

Mike Domitrz: Welcome to The Respect Podcast. I'm your host Mike Domitrz from Mikespeaks.com, where we help organizations of all sizes, educational institutions, and the US military create a culture of respect and respect is exactly what we discuss on this show. So let's get started.

Mike Domitrz: Welcome to this episode we have Kelly Charles Collins, who's an attorney, speaker, author, consultant, and unconscious bias expert. She works with organizations to discover and leverage the true value of their workforce and to keep them on the right side of hashtag movements. So Kelly, thank you very much for joining us.

Kelly Collins: Oh, thank you so much for having me today.

Mike Domitrz: On our show, we've discussed unconscious bias previously. Everybody can have a little bit different explanation of what it is. How do you explain what unconscious bias is?

Kelly Collins: Unconscious bias are those snap judgments that we make about people. It's based on stereotypes. So things that we have experienced, things that we've heard, things that we've seen in the media. When we're growing up, rules we learned as little kids, right, as we were growing up, and we create these visions of people or groups of people. And then when we are overwhelmed with information, we use that learned knowledge to make very quick decisions about those people or groups of people or sometimes just situations.

Mike Domitrz: And so what would be a common example of unconscious bias?

Kelly Collins: For example, you see people walking down a street, and if I were a woman and I was walking down the street at night and I saw a man coming towards me, I may cross the street. Or if I see young people who were being rowdy or loud, I may cross the street or I may grab a hold of my purse. And the reason is because, as women, we're taught that when you're walking and you see "strange men" or you see people that could put you in some type of danger, you need to protect yourself.

Kelly Collins: So in that situation, your unconscious bias is working to protect you and it causes you to react. So the reaction would be me grabbing my purse, or the reaction would be me crossing to the other side of the street in order to protect myself.

Mike Domitrz: And so as the downside of that, that that person approaching you might notice this and feel this and feel they're being discriminated against.

Kelly Collins: Exactly. And so we have to be careful too about unconscious bias and discrimination, right? So they may feel bad and they may feel that they're being treated differently in some way. And some people consider that alone to be

discrimination, but the thing was unconscious bias is that there's a difference with intent, right, between discrimination and unconscious bias.

Kelly Collins: Unconscious bias is unintentional. It's just something that happens. I like to call our unconscious brain like our junk drawer. We have all these things stored in there and so, we react. And we're not intending to harm the other person or intending to cause them to feel badly. We're just reacting based on things that we already know. And so yes, it does create sometimes this discomfort for the other person who may realize that you've reacted in that way.

Kelly Collins: For example, if I was in an elevator with a man or the door opened and a man came in and I grabbed my purse. The man may feel like, why would she do that? I'm not going to attack her. I'm not going to take her purse. What about me makes her feel that she has to do that? But again, it's just this snap judgment that we're making in the moment, where if I had time to really process, I may not have that same reaction.

Mike Domitrz: So how about the person who says, "But wait a second, the person who's discriminating isn't discriminating for the purpose of harming the other person. They're doing it to protect whatever they believe in."

Kelly Collins: So unconscious bias, and again, I want to make sure that we separate the two things. Unconscious bias-

Mike Domitrz: [crosstalk 00:04:09] That's why I'm asking the question, exactly.

Kelly Collins: Right. So people think, okay, unconscious bias and discrimination are the same thing. They're not. So if I'm discriminating against you, I'm intending to harm you in some way, or I'm intending to benefit someone to your detriment, right? So I really am intending those actions. Whereas unconscious bias, it just happens, right? It happens in that way.

Kelly Collins: Now, what we really also do have to be careful about though is that though the intention is different, the impact may be the same. Right? So that goes back to your question about, well, wouldn't these people, somebody may feel discriminated against. So the impact of your action is the same. It's the intention that's different and I think we have to really make those differentiations, and really have people understand that so that the conversations can be had.

Mike Domitrz: And so is there a place where they intersect? Where diversity, inclusion, and unconscious bias come together?

Kelly Collins: Absolutely. So we know that there for I guess probably the last decade or so, there's been this real push about diversity and inclusion. And we hear people talk about, "Oh well, we have a diversity and inclusion problem." Or, "We have this problem of diversity." And that's really not the problem. If you look at it, the

problem is unconscious bias, lack of diversity and inclusion is the symptom of that problem.

Kelly Collins: So, when we're making these decisions, right, we're making decisions based on unconscious bias, where we're bringing in people who look like us, so there's a lack of diversity. Or people who sound like us or think like us, that results in there being this diversity issue, that results in there being an inclusion issue. Because even if we bring people in, because we have to have diversity, right? That's a buzzword.

