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[00:00:26] **Speaker 1** Doctor treat, thank you for joining us.

[00:00:27] **Speaker 2** It's really good to be able to sit down and talk with you again.

[00:00:30] **Speaker 1** Always a pleasure. So let's talk a little bit about, we know that, Nehemiah has its arms in all kinds of different things. Let's talk a little bit about just about.

[00:00:39] **Speaker 2** All right.

[00:00:39] **Speaker 1** Let's go. How did it start?

[00:00:42] **Speaker 2** I was minding my own business. Driving to a prayer gathering right in this space. Pulled up right outside the front doors, and two police cars pulled me over. Said that they were looking for a red car. Mine's black, and they're looking for a car that was going the wrong way down Fisher Street. I grew up on this street, and I just left there visiting my mom. I said, Fisher Street's a two way street. What do you mean, the wrong way? And my car's obviously not red. That experience. And let me just add, my associate pastor, who's white, was in the parking lot when I pulled up. I hired him, I signed his payroll check. He got out of his car to come and make sure that nothing weird was going on. Not once did they say, get back in the car. Who are you? Show me ID. But they asked him to corroborate my story because they wanted to know what I was doing here. And I'm the longest serving pastor in this community.

[00:01:34] **Speaker 1** So you were profiled, basically.

[00:01:36] **Speaker 2** I was profiled in my own church parking lot.

[00:01:39] **Speaker 1** Well.

[00:01:40] **Speaker 2** And if they wanted to know what I was doing here, why didn't they want to know what my white associate pastor was doing? You sit in the parking lot first. It was an evening. It was dark. He was the first car I pulled up was a second car, and then two police cars pulled up behind me.

[00:01:53] **Speaker 1** Never even when he got out of his car, he never.

[00:01:57] **Speaker 2** Said so. Who are you? What are you doing here? Show us I they added to my rearview mirror and saw him standing back here, talking to the police officers while they asked him to corroborate my story. Is he who he said he is? I had to drop the name of three police officers who were part of this congregation at the time. Had the name dropped to have them. Let me let me go between that and the evented, rotary, where I talked about the bleak realities of, of, mass incarceration. Woman. Thank me for not being an angry black man.

[00:02:26] **Speaker 1** God, you take that.

[00:02:27] **Speaker 2** I said, well, why would you think I'm not angry, man? I'm very angry. Oh, I know, I know, but you're not. You're not angry like something. And then she named another black influencer. You know, pitting us against each other. I said I'm angry. Just like in. After that, I found one of my friends, Phil, hassling her, who used to write for cab times, and he was a pastor. I said, I need to tell my story. This crap goes on all the time, and people wouldn't believe it because I didn't believe until it happened to me. So I pinned, my response, you know, and, Cab Times published it and it went viral. I wrote it, I think it published December 18th, and by the 31st, and it was the 11th most racist story of the year.

[00:03:07] **Speaker 1** So let's talk about the cab times. Sure. Essay that you put together. The headline was, Alex. She says Madison is failing its African-American community. You feel that was an accurate way to describe it?

[00:03:21] **Speaker 2** Oh, it's extremely accurate. I knew that my response would ruffle feathers, because who wants to listen to a middle class black male with an advanced degree living in Fitchburg talking about racial disparities? And I knew that. So I sat on some of these truths for a long time. But after this, after being pulled over by the police the second time, after being profiled the second time and pulled over, and that comment at rotary, I said, at the end of, new Jack city win. And Wesley Snipes said, you know, if I Nino Brown said, if I go down, everybody's going down. I just said, if I go down, everybody, I'm going to tell it. I'm going to tell it. And I just started talking about the experiences and the accuracy really comes in the fact that we have been voicing these issues for a long time. We've been talking about, the two tier system, the parallel realities, and people like, no, no, no, Oprah, Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, you don't see color.

[00:04:17] **Speaker 1** Alex, this is Madison.

