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Leadership, Impact, and Institutional Change

A Community Conversation

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Larke Nahme Huang, Doris F. Chang and
Linda Lausell Bryant*

In this conversation, psychologists Helen Neville, Larke Huang, and Joseph Gone speak with editors Doris F. Chang and Linda Lausell Bryant about their pathways to leadership, the challenges of transforming institutions – higher education, the federal government, and the mental health professions – and how they navigate barriers and competing demands as BIPOC leaders. This conversation has been edited and condensed.

Participants

Joseph P. Gone, PhD, is an international expert in the psychology and mental health of American Indians and other Indigenous peoples. A professor at Harvard University, Gone has collaborated with tribal communities for nearly 30 years to re-envision conventional mental health services for advancing Indigenous well-being. As a clinical-community psychologist

¹ The first three authors are listed in random order, reflecting their equal contributions to this chapter.

and action researcher, he has published over 100 scientific articles. He is an enrolled member of the *Aaniiih-Gros Ventre* Tribal Nation of Montana.

Helen Neville, PhD, is a counseling psychologist and Professor of Educational Psychology and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has held numerous national leadership positions and has co-edited eight books and (co)-authored more than 90 journal articles and book chapters on race, racism, and diversity issues related to well-being, with a focus on the lived experiences of Black Americans.

Larke Nahme Huang, PhD, is a Senior Advisor in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and Director of the Office of Behavioral Health Equity (OBHE) at SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). As a licensed clinical-community psychologist, she has worked at the interface of policy, research, and practice in behavioral health for nearly 35 years.

Leadership, Impact, and Institutional Change: “Believe in Yourself and the Power That You Have to Make a Difference”

Doris: There are so many connections between each of us in this room and we are hoping that our gathering today can prompt some reflection and sharing of stories about your respective journeys into positions of influence. We want to begin by asking you to introduce yourself with a story about when you first began to see yourself as a leader.

Larke: That’s a hard question obviously.

Joe: Well, I went to three different colleges over five years, and I did a stint in the United States Army in between as an enlisted person and ended up going to West Point as a cadet. As a West Point cadet, you’re being trained in leadership, military leadership in particular. Obviously, military leadership is quite different from leadership in lots of other contexts. I think the time when it became most apparent to me was in graduate school, at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, in the clinical-community psychology program. My faculty mentors were really supportive of thinking outside of the box and doing unusual things. And one thing they let me do was to leave campus to go to my home reservation in Montana for an entire semester, giving me

practicum credit just to do stuff on my reservation. So I went there to teach at our tribal college. And we were trying to launch a grassroots cultural society for our tribal community. We called it the White Clay society because our name for ourselves, *A'aniih'nin*, can be translated as "White Clay People." It was a small group, like half a dozen or maybe eight people, and there were some tribal leaders involved. And part of it was getting organized as a cultural society to handle things like repatriation of human remains back to our community and things like that. Well, all I did was listen and write things up and try to keep things a little structured and document what people were doing. And because of that, some of those tribal leaders came to me and said, "Look, we have a vacancy for the person who's running our tribe, what we call a Tribal Administrator. We want you to do it." And I thought, me? I had done stuff for my tribe after college, little things, but nothing like that.

So I spent the next six months or so serving in that role before going back to graduate school. I inherited 200 staff and 50 tribal programs, and there wasn't really one person who could tell me how it was all organized, and what was going on. Millions of dollars were flowing through. So that's sort of where it dawned on me that I had to learn how to be a leader in a really distinctive context, where there are competing leadership paradigms at work. There's the old traditional Indian way of leadership in which a lot of what makes you a leader is having resources to be generous with. And so your followers are people that you share with, things that they wouldn't otherwise get. That is very different from federal bureaucracies, funding agencies, in which every dollar has to be accounted for and has to be shown to be going for programmatic purposes. People would come through the tribal agency, into my office and say, I need help with this and that, and of course there's no program that's meant to help everyone just in the way they wanted. So, trying to navigate my way through those very different leadership paradigms, I also had to manage the tribal politics that so heavily influenced my bosses on the Tribal Council.