Kelly Collins: And diversity being numbers or a lot of somebody, right? Something you bring in, we forget about the inclusion part and the inclusion part could also be a symptom of unconscious bias because people are resistance. Some people are still resistant to this whole thing about diverse workforces. So they may feel, listen, I've had to bring in this diverse workforce, but I don't really agree with it.

Kelly Collins: And so that bias then translates into, okay, well then we're not going to include them. We're not going to listen to them, and we're not going to empower them. We're not going to make them a part of the plan and what we're doing in the organization. So they're tied in in that way. But diversity and inclusion is not the problem. It's unconscious bias.

Mike Domitrz: So if somebody is listening in, could they be thinking, well, then why do I need to be aware of unconscious bias? I'm not doing it to harm someone. I'm not doing it to benefit myself. Why do I need to bother having another thing on my plate to think about?

Kelly Collins: Because what I was saying before is that the impact ends up being the same. And so when I train my clients on unconscious bias, what I explain to them is that there's a very fine line from going from being unconscious bias to discrimination. So for example, if I am in HR for [inaudible 00:07:21] I'm in recruiting and I am looking at resumes and I decide, nah, that person's not a good fit, that person's not a good fit. And we start to see that everybody who is not a good fit is Hispanic or somebody who is differently abled or somebody of whom you can tell has an ethnic name, right?

Kelly Collins: When you're doing it originally, you're going through the resumes. You're not doing it because you think of any of those protected categories. But if that keeps happening, the impact of that can bleed over into discrimination. And so it's very important for you to be aware of what your biases are, acknowledge them so that you can check yourself and so that you can check the people around you, and make any type of course correction so that we don't move from this unintentional, just happens, everybody has it. To it being some type of systemic issue that becomes discrimination.

Mike Domitrz: And so for the person who does sit there and go, everything's just too over-sensitive right now, why? This is just another thing to make people feel they're

doing something wrong when they're just being human. How do you respond to that?

Kelly Collins: I have to accept that that happens, right? And I have to accept that people do-

Mike Domitrz: Right, I mean I get the same pushback in my work, right.

Kelly Collins: Right, and you have to accept that people feel that way, and when you have that type of resistance, I think it's really important about the messaging. When I train on unconscious bias, I make sure that people understand that they're not being accused of anything, right? Because a lot of what happens with unconscious bias because they mix the two with discrimination. Immediately this wall goes up like you're being called an ist or an obe, as I call it, a racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobe.

Kelly Collins: And so one of the things to do is really show people just in everyday life how we have these unconscious biases and how they affect our decision making. For example, when I was talking about just crossing the street and how somebody would feel about that. Well, what if somebody did that to you? How would you feel? And really putting people in those situations so that they understand, yes, this is a natural thing that happened because we get so much information every day we have to do something with the rest of it.

Kelly Collins: We can only process... We get about 11 million bits of information every second. We can only process about 40, the rest of it has to go somewhere. And I call it the junk drawer. And when we're digging through our junk drawer, your brain goes through to try to figure out what do I do with this information? What do I do with these people in front of me in these situations?

Kelly Collins: And so I think it's really important for those people who are resisting to really open the conversation so that they understand that they're not being accused of anything. It is just something that we all need to be aware of because whether we know it or not, it is impacting the decisions that we make every day about people and things around us.

Mike Domitrz: And you have your own experience, your own unconscious bias in what happened with GoDaddy. Can you explain that?

Kelly Collins: So with GoDaddy, this was my own unconscious bias coming to the surface. I tell myself I'm a domain hoarder. I own like over a 100 and something domains. And one day I wanted to use one of my domains for something and I was told that it had to be hosted. And I don't know what that really, what that means. I'm not that technologically savvy.

Kelly Collins: And so I called GoDaddy to talk to them about what I needed to do. And so the gentleman was talking to me and he was explaining to me what I needed for hosting, and he was asking me what I wanted to do with it. And I said, "Oh, I

created this lead page and I have this thing that's related to a book that I wrote and I want to I want to get leads in and send it out to people." And he said, "Oh, okay." He said, "That might be interesting, I might be interested in..." It was a cheat sheet. And I said, "Okay." I just brushed him off.