[00:04:18] **Speaker 2** Oh, no. Come on, just calm down. You're high. Strong. And I just said no, I'm going to talk about these experiences. And when we bring them up, if action does take place, it's someone typically white going into space, some spaces and creating solutions and then asking us to rubber stamp. That said, in order to really address these issues, we have to address them. We have to tell the stories, and we have to invite others when we're ready to be a part of that solution. But we need to design them ourselves. And I wanted the letter to kick off the reality that is that not only are we experiencing the disparities, we are invited to the table very late to address them and we needed to change that. So that's really what I meant when I said, and that Madison was not treating its black residents well. Its because our experiences weren't being respected.

[00:05:05] **Speaker 1** And, correct me if I'm wrong, the name justified anger. That was something that, you did not come up with.

[00:05:12] **Speaker 2** Oh no no no no no no cap times came up with that. Now I like it. I think it's I think it's catchy. But no, no I didn't I didn't make that up. And so when they came out to shoot the the photo for the story, they say, well, why don't you, can you.

[00:05:28] **Speaker 1** Hold your hands like this?

[00:05:30] **Speaker 2** So, I mean, I wasn't thinking about it was cold outside, so I got a bullet in my arms when the article came out. A lot of them, you know, our black friends said, oh, Alex, you're going to get it. They made you look angry. Them, and they made you look defiant. You're going to get it. They're going to peg you as an angry black man. I said, well, I am angry, but that doesn't mean that I'm destructive. And the only thing that I'm dangerous to is the status quo. And so I'm not going to hurt anybody. But I'm going to spill the beans and I'm going to challenge the status quo.

[00:05:57] **Speaker 1** When you say when we say justified anger, what does that mean to you?

[00:06:00] **Speaker 2** It means that even though anger is is often a feared emotion, the justification of it is it makes sense because. If I'm experiencing these issues with what I've done in the community and who I am, perhaps other people have been telling the truth also. And if this indeed does happen because of race, then you have every right to be angry. That anger is called for and it gave me space to own that. Now I would have to tell you, I sat down with a lot of white influencers after that took place and they said, Alex, can't we call it justify something else? Can't we call it justified attitude or justified action? It's just an anger who just sounds so. I don't know. Threatening. It is a threat. I've threatened every day my existence and the existence of those who look like me is threatened every day. Let's call it what it is, and I refuse. I absolutely refuse to change it. Even if they insinuated that my funding would be jeopardized. I wasn't to be bought and our pain wasn't to be bought, and. So here it is, ten, 11 years later, and we're still known for that.

[00:07:13] **Speaker 1** Yeah. And, you talked about some of the funders wanting you to change language on that. Is it something you considered ever and do you ever worry about coming up sounding too angry?

[00:07:25] **Speaker 2** I am angry.

[00:07:26] **Speaker 1** But do you ever worry about sounding too angry?

[00:07:28] **Speaker 2** No, no, no. In fact, what I told one of the funders is. When white men start becoming more angry, perhaps then I can become less angry. Help me carry this anger. But you're not going to challenge me and my anger, and you're not going to look at your own lack of courageousness. You know, there's a there's a poem that I quoted in the anniversary article of just about anger from, Augustine of Hippo, a fourth century, theologian and philosopher. And he said, Lopez has two beautiful daughters. One is anger and one is courage. Anger at the way things are encouraged, for the way things can be. And so anger is a part of hope. You can't get to hope without anger, because anger is a catalytic emotion that can cause you to start doing something. My anger caused me to organize people, train non-black allies, train black emerging leaders, speaking my mind, advocating for my community. Anger prompted those issues, and so people can try to get upset at the vernacular of the word. But take a look at the body of work. Does it justify fear as it justify worrying about what my intentions are? And have I not contributed more to the community as an angry black person than some of the colleagues who are white and calm and very placid? In terms of how things. How things work. How's that working for them? And so, no, I never, ever worry about Sandy two angry.

[00:08:56] **Speaker 1** Let's talk about the coursework. Justified in your coursework. How does that how does the program work?