Helen: I'll just share a little bit. Growing up as an African American girl, and then a woman, in multiracial, diverse Los Angeles, but going through public schools that were racially diverse but with no Black people in them, I experienced intense anti-Black racism, as well as this sense of solidarity. I did not grow up thinking that I could be or was a leader, even though I showed leadership. As a Black girl

growing up in that environment, I was not told, “You are a leader.” A lot of my career has been mostly other people asking me, would you serve in this capacity, will you do this, and not as much self-initiated. So I have stumbled in terms of having formal leadership (training), even though I was engaged in more informal leadership. So if I were to think about one critical moment in my development as a leader, it would have to be after I was asked to co-chair our university’s strategic planning around diversity and create a ten-year strategic plan. After that, I was asked to apply for this Provost Fellow Program,² which was affiliated with what was then known as the CIC [Committee on Institutional Cooperation]. They would identify Provost Fellows for each of the institutions that were part of the Big 10. So it was then that I began to see myself as a potential leader. It was this external validation, and then, engaging in a year of activities where you really reflect on what it means to be a leader? How do you impact change? What kinds of things do you need and then getting mentorship about how to create structural change. So it was later in my career that I began to see myself as a formal leader but I think that experience empowered me to say, how can I use those skills to make a difference in other kinds of settings. One of the most impactful things that the Provost fellowship provided was the chance to travel to other institutions to meet other fellows and attend various programs. And as part of that, the President of the university would have this quiet chat with you behind closed doors about what it was like to be a leader. People were very real and honest and authentic and it humanized the experience of being a leader. It allowed me to say, “Yes, I can be a leader.” Not necessarily the leader the university wants me to be, but a leader in other capacities.

Larke: So I don’t think I have the answer to this question yet. I’ve never strived to be a leader. But I am . . . drawn to problem solving, and trying to figure out how to solve problems, whether it’s a big societal problem, or how to teach my kids to tie their shoes. In terms of seeing myself as a leader . . . I suppose it was when there was external

2 The Provost Fellows Program provides academic leadership experience in key campus administrative roles for distinguished faculty at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Fellows also participate in the Council of Independent Colleges’ Academic Leadership Program.

recognition that I could actually influence people that I highly admired or who were much more senior to me. I realized that they might have incredible depth of expertise, but they don't really know how to solve problems. I see that a lot in the federal government, where we have tremendous thinkers, but as Joe alluded to, the federal bureaucracy is extremely complex, and you have to know how to navigate the rules, regulations, turf issues, and people and personalities in order to solve problems to get things done. I realized that I'm not going to be of the stature and prominence of some of the people I most admire. But while they define the problems and the drivers most eloquently, they often fall short of testing solutions, even incrementally. And I think that's something that is at the heart of everything that I do, that there's a problem that needs to be solved and there's a strategy that needs to be crafted.

That flexibility of thinking and being drawn to problems that don't have easy solutions are probably what helped me to get into leadership roles that I didn't volunteer for. I will often say to my teams, "I'm the accidental fed." I didn't go into the federal government with intention, I kind of slipped into it, and then I realized that your reach is great, for better or worse (laughing) in the federal government. So once I was there, it was hard to think about a different kind of position. Growing up, I had to assume leadership in my family in ways that young children typically don't have to. I was fiercely protective of my family, and I think that probably instilled the ferociousness I sometimes still have today. So [my pathway to leadership] was a culmination of different kinds of experiences and nobody anointed me as a leader of anything and I didn't run to be a leader of anything, but I have had opportunities to shape different things and build strategies that I feel are important.

Linda: I love this thread that ran through the three of your responses. Each of you ended up being thrust into leadership or told, this is something you can, should do, we need you to do – or as Larke characterized it, you became an *accidental* leader. Was there a point that you began to own the sense that, "I bring some unique things to this work." How do your identities and your personal history connect you to the kind of change work you're involved in today?

