

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

Announcer: This is the Inclusion Interchange, a podcast from the University of Pittsburgh's office for equity, diversity and inclusion. And here's the host of the Inclusion Interchange, Dr. Clyde Wilson Pickett.

Dr. Pickett: Greetings. I'm Dr. Clyde Wilson Pickett, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to the Inclusion interchange, an opportunity for us to profile the voices and individuals who are making impact at the University of Pittsburgh and beyond in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. With me today is Ron Idoko, Associate Director for the Center on Race and Social Problems, and founding director of the Racial Equity Consciousness Institute and Research Assistant Professor. Ron, of course, is no stranger to the University of Pittsburgh community, having been a long committed individual in progressing the work around diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Ron, welcome.

Ron Idoko: Greetings. I'm happy to be here. Excited for the dialogue, and really excited to see that we have this opportunity to share knowledge in ways that are distinct in terms of podcasts. And so excited to learn more about how I can influence folks on the radio.

Dr. Pickett: Absolutely. Well, this appears in a number of different places, so it won't just be on radio.

Ron Idoko: I'm old school.

Dr. Pickett: Oh, okay. No issues. No issues. And so Ron, let's begin with this. Talk to me about why you have a passion for the work to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how did you get your start in this work?

Ron Idoko: Yeah, and so I can say that this work around diversity, equity and inclusion has been a long time passion of mine because I've always been really interested in how we build communities in which everybody can thrive. I've been at Pitt in a working capacity since 2012. I started off in the alumni department, and one of my focuses in alumni was cultivating distinct affinity groups where I would work with different communities of pit alums, LGBT alumni, black alumni alumni across all sorts of identities to really think about how we can make them feel more included as part of the Pitt family, realizing that in the past, perhaps we did not provide the sort of attention needed to ensure they felt strong connection and belonging in their times as alumni. And so for me, I've always been thinking about how do I create space in which everyone can feel like they belong?

Ron Idoko: And it literally turned into a passion of mine to the point where I became the chair of Equipoise, which was our black faculty and staff group, because I wanted to better understand too, not just for alumni, but for the folks here at Pitt, what are the barriers towards feeling more connected, to feel more engaged, realizing that some of that is not always well stated or well understood, and how do we bring those challenges to the surface and so that we can be more thoughtful about the interventions or opportunities that exist to create a more welcoming community for everybody. And that then translated into an opportunity in the office for equity, diversity, and inclusion where I really began to better understand systemic issues. I had an opportunity to better learn under folks like yourself to think about what it means to be much more strategic around these practices, realizing that you have to be very thoughtful about the different communities and folks that you're engaging with to ensure a broad understanding of what's possible.

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

Ron Idoko: And as I continue to engage in that space, one of the things that became very clear to me in terms of challenges was particularly around race, where we live in a society where racism is the status quo. And for many folks, even at the university, there's not broad understanding of what we are dealing with when we talk about systemic racism. And so I saw an opportunity to help build capacity and mindsets to better understand how we deconstruct racism, just as importantly, also cultivate racial equity of realizing there has to be an intentional sort of practice towards the ends we seek when it comes to fostering an environment in which people across different racial identities can thrive. And so that then led to an opportunity to further that work over at the Center on Race and Social Problems. I never imagined myself as an academic, but to the extent that when you find a topic that you find really intriguing and you're very passionate about, all of a sudden you want to put yourself in a position to cultivate more knowledge and to really make sure the knowledge gets out far and wide. So that's been my focus over the past a year and change at Crisp is really thinking about how we leverage tools, how we leverage strategy and frameworks to build the sort of ability of people to do this work most effectively. And that's the Racial Equity Consciousness Institute in a nutshell. Well,

Dr. Pickett: Specifically you talk about not seeing yourself in this work, but we often think about this work as a passion or a calling. Talk to me about some of the ways in which you have been able to connect with different individuals who helped motivate you further in this work, and then what's your responsibility to push that forward and to cultivate that opportunity in others?

Ron Idoko: Yeah, one of the things I learned early on in terms of really connecting with others on this topic was being able to actually communicate effectively, right? Because I often found, at least for me early on, that some of my challenges and engaging on the topic would be how you approach it, conversations on race and racism can be anxiety inducing and can put people in a position to not effectively hear each other when they're trying to dialogue on it. And so being mindful of the fact that I'm engaging with people across all sorts of different identities, one of the things that I took from my time in alumni was learning how to communicate with people across all sorts of differences across all sorts of different regions, different generations. And I thought about how could I leverage what I learned in terms of my interpersonal skills to really consider an approach towards talking about this topic that many of us are often socialized to avoid like the plague.