[00:09:00] **Speaker 2** Yeah, my undergraduate work was in Afro-American history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. So I've always thought if people understood how we got to where we are in terms of race relations, they understood, the history of systemic racism. Let's just take the name of it out. Let's just talk about the way the country was built. Let's look at our history at a nonpolitical, academic perspective. I felt that people, non-black people would say, I didn't. Wow. I didn't know that. Really? I understand things a lot differently now. Now I know how strategic we must be in dismantling this. Know people were very strategic in maintaining this, and we thought we'd get maybe 100 people. The first class, I think we got 150 with the waiting list. And then the next time I think we did 250 with 100 people waiting list. So eventually we took it up to 300 people. And then during the pandemic, when we put the course online, that first cohort was 1700 people. We've taken nearly 5000 people through this nine week, two hours a week course that teaches history from Western African civilization, pre transatlantic slave trade, through the 1950s and 1960s. And it's just packed out. And it has been a very, very powerful tool for helping people to understand how we arrived at this place of a racialized America.

[00:10:29] **Speaker 1** Do you feel like, you know, you mentioned that the the 5000 number, which is what you've seen in the ten years now? Do you feel like that number is higher or lower than what you would have?

[00:10:39] **Speaker 2** Oh, it's much, much, much, much higher. Because even though I wrote Justified Anger in 2013, I don't think we launched the class until maybe 2017. And so it took us a couple of years to design it, to work with faculty on campus, but it's much higher. First of all, I didn't know that we'd be doing it every year just on let's just try lists, because hundreds of people were emailing me after I wrote the article asking, what can I do? So I thought, let's create a bar. And if people adhere to this bar, if they come to this nine week course, then I can I can have, a crew of people, corps of people that I can at least say, all right, let's take the next steps in addressing this issue. But I couldn't just tell the hundreds of people who have said, tell me what to do. It's just too much to manage. But people went through the course. They show that they're really interested in educating themselves about the issue. It's it's more it's easy to move those people along because they dedicated some commitment. So I didn't know they were going to do it again and again and again and again. Now, because it's going online, people have taken it from coast to coast. People stop me in restaurants and say, you don't know me, but I've taken your course. This is what's going on. History. People have completed the course. Like Judge Justice Jakosky has opened doors so that we've created opportunities for fellow judges to take a portion of the class. We've offered it to corporations, whether it's Summit Credit Union or American Family Insurance or other major corporations. University of Wisconsin has actually sent faculty. Elected officials have taken it. CEOs of nonprofits. I don't think that I imagine how eclectic the group would be, that it would continue for so long that we would actually talk about 5000 graduates with, about and about with about 84%, completion rate. So the numbers of people who start is actually higher than 5000, but the 5000 is the number of those who completed it.

[00:12:37] **Speaker 1** What's the demographic of the person who goes like what? What's their race, gender, and what kind of work are they in?

[00:12:43] **Speaker 2** It was designed for for, white allies for people wouldn't be white outs primarily. We saw other groups coming as well. But it was it was really designed, for the larger population that for the dominant, population here in Madison.

[00:12:59] **Speaker 1** When you say ally, what do you mean by one?