Helen: I know a lot of people don't believe this, but I am introverted. So doing leadership takes a different kind of energy from me. When I think about a leader, I think of somebody who has an extroverted

leadership style who says, this is my vision, this is what we're working for. At a diversity conference years ago, Patricia Arredondo impressed upon me that counseling psychologists have a lot of transferable skills – good listening skills, being able to have people come together, as well as the values of social justice, freedom, etc. And through my Provost fellowship position, we learned that there are multiple ways of being a leader. I've come to realize that my leadership style is more of a collaborative collective leadership style, the understanding that things don't fall on one person, the importance of working within a team in order to create a collective vision to move forward on and have the impact. So those are some things that have been really important insights along my journey.

Early on in my career, I knew I was passionate about antiracism work. But the work I want to talk about is my newer work. I did this Fulbright at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. And being there for so many months, I experienced a level of liberation and freedom that I had never experienced in the US. While there were some issues that I experienced there, I did not experience racism. And because Tanzania did not have a history of settler colonialism, it didn't have white people living there, they also don't have the internalized whiteness that goes with it. So it was incredibly liberating. Around that time, somebody asked me to run for president for Division 45, the Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race (a division of the American Psychological Association). And at that time, I'm like, okay, maybe I could do this because I want to focus my whole energy on People of Color. When you do antiracism work, some of the work is directed toward white folks to get them to understand certain things. I really wanted to center People of Color and our experiences, and how we are able to heal and thrive in the face of incredible adversity. I was fortunate enough to work with some really good people to develop a Radical Healing paradigm³ that builds on ideas that others have been working on, a framework to understand what is our lived

3 The Psychology of Radical Healing Collective is a group of BIPOC scholars and healers who produce scholarship and frameworks that elevate community resources, ideas, and actions that are strength-based. The Collective aims to encourage social justice action and commitments among psychologists and other healers to foster individual and collective healing for BIPOC and people of the Global Majority. For more information, see: <https://psychologyofradicalhealing.com/>

condition, what gifts can we give to people that are hurting now. And doing it in a way that is not, “This is my singular vision,” but as a collective vision and a collective effort. And now I am President of Division 17 (Society for Counseling Psychology) and want to build on work that we did in Division 45. So my initiative will center personal and collective healing, which includes justice and joy, transforming healing practices, and counseling psychology and beyond.

Larke: Justice and joy, that is a really interesting combination of concepts. I’d love to learn more about how you put those together.

Helen: Wole Soyinka (the Nigerian novelist) says, the first condition of humanity is justice. And community psychologists say, you have to have justice in order to have both individual and collective well-being. But often when we focus on justice, the focus is on how we’ve been oppressed, how we’ve been downtrodden. But we are more than the oppression that we experience. No matter what else is going on, there is joy through our cultural celebrations. We know through the science and psychology of joy that it adds to well-being. Personal individual joy, as well as communal and collective joy, as resistance and as cultural strengths.

Larke: I really like that because especially in the time we’re in now, we don’t really find the joy in our day, we just find the division, the hate, the anger, and the oppression. So I like that combination. And, it connects to my own leadership style, which is often about bringing contrasting concepts together. The way I try to organize my life – how I live at home with my family and what I take to work and vice versa – is not as divided as some people think it is. And the team piece that you’re talking about, Helen, is really a critical part of how I think about leading, too. This sounds really trite, but I feel that being a leader is also about being a lifelong learner. I’m always surprised when people say, you really spend time learning from your children. But it’s important for me, because many of the

4 In July 2023, the White House Initiative on Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (WHIAAPI), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) convened a summit focused on improving equity and access to behavioral health care for AA and NHPI communities. For more information, see: www.hhs.gov/about/whiaanhipi/index.html

people I'm leading are in their generation as well. And I thought it was striking when you said you're an introvert because I never really thought about that until one of my fellows said to me, "I watch you as an introverted person leading these meetings and I realize, there's hope for me." So I think again, it's putting together contradictory concepts. That creates new leadership paths too, because not they're not necessarily traditional modes of leadership.