Ron Idoko: And that learning that the change that we seek really requires all of us that I had to be mindful that I needed to be able to foster a conversation, whether it's with students or with a senior administrator or with alumni or community members. I started thinking about the approaches there that would allow me to be most effective. And so one of the things I established early on was the idea of being able to almost bring down the temperature or at least acknowledge the anxiety that comes with these conversations so that people can be more mindful of the sort of almost innate sort of responses that we have when it comes to these conversations. I think many of us are sometimes not mindful of the fact that we can almost move into this sort of fight or flight mode with these conversations. It triggers these sort of stress responses in us, and that me being mindful of how to not trigger that, or at least to be mindful of how to address it early on, allowed me to have really productive conversations around it.

Ron Idoko: And so from there, I really began to think about, well, how can I leverage the ability to have meaningful conversation with people and to do so in a way that's constructive, to

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

begin to think about what's a collective approach towards addressing this issue on our campus? And it became just a matter of really active networking, looking for opportunities to connect with people across differences, to say, Hey, how can we collaborate on programming or initiatives that work towards fostering a community, again, which everybody can thrive realizing most folks tend to have a similar desire to foster an environment in which people can thrive, and which they don't have to experience these challenges based on identity, but most of us are not often educated on how to do that effectively, and that it requires really meaningful dialogue so we can really talk about the change we seek.

Ron Idoko: And so from there, it was a lot of networking, engaging with folks, leveraging the opportunity to do the work from the Office for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, realizing that folks look to our office for this sort of support, for that sort of guidance. And then just being mindful about creating strong networks. One of the things that I did early on was try to create that network through the inclusion network, trying to be very intentional about bringing people together who are either practitioners or interested in equity inclusion in general to say, Hey, how can we foster more dialogue, more opportunities to connect, share ideas, and be intentional about it?

Dr. Pickett: And so for those who may not be familiar, the Inclusion Network is ---

Ron Idoko: The Inclusion Network is our DEI Community of practice, the folks, again, who are actively working towards affecting change on our campus environment. And again, it's open to all members of the community because we recognize everyone has a role to play in affecting change. And so in establishing that network and really trying to drive it forward, it became clear to me that we needed to institutionalize more spaces and opportunities for people to understand how to do the work effectively. And that's again, what really led me down the pathway of thinking about frameworks that people can engage, realizing if you can make it as constructive as possible, if you can give people clear pathways, they can embrace the opportunity to grow on their own and to support the growth of others in their spaces.

Dr. Pickett: And so it, it's clear you have a calling for this work, you're advancing this work, and you're helping our community move forward. And even beyond that, but you noted at the beginning you didn't see yourself as an academic. Talk to me about the ways in which you've transitioned into this and where did you see yourself?

Ron Idoko: Yeah, I mean, I always knew I wanted to be in spaces where I can engage a lot of people. My undergrad degree was in communications. I always thought about how can I leverage the ability to talk with anybody or connect with anybody to make change happen? I never really did see it through the academy. I come from New York City, and I always thought, I'll go back to New York and figure out whether it's in the nonprofit space or maybe even in the private sector, how I can leverage the ability to connect and engage to make change happen. But I think during my time here at Pitt, as I again further investigated why it was so difficult for us to make change when it comes to addressing racism, a lot of it became clear to me it was that we didn't have as much knowledge in terms of what it means to build cognitive capacity and not to get really technical or academic with it, but again, most of us are socialized not to even understand the topic of systemic racism, much less be situated to figure out how to address it.

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

Ron Idoko: And so for me, I saw an opportunity to do some more research to say, okay, well, what does that actually mean to build people's cognitive and behavioral capacity to be effective agents of change? And as I started doing that research, it became clear to me that, okay, well, there's not as much by way of prominent research on the sort of neuroscience of racial equity, and that if I could leverage my research to further build pathways and understanding around that, that was going to be, I think a helpful tool for a lot of people. And that's when I began to realize, I'm like, wait, I think I might be a nerd. I think I might be an actual academic because not only did I like to research about it, but I like to talk about it. I like to, in a sense, teach about it. And so that's where I found myself leaning more towards the understanding that this is my purpose, that I have an ability to further cultivate this knowledge and ensure that it becomes as widespread as possible, and I could do so through the academy. And so that's how I ended up becoming a research professor, which again, if you asked me 10 years ago, I'd be like, what are you talking about? But here I am.