[00:13:01] **Speaker 2** Well, actually referred to folks who are interested in helping as would be allies because we found that, the term ally was thrown around too easily because anyone who felt sympathetically about these issues call themselves an ally. But, it didn't convict them enough to vote in a way that would help the issues donate in a way that would help the issues show up in affiliate themselves with these organizations. But we needed more than just sympathy. We needed people to really ally. Allies put themselves in harm's way. They say they don't wait for me to address an issue, or their black friends will say, excuse me, that's offensive and what you just said, or in their own places and spheres of work. I thought we said we're going to wait for Diverse pool. I thought that were. Why is this committee so monolithic? Why, why is and they would ask their own questions. And so that's what allies. Do. And so we we created this training for people who wanted to become allies. We didn't just assume people were allies because they felt sorry about the issues. The demographic early on, it's probably white Madison ians who were, in their in their 60s or close to retirement age. Many of them had had an advanced degree. And so they were really considered to be educated people who knew nothing to very little of real U.S. history, had never heard of the Harlem Renaissance, did not know about reconstruction. They did not understand a lot of these things that were just everyday knowledge, you know. You know, a certain groups of people. And so it caused them to question who messed with my educational process, that I can have an advanced degree, an intelligent individual. And there's a whole segment of American history, not black history of American history, that we never heard about. I use a quote, by James Baldwin that he wrote for The New Yorker in 1964, I think. And he and I paraphrase it, it is said to the extent that white America doesn't understand the history of black people in America, they do not understand themselves. And I found that to play out incredibly true. Many people signed up for the class thinking, we want to learn what happened to our black brothers and sisters after the third or fourth session. They said, wait, wait, because they could go home and Google and say, this is real. This really did happen. The Harlem Renaissance is really a thing. How could I have not been told anything about it? So then it caused them to question their own educational experience and processes when that happened. Gloves off. They were ready to say, okay, we're going to dive in because we were. We understand that you weren't told about your history, but we didn't know that. We weren't told about ours. And why was that? And how did that make us party to the systemic racism that would happen in this country? It's a very powerful moment when that takes place. That takes place with every cohort around the fourth lecture.

[00:15:50] **Speaker 1** I remember reading that, that you put this together to better race relations here in Madison. Why not put something together to better race relations throughout the entire state of Wisconsin?

[00:16:02] **Speaker 2** You know, you have to understand your market in your reach. And sometimes I think we've missed an opportunity to do, to do good by trying to do too much. And I have credibility here. I've invested here, been raised here. And I knew that I could pull off things and I could gather people, and I had a reputation here. But I also felt that if this became established enough, we could then spread it throughout the state. But I've learned to really start locally and begin to to move out. So I just wanted to be cautious and to think this think this through. I love now that it is statewide and that people are taking it from all over the country. But the idea was, let's just make sure that we take care of the would be allies in Madison who need some type of threshold to cross to say, now I want to be taken seriously. I want to be invested in because I want to be part of the change. And we could do that locally. I couldn't do that statewide at that time.

[00:17:00] **Speaker 1** And I understand also a big part of. The effort and justified anger is not just to educate about black history, it's also about letting white residents learn about themselves.

[00:17:13] **Speaker 2** Oh, definitely. Because learning about black history won't change anything. Learning about themselves will change everything.

[00:17:22] **Speaker 1** What do they learn?

[00:17:24] **Speaker 2** They learn. They learn what's really meant by the term white privilege, and that that's not just a moniker, that's not just thrown off on people. They learn that they're not really white. The German, the Italian, they're they're British, they're French, they're Scandinavian. And then they have to ask, well, why do we celebrate that? And we tell them, your grandmothers did. Your great grandfathers celebrated it. Tell me, what if you tell me the ethnic background, I can almost tell you how they may have celebrated. Tell me what they ate and I can tell you how they celebrated it. So then they have to ask themselves, well, then why did we stop being German? Why do we stop being Irish? Because you were given the option to not only to be white, which was to be American, but to not be black, so that no matter what day the country put on you as a white person, you could always say, at least I'm not black. You can vote, you can go into theaters, you could marry at all these rights that black people didn't. All you had to do was to wear the team jersey of whiteness and kind of throw away your own little separate cultural identities that might separate us. Meanwhile, black people were holding on to their blackness. You remember the the scene in roots where, they were trying to tell Kunta Kinte that his name was Toby, and he wouldn't say it because all he had was his his name, his blackness, his culture, his family, his God. And he kept saying, what's your name? And they could not get him to say, Toby. We were holding to our heritage, and white America was selling theirs for the American dream, for American capitalism to be accepted. And so then that completely polarized the country between black and white or white and other. And when people learn that, they realize that once you dichotomies people that way, once you polarize in that way. You can put them at odds around anything. Separate them how they live, and then they never come together so that we never work together. We don't create solutions together without even realizing it. We've been made to be the enemies of each other and fearful of each other. And when they realize that that was strategically designed. They were pissed. Our participants were pissed because they just didn't know. They've been thinking. Why can't you just be it? Why can't you just be American? And why can't you just be American?