Kelly Collins: And so he kept talking to me and he brought it up again and he said, "I think I would really be interested in that." And then I was like, in my own, I guess arrogance was like, "No." Thinking to myself, why would he be interested? So he says, "No, tell me what it is, tell me." And I said, "Oh," I said, "well, it's a cheat sheet based on my book and it's about workplace investigations, but you probably wouldn't be interested in it." And he, "Oh, Kelly, well that's where you're wrong." He said, "I used to be a compliance officer for some major company for many, many years. So that's right up my alley."

Kelly Collins: And so what that really showed me is that I had created this persona of him, right? Because he was working at GoDaddy, he was talking to me about hosting. He was a customer service person. And so for me, why would he ever be interested in my book on workplace investigations, which goes to companies and owners and CEOs, but I don't know his background, right? So we assume things about people all the time, and then we make decisions about how we interact with them or how we don't interact with them.

Kelly Collins: And so for me, even being an unconscious bias expert, that was just another example, like a slap in my face, like Kelly, check yourself. And we always have to do that. Every single day we have to check ourself and the decisions that we're making and how we're interacting because we don't know. I don't know, this man could have been a CEO of something, and he's just retired and he likes tech and this is what he wants to do.

Kelly Collins: So it was just one of those situations that really brought me back and allows me to share that with others so that they understand that we all have it and we do it and it isn't intentional.

Mike Domitrz: So with that said, knowing that we might lose out on customers, we could cross into discrimination accidentally, what are additional dangers of ignoring unconscious bias?

Kelly Collins: So the big one is obviously lawsuits, right? One of the things people are mindful of in the workplace is discrimination, lawsuit, title VII, but they think that because unconscious bias is not the same thing, and it's unintentional that that won't get them in trouble. But the courts are now looking at unconscious bias and allowing people to use some of that evidence. It's not widespread yet, but it is becoming more prevalent in the courts.

Kelly Collins: Another big thing which came out of the Me Too movement is damage to your reputation. So, you don't want to end up in the news. And we know that once people hear things, it's just like, as I was saying about unconscious bias, we are

exposed to things. So then you hear these things about these companies or you hear things about people and all of a sudden you start to judge.

Kelly Collins: We don't necessarily follow the story to the end, right? So if your name gets in the news and it's about sexual harassment or unconscious bias or lack of diversity or whatever, people will hear that story. It may end up that that story was incorrect or somehow you were vindicated. But by that time people have already lost interest and usually that doesn't end up back on the storyline. And so there's this damage to your reputation that is, you can't even quantify sometimes.

Kelly Collins: If you're talking about a workplace then there is... It affects turnover rates, it affects you being able to recruit and retain diverse and inclusive, diverse talent and top talent. It affects your attendance, morale, profitability. It could affect your business with vendors and customers. So there are all these other things, we think about money and lawsuits, but there are all these other things that happened within the organization and also outside the organization with goodwill that can be very costly and that you cannot easily recoup from.

Mike Domitrz: And so how do you learn your biases? How do people figure out, hey, I don't want my biases to make bad choices for me. So how did they become more aware of them?

Kelly Collins: One thing is to do the Implicit Association Test by Harvard. It's online. And so you can go on there and they do different exercises so that you can really see where your biases lie. And when I do training, I also do different exercises. For example, you may list some attributes about someone and then you ask them, if this is a male, then pick which one of these words you think you associate with them.

Kelly Collins: The other thing to do is to watch the decisions that you're making. Who are you friends with? Who are you asking out for lunch every day, right? Is it the same people, the same type of people? When you're making decisions about who to promote or who to sponsor or who to mentor, what are those people look like? Is there a pattern?

Kelly Collins: What you need to look for is kind of patterns and how you respond to certain people and certain groups of people, and that will allow you to become more aware of what your biases are.

Mike Domitrz: All right, so now you've got them, you've got your biases. What are some practical actionable strategies for disrupting them so they don't make those bad choices.

Kelly Collins: The easiest way, Mike, the easiest way to disrupt bias is to have conversations. We developed so many ideas about people, situations, groups of people, because we don't know, right? And so we should really start to have

conversations with the people in those groups. So for example, if you have a stereotype about some group or some person, go and have a conversation and really actively listen so that you're there to understand and learn and see if what you have heard, what you've been exposed to, what you've experienced really is factual, right? So that's one way that you can do that.

Kelly Collins: The other thing is to really just be open minded, right? And when you're in a group of people, listen, listen to what everybody has to say. Take in other people's thoughts. Really consider and value other people's opinions. Another thing is set objective standards. So one of the things that we talk about a lot in workplaces, and I mentioned this earlier, is about good fit, right? We always talk about good fit.