Doris, you were at the summit that we had last week, the White House summit.⁴ And what brought me tremendous joy about that Summit was when I sat back in the audience and saw the people who are leading the Summit now. The facilitator there, the subject matter experts, the people who we invited to be panelists, the people who were moderating panels, many of them were my interns, or people I hired early on in their careers. And I sat back there just looking at that stage full of people that in some ways I had been connected to their lives, and felt, *Okay, I can RIP, I can "retire in peace" now*, because it feels like there's a transition to a new generation of emerging and confident leaders. And it was actually just thrilling to me. Although I had provided leadership in the design of the program, and who was going to be in attendance, to observe this generation of new leadership was deeply satisfying. And I thought, for me, I guess it's a kind of quiet leadership. I push, I feel like I try to shape, I try to mold even when confronted with resistance. I see growth and development and change. And, it's very exciting to see.

Joe: Yeah, you know, I think pretty early in my career in graduate school, it became very apparent that my desire to train in clinical psychology and mental health services would have certain strong limitations with a swath of people in my home community. I think of more traditionally oriented Indigenous people in particular. And that led me then to want to start thinking through, well, what are the disconnects between conventional counseling and psychotherapy, the kinds of things that I'm being trained in and the things that traditionally oriented relatives, or others at home, might not find very helpful. And so that led really to a series of linked project-based inquiries. One question is, how would we characterize what we might call the cultural psychology of my own people, and other Indigenous peoples. I wanted to learn more from Indigenous people themselves: what are the distinctive facets or aspects of our own cultural psychologies? The second parallel effort was to try to unpack the cultural orientations and assumptions

of the mental health professions and how those map onto the distinctive facets of Indigenous cultural psychology (or not). And the third endeavor explored what therapeutic treatments or services are needed to better reconcile those disconnects. That's what my career has been about. I've aspired to take the knowledge of my ancestors, my people and other Indigenous peoples, and to bring it into psychology, particularly into applied psychology and to health service psychology or mental health work. I hoped to better open up what we consider to be "true" (or authorized) knowledge about psychology, as well as to try to harness it to be more practically beneficial for my own people.

I've drawn inspiration from certain of my ancestors. My great-great-grandfather was called The Boy. He was often referred to as the last chief of the Gros Ventres, of our people. And one thing he had was a treasury of Indigenous ceremonial knowledge, especially from the old days, that was really no longer viable in the reservation era with Christian missionaries and government agents suppressing Indigeneity as savagery. He made sure that all that knowledge was written down because he wanted it preserved for the future. And I look back to that knowledge as one way to help influence psychology today. And so my goal in keeping with an anthropological approach to culture, if you will, is to keep it quite specific, tied to particular communities and particular traditions.

Doris: Thanks, Joe. It sounds like you're mapping out a more expansive and inclusive vision for what you're hoping the field can be. And I'm struck by how each of you are working within these so-called traditional institutions, some of the oldest institutions we have. I'm curious about your decision to invest in trying to change those institutions, whether it's APA, or your universities, the federal government, your scholarly discipline. We're seeing a trend toward lots of younger folks deciding to opt out of these existing institutional structures, deciding instead to build their own thing. That is exciting and important. And yet these institutions are still really powerful. Can you talk about first, your decision to invest in these institutional spaces. And second, what are some of the key approaches you've taken to try to shift and change those institutions for the better?

Larke: I don't think about changing the federal government. But I think about the federal government's reach and its power to influence service delivery at the state and local levels by deciding who

gets research funding, who gets grants, what kinds of services are available. So the way I try to influence things is to embed social justice and equity issues deeply into the mechanisms and the operations of government. I've served under four different presidential administrations and have seen expansion and shrinking of civil rights. I think societally, now we are in a period where rights are being taken away, so I think it's imperative that we expand opportunities. In my office, the Office of Behavioral Health Equity, we are really trying to expand the reach of our funding apparatus to those populations that are not traditionally receiving significant federal grants. We started an initiative about ten years ago, called the Disparity Impact Strategy,⁵ where we changed the language and set the expectation in our grants, that funding was going to be linked to the populations served, and requiring greater inclusion of populations who are more disparity vulnerable or traditionally underserved in the catchment area of the grant.