[00:19:45] **Speaker 1** We've been trying to be American for 500 years.

[00:19:49] **Speaker 2** But we couldn't. And it wasn't because we didn't work as hard as y'all or think as hard as you all are, run as fast as you are. There were other reasons they kept us from being American, and I think by now we know what those reasons were, and that reality causes those who are watching closely to think, if I don't do something, I'm part of the problem. And that's what the course taught. Either you become a part of the solution or you are the problem. If I may say this, I think that this is very important. We presented to the Wisconsin Partnership Program the idea, we gave their data back to them in departments of public health who have found that racism has become a social determinants of health, that if if people of color and I speak specifically about my background as a black person who's working predominantly in white spaces, dealing with microaggressions from can I Touch Your hair to only talk to me about black news and not regular news? To why do you crease your jeans? So whatever the case may be, not all of these are mean and nasty things, but there are things that keep reminding me I'm not seen as just an employee or partner I'm seeing is black. First, we have found that illnesses develop in us more quickly because of the because of the stress of those microaggressions, we find that we are more prone to diabetes, hypertension, even dementia, etc. we wrote a proposal to the Wisconsin Partnership Program said that saying that we can reduce types of microaggressions if we are allowed to train white people in understanding the roots of these microaggressions so that they create a different environment at their doctor's offices, their law offices, their classrooms, wherever they are. If they create better space for people of color, they will reduce the stress that shortens their lives. The conversely, I said, we need to bring emerging black leaders to the table. So we need to take black employees who are nominated by their employers to invest them in the seven month process. We have black speakers and presenters, and we talk about what does it mean to bring all of you to the table, giving them black space to to process what it means to still be the first and the only? You and I know about that well, being the first and the only at this point in 2024. We bring doctor Krista Clark Pujara to talk to them a little bit about black history and understanding themselves and the resilience, of our communities. So between investing in black leadership and training would be white allies. We could reduce the microaggressions that that black people are experiencing and help black people and white people and other and and everyone else to work together on solutions by having a better understanding of the way things work, that by doing that, we could reduce the health risk of black people in our community. We received $1 million grant to do that work. And so I just want to make sure that I put that on it as well, that it's not.

[00:22:51] **Speaker 1** Just, oh, let's just.

[00:22:52] **Speaker 2** Talk about history and have a kumbaya moment. No, there's a lot of strategy. We captured data on this in order to prove that if we're going to create space for black wellness, it begins with non-black allies understanding how we got here. And it's training black emerging leaders and understanding how they run with the ball from here. And that by doing both of those together, we begin to create the capacity to change the environment in Madison. That will make it perhaps more attractive to other black people, because this environment will no longer be detrimental to our health.

[00:23:27] **Speaker 1** What's corporate America's, role in all this?

[00:23:32] **Speaker 2** As we as we move ahead? You know, I'm working on the center for Black Excellence in Culture, a place where black people can come and celebrate our resistance, our stories and tell our stories and and have this fine art space, this cultural space. The corporate community has responded tremendously because they realize, and I've asked them, what do you do with an employee who's been hired as she happens to be black and she she is the candidate head and shoulders above the rest. And at the end of the interview she says, I want this job, but can someone drive me around your city and just show me a few examples of black innovation? Where would you take her? And this is on zoom to the Chamber of Commerce board. No one said anything. Not a single response. And I've asked that with other CEOs. And what they've said to me later was, Alex, if you asked me that question by a Latina woman, Latinx woman, I would know. If you ask me that about an Asian man, I would know a white woman, I would know. I don't know what I would say. I've never thought about that. And then I said, your competition is not epic. Ezion exact site, your competition, that epic exact science. That same UW, the bank down the street. That's not your competition. Your competition is civic life in Madison for black people at 5:00, when they go home for work and they want to be around other black people like they were in DC, Atlanta, Raleigh, Dallas, Chicago, Milwaukee. We don't have that here. We're having health implications. One of the reasons why we're not keeping people here, because they've come from places where that was just a given. You can't ask black people to be the first and the only in their jobs that have no place to go, to be reinforced by people who share their culture. And the business community. Got it. And that's why we've been so successful in our fundraising campaign, because people understand that's a piece of the puzzle that we've never considered.