Dr. Pickett: Well, we appreciate that you're here and certainly appreciate you sharing that. I guess I'll lean in a bit into what you offered in terms of looking at and confronting that apprehension around having discussions about racism. Talk to me about the ways you would suggest for our listeners to start the conversation on facing and overcoming that apprehension and starting the conversation about confronting racism.

Ron Idoko: Yeah, I, and I'll say this, there is no silver bullet when it comes to ensuring constructive dialogue with folks. All contexts are different. All nuances certainly can be applied differently and that people are people and they will respond how they respond. But I will say for me, what's been most effective is approaching from the sense of what I'm trying to accomplish. And for me, I'm always very clear, but I want a world which everybody can thrive, and I believe we have to do it together. And so I'm always sort of leading with that idea, okay, how do we learn how to make our society better for everybody? And considering what's getting in the way these sort of systems that are producing these inequities? And to the extent sometimes that we have to start with some foundational language, I often ask folks, how do you define racism?

Ron Idoko: There is a clear definition, but again, most of us are not educated on it. And so it's important to establish how do we understand this term racism and how do we understand what it means to be racist? 99% of the people in the world, you ask them, are you a racist? They'll say, no. And then you ask them, well, can you define systemic racism? They'll be like, right. And so again, we're often positioned to think that if you're a racist, you have to be an overt, almost actively prejudiced person, not realizing that the vast majority of racism is perpetuated unconsciously, implicitly because we're socialized in a society where racism's the status quo and we're socialized not to understand it in terms of how it impacts us through policies and other sort of practices and our cultural ideology. And so for me, I come in with the sort of empathy to say that, Hey, I too was not educated on this, but once I understood the definition and better, was better positioned to think about how my behavior may contribute or work against it, that that's where I think the conversation then goes back to, well, how do we work to make a society free of racism?

Ron Idoko: Right? Again, we have to have establish a clear understanding around it. And I think one of the things that's happened over the past few years that have made the conversation easier about understanding the broader nature of racism has been the declaration of

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

racism as a public health crisis by multiple government entities, particularly by the CDC, the world's largest public health agency, that they define racism as a system that truly produces inequities across racial identity groups, mostly primarily impacting black and indigenous folks. And that if you can just start from there saying, Hey, here's a factual statement from a public health agency that we can then talk about, well, what does it mean for us to actively address it? That certainly we got to build our understanding around it and build our ability to think about how we work collectively to address it. And again, does that approach work every single time with folks? Not always the case, but for most folks who are good faith actors who do want to see change happen, that it tends to be a meaningful way for me to get the dialogue going.

Dr. Pickett: You're listening to the Inclusion Interchange. I'm your host, Dr. Clyde Wilson Pickett. We're going to take a quick break and we'll be back more with Ron Idoko.

Announcer: For more information about the Office for Equity Diversity and Inclusion, visit our website at diversity.pitt.edu or find us on social media at Pitt Diversity.

Dr. Pickett: Welcome back to the Inclusion Interchange. We're talking about a number of wide ranging topics with our guest, Ron Idoko. And so in our last segment, you were specifically talking about racism and our understanding of racism. I'd like to pivot just a bit and build on that and give you an opportunity to define racial equity.

Ron Idoko: So if there's one thing I know for certain that folks struggle with trying to define systemic racism, they really struggle with trying to define racial equity. And when we talk about racial equity, we're not talking about necessarily everyone getting the same thing or everyone experiencing or getting the same sort of resources. We're talking about people getting proportional resources or opportunities to ensure fair outcomes. And I think one of the most meaningful definitions of racial equity that I've seen comes from race forward of very history racial justice organization. They define racial equity as the process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone that they talk about it not just as outcomes, but also a process that racial equity is the process, the pathway towards racial justice. And so in that sense, it puts us in a position to realize that there are many things we have to do to establish processes to achieve equity, to achieve fairness in outcomes, which means we have to be very mindful of the ways in which we're engaging personally and collectively to create those sort of strategies, those opportunities to ensure that people can experience fair outcomes.