We were able to get people to think differently about the distribution of their resources, because we tied it to funding decisions and also required them to report who they serve, what services they get, and what the outcomes are, disaggregated by race and ethnicity and sexual gender minority status. And so it has been very transformative for our agency, because it affected every operation in the agency, those who were writing the grants, those who were administering them, those who were reviewing them, those who were deciding whether they would get a continuation of award, etc. So it really penetrated deeply into the operations of our agency. And now it's part of how we do our funding. And it goes back to what you were saying, Joe, that leaders are those people who have the resources. We're trying to send a message through our agency, because they are making decisions that really affect people's lives in sometimes life and death ways by who is getting resources and who is not. But it's also very data driven. We expect the grantee, the applicant, to really examine their data – who is and who is not being included. I just wanted to share this initiative because when

5 The US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health's (OMH) Disparity Impact Strategy is a comprehensive data-driven approach for identifying and addressing health disparities to promote health equity for racial and ethnic minority populations. For more information, see: www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/Content.aspx?ID=22540&lvl=2&lvlid=12

you think about change in the federal government, it can be slow and tedious. But every now and then you get a “win.” And not surprisingly, fundamental to this change is building on relationships and allies.

Helen: I’ll share what I’m thinking. At this point, you know, I spend a lot of my career invested in institutions, trying to make them change, but it’s realizing at what level of the investment so I realized early on, it’s not at the administrator level, I can’t think like an administrator, because I’ve got the heart of faculty, staff, and students in mind more than taking up the perspective of the administrator. And I was told repeatedly that don’t think like an administrator, I’m like, well, thank you. I realized over time that I would rather use my energy in other ways. There is a point where you feel like, let me invest in the institution and create change. There was probably a decade and a half where I was that. Now, I’m in this season of life of *divesting* from this institution. Do what is asked of me, but conserve my energy for things that I can change outside or make a difference in students’ lives on a very real level. Students are hurting now, and I’d much rather invest in students than institutions that are reticent.

Doris: **Helen, I do think of you as an institutional leader, within APA and within the field of counseling psychology. Especially with regard to your work developing your Psychology of Radical Healing collective and framework, and building teams of people who are co-creating new ways of thinking about mental health research and services for BIPOC communities. I think of those as also falling into the category of institutional change processes. I wonder if you see it that way or not?**

Helen: Okay, so that institutional change, again, a lot of my things are by invitation, not by like,” Oh, let me go ahead and get up, get up in here and do this . . .” I feel like the past few years have been tough. Maybe it’s the case for everybody, but Black women have been asked to stand up, step up, step in, lean in, as most People of Color. And I guess I’m in the season of being exhausted, to be honest.

Linda: **I’m appreciating your honesty because we don’t say that part out loud. You know, and it can literally hurt us from a career perspective to say it. So, I’m applauding that. Totally.**

Joe: For me, I’d say the first thing that happened in terms of institutional change was also not voluntary in any way. I arrived at Michigan as a faculty member in Clinical Science. And our chair said, form a mentoring committee of senior faculty, get their advice on how to

get tenure here. So I called together some folks who I knew would be supportive of me getting tenure, and went through a presentation: here's who I am, here's what I study, here's why it matters, here's the kind of research I want to do. When I was done, there was silence for a minute. And then one of the faculty said, "Well, that's well and good. But if you want to get tenure in this department, shelf all of that until ten years from now, because it's too risky for a bunch of reasons." I talked to my mentor, Julian Rappaport at the University of Illinois, who said, "Why would you want tenure in a department that doesn't actually value what you care about?" So I decided that I would have to do enough work, publications that I'm proud of, and if they don't want to tenure me on that basis, that's okay. I can live with that. So I proceeded in the way that I had in mind with this vision I've told you about. So there were some things that have happened in my career by virtue of the right support, the right luck, whatever I can bring to it in terms of diligence and whatever talent I have.