[00:25:26] **Speaker 1** So we know people of color move here, sometimes have a tough time adjusting. And we know that people grow up here and they have a tough time adjusting. And I read that you prefer to see black people stay here in Madison Shrader. Why is that?

[00:25:45] **Speaker 2** I want to see black people stay here because Madison has, promising opportunities. And I want our people. I want black people to take advantage of that. It's a beautiful community. It's a world class university. So many things to do. But it's not catering to us culturally, so it never feels like home. The example I use is if I went to my grandmother's house with all of my cousins, and everyone else's picture was up on her fireplace or mantle, but my everyone else's homework and drawings of mine at some point I was a grandmother. Something you want to tell me or Mom and Dad? There's something y'all aren't telling me. Madison feels like that. That a lot of people see their artwork. They see themselves, they see their pictures in their faces. But the black community, we really don't. And when we are talked about, it's the books is the packers or it's the prisons or it's reports, but it's not the black resilient brilliance. It's not a historical perspective. It's always pejorative. And that's not who we are. And we've done more for this state than just that. And so I want not only do I want that narrative changed, I want us to be the one to change it. And I want space where that's changed. I have space where we tell our stories of space, where we train our leaders. I want to make this place attractive to black people from all over, because there's actually a place where we can sigh and have a reprieve from being the first and the only, because it's okay to be the first and the only. But historically, when you were the first and the only, you still went back to a community, you still went back to a center, you still went back to a church, you still went back someplace where you could say, my people, I'm not crazy. I can be reinforced. I can go out and do it another day. When you don't have that, your days are limited.

[00:27:35] **Speaker 1** Are you ever worried about your safety but the work that you do.

[00:27:40] **Speaker 2** It's not my first reaction, but people, people, often close friends, will pull me to the side and they'll just say, you know. You just need to be a little bit more cautious. Not in what I say, but just whether or not I travel alone. Posting if I'm out of town or not. Making sure my house has a good security system. People have brought up things to me, in the line of my work, saying, I just need to be aware that it could be that what I'm doing could feel threatening to some, but it's not my first thought.

[00:28:17] **Speaker 1** So it's been, ten years since you wrote that first essay in the times, came back and wanted you to write a note. Or you can just do that recently here. I did, and, I saw that it started off with you saying, yes, I am still angry and yes, it is still justified.

[00:28:36] **Speaker 2** Yes.

[00:28:37] **Speaker 1** What are we saying there?

[00:28:38] **Speaker 2** Well, because I know people are wondering, have things gotten better? You know, are you still angry? You know, you. Has your work made you less angry as you work? Fix things so that you have less to be angry about. So I just started out by answering the question that new people had. Yes, I'm still angry and still justified. But let's talk about what I've been up to. But there's so much work and so much just needs to be done that I can't afford to let up off the anger gas. That because it still motivates me to make things better.

[00:29:08] **Speaker 1** Part of that essay, you said that you just want to, thrive in your hometown. You look at all the great work you're doing, all the different arms that the organization is involved with. Do you not feel like you're thriving?

[00:29:21] **Speaker 2** You know, it's impossible to really thrive alone if you think about community as an ecosystem. You can't just have a good flower, but the soil is crappy and it's dry, and there's no irrigation, and there's no weeding and no fertilizing and no sun. By definition, if I'm doing well. But my people aren't, it's not thriving. I'm just. I'm finding ways to succeed in spite of it all. Thriving has to do with the infrastructure. It has to do with the ecosystem. I want to create something so that thriving is is normalized and is not just an occasional person or two doing well. So no, I'm doing well, but I'm not thriving because I need more people to be thriving. And to see this as a as a wonderful, as a great destination. We're moving to that place, but without space to tell our stories and be ourselves and be reinforced and create a new narrative and hold others accountable without thriving yet. But we are getting awfully close to to thriving here. Yeah, it's going to happen.