Ron Idoko: Realizing our society has been structured for people to experience wildly disparate outcomes, and to the extent that when we think about what it means to develop processes, each of us operate in different spaces, in our different workplaces, in our different neighborhoods and communities where racism might appear differently. And so each of us has to consider what sort of processes that we have to develop personally and collectively with the communities that we influence to achieve the outcomes that are fair across the board. That in of itself is a unique sort of skillset, and one that, again, most of us don't know inherently, I can't recall any course I took and one through in K through 12, even in college, that talked about how do you actively work to eliminate racial disparities and improve outcomes for everyone. So that requires a structured pathway for growth. It requires some sort of blueprint, some sort of framework that gives people an idea of, okay, what does that mean for me?

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

Ron Idoko: How can I be most effective in developing processes that lead to fairness in my community? And that was something again that I really wanted to understand and that I took a lot of time to study to say, okay, how does one actually learn how to contemplate and cultivate racial equity? That is, how does one learn how to contemplate and cultivate what it means to create processes towards eliminating disparities and improving outcomes? And realizing, again that that might take a good amount of work from folks in different spaces. How do you make something that's universal so that it's not necessarily just about the things you do in the education sector or in public health or in criminal justice, but a sort of universal approach? And that's where I really focused on building consciousness as a sort of universal approach so that anyone can take the time to build their consciousness that is build their dispositions, their awareness, their skills, and their knowledge towards how they can contemplate and cultivate racial equity in the spaces that they engage in.

Dr. Pickett: And so specifically, you were referencing the Racial Equity Consciousness Institute for the listeners, talk to them about the ways they can participate, learn more information, and really get involved with the institute.

Ron Idoko: Indeed. And so I would encourage anyone, you can hop on the Google machine and type in "racial equity consciousness institute," and that should pop up some resources. In particular, we have a learning management site, basically an active open course where folks can dive into the concept, learn more about the frameworks, and engage the prompts that we utilize to help build consciousness. When we think about building consciousness in this space, it's almost like thinking about building muscle mass that you have to go in the gym, you do specific workouts to build muscle and to really ensure your top health, your top fitness, the same has to happen here. We have to build muscle memory towards how we advance the world in which everybody can thrive. We want to almost become inherently skilled at it, which means we have to engage in a lot of practice and a lot of workouts, a lot of reps, so to speak.

Ron Idoko: And so on those sites, on the racial equity consciousness site, you're going to find resources that again, help you think about what particular prompts or what information or resources can I leverage to really build that muscle memory, to build that capacity to both see how racism operates in my environment and to see where I can intervene with new practices, new policies, new initiatives to cultivate racial equity. We also have ongoing racial equity consciousness learning community cohorts where we bring members of the community together to engage in open dialogue and reflection on how we, again, both build our understanding of racism and our ability to affect change in our environment. As I mentioned, most people are often socialized to be very anxious on this topic, but I know for certain that transformative change can't happen if we don't know how to have dialogue. And so it gives people an opportunity.

Ron Idoko: The cohorts give people an opportunity to both engage in the learning around the frameworks, but also an opportunity to engage in dialogue that people need to practice having meaningful constructive conversations on this so they can be effective in their environments in terms of facilitating opportunities to dialogue with others. And one of the other tools that we're working on is an actual guidebook, realizing again, that some folks really do well with clear instruction and guidance, that we want to be very intentional about providing resources that people can leverage not just for themselves, but for their own learning communities, whether it's in school environments or in work

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

environments, realizing that some folks just need some real clear instruction as to how they move forward in this space. And those are the things that we're trying to develop to support people in all communities to do this work effectively.

Dr. Pickett: Well, you referenced this conversation about the power of transformational dialogue. Much has been made about the public attacks on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. My question to you would be this, in what ways can we, tools like the Racial Equity Consciousness Institute and others to appropriately position a more clear understanding on this work and to confront some of those attacks?

Ron Idoko: Yes. One of the things we emphasize in the institute is the ability to distinguish bad faith behavior. And what I mean by that is that folks that aren't necessarily honest in their desire to make change happen for the better folks that perhaps might have agendas that aren't necessarily aligned with the idea of everyone thriving. And that when we get really good at being able to facilitate these conversations and that we are not operating from a place of anxiety or stress, and that we can really emphasize our desire to be in community with others and to dialogue in constructive ways, it makes it easier for folks to almost weed out bad faith actors, folks who might continue to want to push an agenda and not be able to have a thoughtful conversation. One of the things I often reflect on is imagining a society in which we all know how to have this conversation openly and thoughtfully, and that we all know how to have a productive conversation that leads towards productive outcomes, that we can do a lot of meaningful transformation from that place.

