positive discrimination? And I said, well, for me, discrimination is discrimination. It doesn't matter what word you put in front of it. It is discrimination. And I said, how can it ever be positive?

And I made a joke, I said, you know, I'm here, and you've obviously called me in specifically around leadership and black guys, because I'm a black guy. I said, how many of you don't agree with that? No, people wouldn't give me eye contact. I said, look.

Jerry Colonna:
Right.

David McQueen:
I'm okay with that. I said, you brought me in here because I'm a black guy, so you think that I would have a sense of the living experience. You brought me in because you know I've got commercial experience with knowing how business is run and understanding leadership. And I said, and I'd like to believe further, you brought me in because I'm a really good looking guy and it's eye candy for you, so why am I talking in here? What's the deal with it? But I said, if I'm here just to tick a box, I'm sorry, I'm gonna disappoint you because I'm really gonna challenge you. Because at the end of the day, I want you to walk away from something, regardless of how you see my physical attributes, something that can be sustainable and that can actually work.

So if you wanna have more black people on your boards or in your staff, do it, because you're widening the reach of how you're recruiting them. You're having wider conversations. Don't just do it because it looks good for PR or for your media or for whatever it actually is. And I said, and what I say how you do that is you do positive action. So you have people who, I'll give you a very quick example.

If I can, I will say this. Historically, if you come from a Caribbean or African background and you're in the UK or the US, you have to do what I call the migrant four, right? Your parents would encourage you to do law, finance, engineering, or, can't remember what the third one is, something's medicine, there you go, should know that, law, engineering, finance, or medicine. Those are the four, the migrant four, I call them, right? If you don't do any one of those, oh, I wanna be an artist, your parents and your family are so disappointed that you don't know what.

He came this far for this, really? But doing that, one of the things that happens is we are told very often, or have been told by a generation, my parent's generation, and I think the ones before, to work twice as hard to get half as much. Personally, for me, that's bad math. Because what you're already doing is you're already seeing yourself less than someone else. But then what it means is individuals go in and they will work and really work, and they will put their head down, their work will speak for themselves.

So there I am rocking into these organizations going, one of the reasons why you're missing out

on the talent pool from underrepresented groups, be they black, be they Asian, be they, just not the main white British population, is because very often you don't understand how they think you can see their skills. So none of them is gonna approach you to be a sponsor because they have no idea that sponsorship exists.

No one's going to put themselves forward for a coaching program because they don't see the purpose of coaching because they don't see individuals around them. What they will do is they'll do a 12-hour day, keep their head down, work as hard as they can and really go in there and try and assuage you with their brilliance and the work that they do. But they know they don't want to hang out with you on a Friday in the bar or in a restaurant where, and as I told a lot of people, a lot of the networking goes on or a lot of the conversations actually happen. So I say you either have to think about...Do we need to change our whole Friday evening ritual? Do we really need to think of how we make sure that we highlight sponsorship to a lot of more underrepresented groups? Do we need to realize that the customers that we're serving, we probably need a voice in the actual organization of somebody in that diverse population who represents that?

I said, that's not positive discrimination, that's positive action, because you're taking an actual positive move to identify somebody that can make sure that you are going, well, I'm actually being a lot more inclusive around my stakeholders. The moment you do that, you don't start to narrow it down into that protected characteristic, rather you're going, I'm managing my stakeholders full stop. And that for me is the bigger picture. It's not about ticking a box. It's not about trying to make people feel better because you've got a little bit more color on your board or what have you. This is specifically around going, how do we deal with this differently? And if I can just...go left you really quickly. I've got a lot of stick within the community here because I've said to people, stop complaining about the fact that black founders only get 2% of VC. I said, stop complaining about it. Like, what do you mean David, ever? And I'm like, there's 90, so basically you're trying to tell me that 98% of the people, all of them need VC. Honestly, really? And I said, do you know the bets that VCs are placing on this company doing really well? There's alternative finance. We can do angel.

We can do bridging loans, we can do small business loans, we can get private equity if they've been around for a while. All these things are available. There's all these differences. But some people are so stuck on one narrative and what they see as the rule of success that moving through another space can be really difficult. And so for me, inclusion is around going, there are other options. There are other ways of looking at this. And to come back to that story I was saying, if you are heads down working and thinking, this is the way to get ahead in your organization.

I've said it in speeches, I've said, you're foolish. Cause that's just not the way. It's not the way at all.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah. I think one of the things I so admire about your work and your thinking is you always take

the narrow point and expand it, to use your term, inclusively. You always take that expression, and you see this sort of larger field in which it's operating in. And I think as a result of that, I always learned from you. And I think that...What you've done with this book and what I know you do with your work in the world is expand, expand the thinking. And I'll start to close us by noting that I think we're living in a time, I often speak about how the divisiveness of the time seems so intense, but here's another way to think about it. I think we're living in a time of contraction.

And what we all need to do in a time of contraction is to actually expand our lungs, expand our breath, expand our access to other thinking, expand into those nuanced places so that we start to feel the reality of other people's perspectives and stories. And I think that in doing that expansion of having the bravery to actually, if you will, expand your lungs to take in more of the world, in that there is hope for connection to overcome that which divides us.

David McQueen:

Yes. I love traveling, you know, I just came back from Dubai Christmas and you know, I love going to Morocco. I'm doing, I was saying to you before, I'm gonna go and do this tour. I'm gonna go and speak across the UK and in North America and I'm gonna go down to Africa and then, you know, next year into Asia and Oceania. And every single one of those places I'm going, I'm going to learn and I'm putting myself out there to learn more because there are sometimes where we can make an assumption. I'll give you a very quick story if I can.

I was working with a multinational bank who were very, very passionate, riding on the wave of this whole thing around George Floyd gave us an opportunity to talk about ethnicity more. And they wanted me to go and speak in two places, to their branch in Hong Kong and their branch in India. Now in Hong Kong, they were excited. They wanted me to come in because predominantly they had a hard majority but they weren't in positions of senior leadership. And so they wanted me to come in to really challenge the senior leadership who tended to be white middle-class men who were running the show in that space. In India, I got massive objection. And the objection that they gave me was that I wouldn't fully understand the caste system, social hierarchy, and not only what happens in work, but what happens outside of work as well.

And I remember getting that pushback and honestly, and I could tell you what does he think of that? Who the hell do you think you do? You know who I am. Like I'm the one. I can go there. I've razzled down on all parts of this company. Are you crazy? And then I remember taking, getting a hold of myself and parking my ego and going, do you know what, actually you're right. I don't know. And if I went in there and caused more harm than good, the only thing that would be feeding would be my ego. And bravery for me then was being able to go, do you know what, I actually agree with you. Yeah, I am not your guy. You probably need somebody a bit more local who will be able to understand it. And the truth I learnt about that is, know which areas that you can go into and what you can do. Be absolutely okay with that. The universe has a way of rewarding you when you are present with what you know that you are doing and you're really focusing on.

Jerry Colonna:
Right. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:
Yeah, I love that story. And perhaps I'll close with this. Sitting here and thoroughly enjoying our conversation, I have this image, perhaps, of what is called for in this time is to breathe our way into bravery, is to expand our lungs into the nuances, into the difference, if you will so that we can really lean into inclusivity in a way that is life-affirming and giving.

David McQueen:
I love that. Thank you.

Jerry Colonna:
Thank you. David, thank you for coming on the show. Thank you for writing the book, as I said before, but thank you for coming on the show. Thank you for your friendship, and thank you for the work you do in the world. It's really important.

David McQueen:
Thank you sir.