[00:30:25] **Speaker 1** And you also said that, ten years is not enough time to fix all of our problems in the black community, but it's enough time to move the needle. How much has the needle moved since you began this effort?

[00:30:38] **Speaker 2** I mean, I see instances of growth, but again, using the ecosystem analogy, you know, you can plant a garden, but you can't make the sun come out. You can't make it. You can water, but you can't make it rain. The issue with the black community is not the black community. The issue with the black community, systemic racism. It's the structures that are in place and people that are leading them and benefiting from them. That's got to be changed. That's got to be acknowledged. That's got to be held accountable for going to really see true thriving. So when people ask me, aren't things better? I want to ask them, well, how have you changed? How your friendships change? How has your office changed? Your board change? Your leaders change. That's the true indication of this. I'm not fixing black people so that white people can feel more comfortable by addressing the issues of black people, I'm helping this community to become really what it can be, who it really can be, and a place where everyone can thrive. And so the white community doesn't need to be watching me work and trying to decide if I'm fixing it, or watching the black community to see if things are better. The black community has not created these systems, these systems that hinder black thriving. We need something to happen in the broader system in order to stop impeding black success and black thriving. And so whenever that happens, whenever people get that memo, whenever people get that inclination, that unction, they do something different that will then exacerbate the outcomes, that will then exponentiate those outcomes. But that's something that we can't do. But until then, our trained would be white allies to understand the benefit of work that they do in their communities, to help them dismantle these impediments to black wellness in black health. When that begins to happen on a large scale, we will see huge change. So the white community is not waiting for us. We're waiting for the white community.

[00:32:32] **Speaker 1** And what's your call to action for this community, for blacks and whites? And is it the same call to action for everyone?

[00:32:40] **Speaker 2** It's a different call, I think, to the white community. The call is educate. Donate. Affiliate. Understand the issues. Support the issues and affiliate with people in organizations that are different than you. Become connected. Don't just say oh yeah, I give to. But you don't know anyone that that enriches lives and experiences to the black community. I would say we've got to prepare ourselves. We've got to build this space. We've got to train our own and equip our own and develop our own and celebrate our own. Those are things that we've got to do. So we have to we each each of those groups and all groups have work. And for I, not for our allies who are non-black and are not white. We need that partnership as well. In fact, in our history class, when we break up into small groups to discuss the lectures, we have to group people, based on those ethnic identities also. Because we want them to know that we need all hands on on deck. And so I would say to the black community, let's, let's build, let's develop, let's grow because we are creating opportunity and we want to be ready as those doors open.

[00:33:49] **Speaker 1** And also in your second essay, you said white influencers must own injustices facing Black Madison. Who is that demand? Aimed toward.

[00:33:59] **Speaker 2** White influencers. That's funny, I know you. I know you're looking at me saying, I just asked you that question. It's interesting when white influencers say black leaders, they have 5 to 6 people come to mind. When I say white influencers to white influencers, they say. They don't know who that is. Like, yeah, you do. You just don't call the white influencers the chancellor, the mayor, the governor, County executive. They had an exact science to the head of epic, the head of SS em. You all know what they are. They're just not called white influencers. They're just called leaders. Influencers. They give us names so they can pick who the 4 or 5 are so they know who they are, the people who build authority, who run organizations, who pick political leaders, who support them. They know who they are. We need them to use that power and influence to help their peers practice fairness in every sphere of business, education, and civic life in this, in this community. Whatever attributes they offer to black people, whatever those indicators are, to make them think that that black person is a black leader, they need to just attribute those same things to themselves and figure out who their leaders are, and they need to motivate those people to do better.

[00:35:19] **Speaker 1** What's your gauge on whether or not you're moving the needle?