Kelly Collins: And I like to say that good fit is the enemy of diversity and inclusion, because we usually use good fit in a subjective manner. But like Zappos uses culture fit right? That's one of their major, major hiring and recruiting tools. But the reason that it works is because it's based on objective standards and everybody knows what those objective standards are. So objectivity will also help you in being able to disrupt unconscious bias.

Mike Domitrz: I love that. Now what if it's somebody else displaying unconscious bias? How do you address theirs?

Kelly Collins: So we have to speak up, right? I did a TEDx on the bystander effect and talking about why some people act and others don't, and there's a power in intervention. Now some people are afraid to intervene because they don't know what the other person's going to say or how that person's going to react. And ever since I've been little, my mom has taught me about time and place, and so sometimes you can't correct the person or correct it in that moment.

Kelly Collins: But for example, if you see that somebody is speaking over someone, being disrespectful to... When women are speaking in a meeting for example, you always see that the men speak over them. Or if there is a younger employee, like a Millennial, we like to bash the Millennials a little bit. We discard them. Someone else needs to speak up and just say, and you can say it just as easily, "Oh, that was a great idea that Mary had."

Kelly Collins: And really reinforce that that person brought up the idea, right? So then it lets everybody else know, okay, I'm standing up for that person or I'm correcting something that I saw. And so sometimes it's correction in the moment. It may be correction at some later time. Sit down and say, "I see that there's a pattern of us not bringing in diverse people or not really listening to diverse voices and ideas. Let's talk about that. Let's see what we can do about it."

Kelly Collins: And all of this has to be in a manner that is non threatening, so that people are open to it. If we feel that we're being accused or judged, we won't be open. So it



really is this process of understanding if correction has to happen in that moment or it's later, but it needs to happen.

Mike Domitrz: And you had your own experience where you felt that you were being treated differently by particularly one white male. And can you share? Because you took a lesson from that.

Kelly Collins: It happens a lot in my profession unfortunately as a lawyer. But the other day, and I'll tell the story, a shortened version. I went mediation and I was the only black female there as an attorney, and everybody else were white males or Hispanic female as an attorney. And after giving our presentations, the male attorney, who was my co-defendant's attorney wanted to adopt my presentation.

Kelly Collins: My presentation was, I had given all of my legal arguments. I had given all of the defenses for my client, and he wanted to adopt those and he turned, and I will just use ABC as the name of the company. And he turned and said, "As ABC's secretary just said-"

Mike Domitrz: Geez, oh my goodness.

Kelly Collins: Yeah, and you can imagine how my head like spun around. I was like, "Secretary?" And what was so interesting about that is that we had never met, he and I had never met. But what I got from that is that he had come into this situation and sized everybody up in the room, which is what we do, right, when we get to a place where you size everybody up. And in his mind, before I opened my mouth, I guess, he pegged me as a secretary, or pegged me as a non attorney.

Kelly Collins: And even after I spoke, even knowing as an attorney that only attorneys would be giving these arguments in the mediation, he somehow could not correct his brain, right? There was something that caused him to stop and that course correction couldn't happen. And in that moment, everybody, that was one of those moments where it was like he needed to be corrected. But that was not the time, right?

Kelly Collins: So the mediator later asked, "Kelly, what should I have done? What could I have done?" Which I thought was really good because then I knew that he realized what happened. And so for me, it was this lesson and just reinforce the lesson that, listen, we have these biases, they're not going to go away, right? They will change over time because we were exposed to different things over time. So we will correct some and then we'll get some more.

Kelly Collins: But it just shows you that sometimes people need a little bit more information, a little bit more checking, a little bit more course correction so that they can see what happened. I guess he noticed that it happened, but he never said anything to me afterwards, and that could have been just from embarrassment. And for



me, I didn't want to create any more of a scene in that moment. And it happens so often, which is unfortunate, that I've learned how to navigate those situations and sometimes to my detriment and sometimes not.

Mike Domitrz: This is an interesting one, because I work with CEOs and I've been in a room where a male CEO will say, "I tell the women you to speak up, right?" And they'll hear about a situation like that and be like, "Kelly, no, every time you must speak up." But what they failed to realize, it seems like, is that it's not your responsibility to fix the other person. It's the other person's to be aware of what they're saying and the impact of their words.

Kelly Collins: Right.