Ron Idoko: I think one of the biggest barriers that we have now is that people, again, often struggle just to have an open dialogue about what they're experiencing or not experiencing based on your identity. And that makes it very difficult for us to even consider the strategies or plans towards change. And so when you learn how to have a constructive dialogue and when you learn that you can facilitate that dialogue with anyone, you find yourself much more empowered to make change happen. And I think to the extent, again, that not everyone that you'll encounter will be prepared or ready to engage towards change. That's okay. Be mindful that most people in this world are good people. Most folks are engaging with a desire to make change or to make good things happen, even if they're not aware necessarily of those challenges that exist that you can introduce, introduce those opportunities for collective growth or understanding.

Ron Idoko: And I think in that sense, that puts people in a position to feel empowered to be an agent of change. One of the things I often find in the work that I do early on with people who are entering the space is the barriers that they report when it comes to doing this work where a lot of folks saying like, I'm afraid I might say the wrong thing, or I'm going to upset someone, or I'm going to upset myself. Or to the extent that I'm going to harm a relationship that I have with a family member or a friend, those serve as self-imposed barriers. But if we can get people to move beyond that by empowering them to be much more knowledgeable, skilled, and aware in how to effectively facilitate these conversations, you'll find them making change happen in their environment, I think in much more profound ways than they even imagined.

Dr. Pickett: And so you're talking about change and change management and strategy that appropriately allows us the resource tool and skill and competency to build change. You've talked about the Racial Equity Consciousness Institute. I had to get that out. Talk

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

to me about what's next after this? What are the ways you see this expanding and what are the ways the community can support you?

Ron Idoko: Yes, and so for me, one of the biggest takeaways I've had from this process in terms of fostering significant transformational change is the ability to develop and drive narrative. The stories that we tell about how change happens and how we can position ourselves to make change is key. And so I'm really big on trying to think about how to develop narrative. And so to that point, one of the things we're working on and hoping to have out shortly is a film, a short film on racial equity consciousness. We want to show people how community can come together, have this dialogue in ways that are, again, really meaningful, constructive, and also begin to reflect on how they can make change happen personally, but also collectively with their other communities as they envision and sort of plot towards unique opportunities that they didn't see before, but they can see now because they can see the issue that much more clearly and that they can see the opportunities to connect with folks in their community to foster systemic ways of making change happen.

Ron Idoko: I believe particularly universities are really major catalysts because you have people across so many different disciplines, people who touch so many areas of society, and that if we can learn how to harness the power of building consciousness here, that we can then really ensure that we are graduating students and supporting faculty and colleagues and doing incredible transformation work across all sorts of aspects of society. And so like I mentioned, narrative development is really key. And so in addition to the film, as mentioned, the guidebook, but we're also looking towards our community folks who've gone through the institute to think about what are the unique ways that they can continue to cultivate consciousness, realizing it's not just about doing it the way that we do it, that there are so many unique ways to build understanding that we have to consider and approach every opportunity as a unique one. And so whether it's things like podcasts that help build consciousness or things like children's books that people can leverage their knowledge to think about how they utilize all the sorts of media that we have available to drive narrative around how change happens, and to, again, position communities across the spectrum to be effective in this work.

Dr. Pickett: Okay, so we'll pause. You're listening to the Inclusion Interchange, our guest is Ron Idoko, and we'll be back in a minute.

Announcer: If you have a question or comment, we hope you'll write to us. Our email address is diversity@pitt.edu.

Dr. Pickett: And so we are back with the Inclusion Interchange. I'm your host, Dr. Clyde Wilson Pickett. With me again is Ron Idoko. And so Ron, as we conclude our time together, certainly it's been a pleasure. I want to focus our discussion in a different direction and a chance for us to hear about you specifically. What are some of the ways in which you are able to grow your motivation in continuing this work? What drives you and how do you find fuel for continuing our efforts?