In terms of thinking about institutional change now, I told you about my philosophy of psychology and wanting to contribute Indigenous knowledge to our field. The way I tend to do that predominantly is through published scholarship. I really try to actively circulate, to go out to the margins of our discipline, where there's more humanistic and interpretive kinds of inquiry going on. I have tried to take what I have learned, the ideas, the exchanges, which I think are really rich and interesting, and then carry them back to a more central place in our discipline, which I'm able to do because of the applied focus and the mental health focus. I feel like I'm constantly circulating, I cross over disciplinary boundaries, and go into anthropology, to Indigenous Studies, etc. So that's a kind of effort to transform an institution or a discipline.

More concretely, I've been at Harvard for five years. Harvard changed my life as an undergraduate. I would not be who I am and doing what I do if I hadn't gone to Harvard. And I want to make that possible for a broader swath of people. Harvard has been around since 1636, and there's baggage. So part of what we're also needing to do is to say to Harvard, look, for example, at the way you've treated Indigenous people in the New England area. There are bad things in that history, which need to be remedied. Since I've been Faculty Director of the Harvard University Native American

Program, we now have over 300 Indigenous-identifying students at Harvard, which is higher than we've had before.

Helen: I'd like just to add that predominantly white institutions aren't the only institutions that we've been involved with to make change. I have consistently made a commitment to being involved with other institutions, whether it's through ABPsi (Association for Black Psychologists), or other [BIPOC-centered] community organizations that are pushing for institutional change. I don't want to say that my gaze has always been toward white folks, because that's not my orientation at all.

Doris: **Great point, Helen, I'm so glad you clarified that. As each of you describe ways that you have and continue to push for institutional change in your various contexts, I'm wondering, how do you deal with blowback or challenges to your work?**

Helen: It depends on where you are in your career. Where I'm at now, maybe I'm tired. I just can't be bothered. It's people both within my circle and outside my circle, and people you think should be allies that aren't allies. And of course, it hurts when people undermine the issues. But I think my best approach is first, to gain a little bit of distance, and not take it personally when there are attacks, then to name what is really at play here. Is it that my energy is pulling out the worst possible energy in that person? Is it that we have different agendas? So really trying to name what's critical here to not make it personal. And then to find some solutions. So for example, I do this when I have leaders who do things that I disagree with. I try to put things into perspective by acknowledging that we have different interests in mind. My interests are related to faculty and students, their interests are related to the institution or something else. And so it's not about who this person is, but what is it that we need to do to protect or advance something and how can I build alliances to get to that? I try not to personalize it and get some distance from it. It doesn't mean things don't hurt, but I have to pull up a forcefield, personally.

Joe: I'll just give you a recent example of instances in which I decided that certain kinds of responses are not acceptable and tried to do something about them. A student and I submitted a manuscript to the leading journal in our subfield, an APA journal. The editor wrote back and said, thanks, but sorry, we don't publish qualitatively analyzed studies. And I wrote back and I said, well, actually, I published

a qualitative study in this journal 12 years ago, so I'm surprised to hear that. And she wrote back and said, well, it's the policy now. I said, okay, and we ended up publishing it somewhere else. A few months later, I got an invitation from that same journal to review a qualitatively analyzed study, for a special issue on race and ethnicity. So then I got mad. I said to the editor, okay, so you're upholding certain methodological standards, as you would define them, in regular submissions. But when it comes to race and ethnicity, you're open to supposedly "lowering" those standards in a way. And her response did not really make sense to me.