[00:35:24] **Speaker 2** Who building the center for Black Excellence and Culture and Breaking Ground in summer 2024. That's one of them. I think the 5000 graduates. The people who finished that course. That gives me hope. You know, Mr. Seymour, we, some of our, alumni, they create their own action plans because that's not my work. I can't tell white people what to do to be effective. They're smart enough to do that. But we have a group that have created a program called Court Observers. They sit in on court cases just to monitor how people are challenged, how they sit in on court cases, just to monitor how people are treated. They have documentation from 11,000 court case observations. These aren't. This is not paperwork. They read. These are notes they've taken. They have sat in on 11,000 court cases, half of which are black people. We have that data. They took this upon themselves. That gives me hope that just by sitting in the courtroom, not providing a level of accountability. It doesn't change everything that moves the needle, because then that helps us to think, well, what if we sit in on expulsion hearings and foster care hearings and Medicare hearings? These are not black people. These are white people using just their time and energy to observe. And what they're noting, what they're.

[00:36:47] **Speaker 1** Capturing.

[00:36:49] **Speaker 2** Is blowing them away because they're thinking, I never would have believed that these differences were happening. I wouldn't be I would not have believed it had I not documented it myself. They sit in on a course and watch a Da asked for one thing for a black defendant, and then in the same day before the same judge, recommend a whole different outcome from someone of another ethnic group, to the point that the judge had to say, wait, you just recommended for the same crime? This for the black defendant, but this for the white defendant and the our court observers captured that. That gives me hope. They're going to report out on that information. They're going to talk about it. But people educating themselves, donating and then affiliating themselves to organizations and causes that bring about change, that's how we move the needle. It's not a huge needle, but that's moving in the right direction. 11,000 cases, 5000 people, 80 participants in our in our emerging.

[00:37:52] **Speaker 1** Black leadership program.

[00:37:53] **Speaker 2** That helps you to move the needle. Now, it'll be a few years until we see the impact from that. But those steps, that action gives me a lot of hope.

[00:38:01] **Speaker 1** I no, I know you're a man of words. You're an educator. But I notice that your first essay is, with the word forward. And then your second essay ends with the words I remain committed and angry and courageous. That has to be some symbolism to this. Yeah.

[00:38:20] **Speaker 2** Oh, that's a good observation. With the first essay, I ended with the word forward because that's our state motto. So I wanted I wanted to underscore the fact, I'm a Wisconsin I to my core. Let's live into this, this motto because we're we're walking backwards when it comes to race relations. So that was a subtle jab to my fellow Wisconsinites. Let's let's live into our state's identity. What? The second I wanted to sound a little bit more. Season. Because even though I want to continue to push the systems to continually change, I've raised $25 million in this community in 24 months in order to create space to help black people feel more at home, and to help the non-black community to come into a state of the art space that will talk about our contributions to the state of Wisconsin. So I really I couldn't just say nothing's changed. Nothing's changed, but I couldn't say everything's changed because the community is helping me to build this space. I want to find a middle ground. So I want to let people know that even with building this space, I'm angry because that's an outward expression of of pain and fear. I still I still those things are still very real. You know, I drove home from the cross recently, so very cautious when I'm in rural areas between major cities. And so that brings a sense of anger. But referring back to Augustine's quote, I've got to be able to hold anger and courage in a, in a, in an appropriate tension if I'm going to arrive at hope. And so by saying I remain courageous and angry, it's saying that I'm still focusing on hope. But just arriving and having one major success doesn't mean that we've all arrived until we all arrive. I've got to be angry for the brothers and sisters who have not arrived at the table. I've got to be. Otherwise I'll forget about them. So there was some symbolism to, what I said in the second, because I wanted them to know, that you're not going to get me to stop being angry anytime soon, but you're not going to stop me from being courageous either, because I will have hope, because I have nothing else to offer the community if I don't have that.

[00:40:37] **Speaker 1** Taraji, thank you for your time, sir.

[00:40:39] **Speaker 2** Mr. Seymour, it's good to talk with you again.