Mike Domitrz: And do you find the same that people want to say, "No, you fix them. Tell them what they did was wrong. Be the warrior." But it's not your job to do that every second in a world that's doing that all the time.

Kelly Collins: Right. And it's interesting because we do get tired, right? And I do get tired and I'm exhausted sometimes, and at times I think this is really not my job. This is not my responsibility to fix you, right? Or to correct you. But it is in some ways, because sometimes people don't realize what they're doing or don't realize that it happened. I think in that moment he did realize because everybody's reaction was just... And he even started to say, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to call you that. I didn't mean to call you that." Right?

Kelly Collins: But there are times where people are just oblivious, right, and so you have to give them... For example, here's a really good example of that, Mike. When people say, "I don't see color." Right? That's very, very well intentioned. And I wrote an article about it on my blog on my website, because I should have corrected someone who said that to me and I didn't. And I let him just suffer in his ignorance over that, right? And his ignorance being just a lack of knowledge, right? Not being demeaning to him, but his ignorance and in what that really means to a person of color.

Kelly Collins: If you don't see my color, that means that you don't see me. If you have to remove my color in order to deal with me, then you're removing part of who I am. And so there is this treating me differently. But when I wrote that article, I didn't realize the impact that it would have on so many people who aren't of color, who were just like, "Kelly, thank you so much for having written that because I never thought about it in that way." Right? So sometimes we just we have to be the teacher even though we don't want to be.

Mike Domitrz: Yeah. Well, and that's the beautiful thing about realizing that our voice deserves to be heard, right, and it's just that difference of I deserve to be respected versus I must fix, right? There's a difference in those mindsets. One, you have a choice. One, you're almost imprisoned by society to play this role.

Kelly Collins: Right.

Mike Domitrz: And there's a difference there. This has been awesome. Thank you so much for sharing with us, because I want to make sure that everybody can find you. It's KellyCharlesCollins.com for all of our listeners, and we're going to have all of your links in our show notes including the your TEDx talk. And I found the Harvard assessment and so I'm going to include that also in the show notes. So thank you so much for joining us.

Kelly Collins: Thank you so much for having me. It's been great.

Mike Domitrz: Absolutely. For our listeners, you know what's next? It is of the week.

Mike Domitrz: Before I answer this week's question of the week, I'd love to ask you a question. Would you please subscribe to this podcast, The Respect Podcast with Mike Domitrz? By subscribing, you can make a huge impact. Now you might be wondering, Mike, how does my subscribing to your podcast make a huge impact? Well, here's how. For every person that subscribes, it raises the rankings of the show in the search engines.

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Mike Domitrz: Now let's get into this week's question of the week. Oh, and by the way, you can always ask your questions of the week by joining us on Facebook in our discussion group. It's called The Respect Podcast discussion group. Go there on Facebook and ask whatever questions you would like me to answer and/or address in this segment of the show, and then listen to each episode to find out when your question is included.

Mike Domitrz: This week's question is about a quote from Confucius which says, "Respect yourself and others will respect you." And people ask me, "Mike, what do you think of that?" Well, I think Confucius got it wrong here, and here's why. One, you don't respect yourself so that others respect you. You respect yourself because you deserve to be treated with respect. Starting with yourself doing that, that's really important.

Mike Domitrz: Two, you cannot control ever how somebody else is going to treat you. You cannot control that. So to think if I respect myself then everyone will respect me, is not true. It's a myth. It will set you up for disappointment and confusion down the road. Know that you respect yourself, because you deserve to be treated with respect and the more you do that, the more you live with respect

in your life, because you're the person you're with the most. So respect yourself because you deserve it.

Mike Domitrz: Do you know what I would love? I would love to hear your answer to this week's question of the week. So would you please answer what your answer would have been if you were asked that question today on the show. All you do is go to our Facebook page. We have a special group where we have these discussions called The Respect Podcast discussion group, so The Respect Podcast discussion group and share with us what would your answer have been to this week's question of the week?

Mike Domitrz: And if take a moment, post us a new question for future episodes. What question would you like to hear me answer on an upcoming episode? That's all done on Facebook in our special group, which is The Respect Podcast discussion group. Can't wait to see you there.

Mike Domitrz: Thank you for joining us in this episode of The Respect Podcast, exploring work, love, and life. And this episode, like every episode, is brought to you by our organization, the Center For Respect, which you can find it, [centerforrespect.com](http://centerforrespect.com) and of course you can find me, your host Mike Domitrz at [Mikespeaks.com](http://Mikespeaks.com). Thank you so much for joining us.