So I took it all the way to the APA Publications Board. I had a meeting with them and said, this is unacceptable. It's actually structural racism to have a policy like that, when we know that so many research psychologists are trying to represent our communities, and our communities themselves have said that qualitative analysis better represents our voice and our perspectives and adds things in ways that variable analysis doesn't. But there's a lot of autonomy for journal editors. I didn't really know this editor that well, but this is a Person of Color. And so this is an example of what can happen when you adopt narrow procedural norms. One thing we have to be on the lookout for is being open and committed and dedicated politically to advancing certain causes, but then when it comes time for review and tenure, reviewing an article, or reviewing a grant, somehow we shift back into those myopic views in which we've been trained to operate in a procedural fashion, and that can exclude opening up things. And I think that's something we all need to be on the lookout for, whether we're folk of color or not.

Larke: I look at "blowback or challenges" as part of the work. I've always engaged in initiatives that are calling for some form of redistribution of power and privilege. This by its very nature will challenge the status quo and make people feel uncomfortable. So, I think it is important to anticipate it and think about steps that could be taken to minimize its undermining of an initiative. Identifying and making the right "allies" is critical. For example, when I was serving on a school board, I asked questions about how issues – whether academic, financial, or psycho-social – were handled with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Soon, I was asked to Chair the subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion. Recognizing that if I led this as a new Board member and the only woman of color on the Board, that it could easily be tokenized and would be

totally powerless. So I only agreed to do this if the Chairperson of the Board would be my Co-Chair on the subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion. Over the course of my time on the Board and Co-Chairing the subcommittee, there were many contentious issues under discussion, but having the “power” of the Board Chair enabled our committee to make some important system changes. In other situations, the end-users of the system or program are often the “undeniable” voices. Partnering with people or youth with lived experience of the issue at hand . . . although they are often at the “bottom of the power hierarchy” they often present irrefutable perspectives. So combining their stories with relevant data often serves to slightly quiet detractors. But I think it’s important to expect “blowback” and recognize that it’s an important part of the “work.”

Doris: I appreciate how each of you adopt different approaches to dealing with naysayers – including those internal shifts you make to cultivate empathy and not take things personally, to speaking up and saying “that’s unacceptable” when lines are crossed, and identifying, cultivating, and strategically using “allies” to be more effective, especially when dealing with contentious issues. And I appreciate that these different approaches highlight that there are a million ways to be effective, depending on your specific position, context, and as Helen said, where you are in your career.

Linda: Well said. For our last question, what is one piece of advice that you would give to your younger self or someone who is like your younger self.

Helen: “Be yourself.” One thing I’ve always done is lived by my principles, I have never done anything in terms of my career that compromised my values or my principles. Believe in yourself and the power that you have to make a difference. I think that many times, for Black women in particular, and maybe other people as well, there are many ways in which people try to undermine our intelligence, our leadership. So believe in yourself. Believe in your potential and dream big. Because one of the things that I have realized that the younger generations have, is they have big bold dreams and they go for it. When I was socialized, we were socialized to keep our dreams down to a minimum. So yep, believe in yourself and dream big. Go for it.

Larke: For me, two things come to mind. First, I learned from my children: Get 1% better each day, always try to improve, but you don’t need to

move mountains every day! Second, invest in relationships – vertical and horizontal – this is a rich resource of learning, of understanding trust and respect, and how to navigate and influence complex situations. While it's important to be humble and giving, it's equally important to be forthright and demanding and to communicate expectations.

Joe: In terms of what to tell my younger self, I would say that, in a career path, planning matters, but serendipity is huge. I would suggest keeping a balance between preparing and planning the best that you can for the decisions that are in front of you, like where to go to graduate school, who is a good mentor, those kinds of questions. But at the same time, all that planning can go away as soon as a path appears that you never imagined, as you're walking your trail. And I think being attentive to and cognizant of when those paths appear and not having ever considered that but trying to see what value there might be. Because I could never have predicted my career journey. As I said, I went to three colleges over five years. I was in the Army in between. No one would plan that. But it's created a valuable set of experiences that I can draw on to this day.

Doris: **Great way to end. Joe, thank you so much. Thank you all so much for sharing your experiences and wisdom with us all.**

Linda: **Appreciate it. Thank you.**