Ron Idoko: Oh, man, that's such an important question because early on, as I became more aware of systemic racism and how it operated early on, I was just a very angry person. When you realize just how stacked the deck is against you and folks who look like you, it can

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

become very, very deflating and frustrating. And to the extent that folks who might've known me circa 2015, 2016, as you might imagine, things were happening in the country, I was probably not the most engaging person on this topic because I was just so frustrated and angry, and I realized that was not going to sustain me. If anything, it drained me. It put me in a position at times to almost feel apathetic that, okay, nothing's going to change. This is just too hopeless. And so I had to be mindful, again, as I was thinking about what it meant to really advance this work across an institution of, well, what's actually going to sustain me?

Ron Idoko: What's going to put me in a position I want to keep having this dialogue? And then I had to remind myself of what my goal is, a world in which we can all thrive. And as I would engage with people, I had to think about what can fuel me, and I can't be fueled by fear or by frustration or ignorance that I had to consider. What are the tools for liberation in this space? And so one of the things that was really impactful for me was the work of Bobby Harrow and talking about the cycle of liberation and what are the tools that are needed to sustain liberation movements. And she talked about love and self-esteem and balance and support and joy and spirituality, feeling connected with other people. And as I began to lean into those things, I found that it really did nourish me that every dialogue that I had with someone around this topic that fostered more understanding and connection empowered me.

Ron Idoko: Every opportunity that I had to connect with groups around this work and see people growing in their understanding reminded me that we are capable of making change happen, even if it's one person at a time. And that you embraced the opportunity to provide that gift of liberation, to get people to see that, hey, you don't have to do this work from a place of anger. You don't have to do this work from a place of frustration or apathy, because ultimately those will take energy away from you. You can do things or you can engage in a way that gives you energy by engaging with, again, love, empathy, compassion by remaining confident in why you're doing this work, understanding your dispositions, your drivers, so to speak. And so for me, one of the things that I do consistently is continue to remind myself, what are my drivers?

Ron Idoko: What are my values, my beliefs, my motivations, being clear with myself that I want a world in which we can all thrive, and that as long as I can continue to picture myself moving in that direction, and as long as I continue to see the sort of change that's happening around me with people who are growing more conscious and who are becoming much more confident in their ability to make change happen, that I know change is coming. And I know changes have already occurred in many ways. We've seen people who've gone through the institute who have gone back to their apartments, introduced new policies, new practices, or who've introduced perhaps new ways of engaging with their family that again, have proven to them that they can also make change happen. And so for me, being able to help people do this work most effectively and seeing them grow in the space has been something like rocket fuel in my body, right?

Ron Idoko: Because it reminds me that if you can change one, you can change your hundred, you can change a thousand, you can change much more. And that we all have to remind ourselves why we're doing this, right? Because if it's just simply trying to focus on personal agendas or to really just deal with the idea of wanting to be righteous or wanting retribution, that can only take you so far. But if it's a world in which everybody can thrive and you realize you are an agent of change, or that you have the capacity to

This is an automated transcript. There may be some errors in transcription.

influence people towards that direction, and you can do so consistently and make that your primary purpose, or at least be guided with that sort of energy that you're going to find yourself not only sustained, but empowered, right to do this at the highest levels. I mean, I wake up every day excited to think about, man, what sort of great change can I make happen today?

Ron Idoko: Right? Today's a good day to make something good happen, and that you seek out opportunities to make good happen with other people. And when you see it happen, you're like, okay, I'm reminded I have that capacity, I have that power. And if you do so, for me, it just becomes very infectious because I've seen it bear out. And not just the sort of connections I've made or sort of the change that we see, but also the sort of energy around this topic, because again, I remember it wasn't that long ago where talking about this just felt very iffy and felt very sort of skittish, and folks just weren't really enthusiastic about it. But now I encounter folks who not only want to have the conversation, but are excited to have the conversation and excited to talk about the change they want to make happen. And I think, again, that's what drives me in this space is that knowing we are doing great work that can really redirect the future of this country is something just very meaningful for me.

Dr. Pickett: Very good. Ron, as always, it's been a pleasure. Certainly, we thank you for taking the opportunity to spend some time with us on the Inclusion Interchange, but more importantly, we thank you for all of the work that you're doing for our community and beyond. To our listeners, thank you once again for joining us for another episode of the Inclusion Interchange. Take care and be well.

Announcer: You've been listening to The Inclusion Interchange, a podcast from the University of Pittsburgh's Office for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion. Technical support for this podcast is provided by the Center for Teaching and Learning. For more information about the Office for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, visit our website at diversity.pitt.edu or find us on social media at PittDiversity. The Inclusion Interchange is produced by Jay Togyer for OEDI.