

# Hummingbird Humanity

an LGBTQ+ owned business

## Conversations of Hope, Heart, and the Human Spirit with Ben Greene

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**Brian McComak:** Well happy, happy Wednesday everyone. I'm so excited to be here and hope you're all enjoying the week. We're about halfway through the week although I feel like every day is sort of the same as every other day right now. There's a little bit of difference, but not a big difference but thank you for spending a little time with us this afternoon. For those of you who may not know, I'm Brian McCormick and I am the founder of Hummingbird Humanity. Hummingbird Humanity is my new effort to do good in the world and to make a difference for everyone and it's a consultancy that will work with organizations to create safe spaces, to make sure that all of us see ourselves in those workplaces represented and really celebrating, hopefully celebrating diverse voices. So that's really the hope and it's work that I've been doing for awhile and I have spent a career creating and engaging workplaces. So this is my new effort and I appreciate you joining me on the journey. Today, I am delighted that Ben Greene has joined us. I'll let Ben introduce himself a little bit here in a moment, but I just wanted to say like, Ben came on my radar I wanna say it was six months ago.

**Ben Greene:** It was in January something, I don't know what month it is right now, but however long ago, January it was.

**Brian McComak:** There we go and I was just amazed at, and we'll talk more about where how I got introduced to Ben here in a few minutes, but when I saw Ben's first video, which is what I promise to talk about in a few minutes, I was just blown away. So, Ben I'm so glad you're here and I'm so excited for everyone to hear your story, but do you wanna tell us just a little bit about you and then we'll dive into some other conversation.

**Ben Greene:** So, hi everyone. My name is Ben Greene. I use he him, his pronouns and I am a transgender advocate. I'm an openly transgender man. I have been transitioning from female to male for I think now almost five years, which is very exciting. I'm so, so excited to be here. So honored that Brian brought me in to participate in this. Some people say that their reputation precedes them I only need to say that Brian precedes me. And so I am about to graduate from Brandeis University. I studied computer science, but I'm looking to launch into a career in diversity and inclusion advocacy, and am still figuring out what exactly the road ahead contains, but I've spent a number of years doing public speaking, running trainings at different companies and just kind of doing my part to maximize my good as I like to say.

**Brian McComak:** I love that phrase maximize my good Angelo is going to capture that in Chat I see the face. And I should know by all means it's okay.

**Angelo Cilia:** Somebody commented on your shirt and that's got what got me excited. I'm sorry, Brian so we were more excited about your shirt.

**Brian McComak:** Well, let's talk about the shirt for a second and then we'll go back to the conversation. So tell us about your shirt, Ben.

**Ben Greene:** I love this shirt, one of my favorites, I cove colorful button-downs have been my thing for as long as I can remember. Since I came out, I was like, I'll wear colorful button downs. And this is one of my favorite ones, I bought it from the little boys section in Marshalls. And as I buy most of my clothes, because they're more fashionable and less expensive and they fit me just the same and I wore it 'cause it has the bird, for Hummingbird Humanity. So I figured it was very apt.

**Brian McComak:** I love it, I love it. Well, thank you for being on brand Ben that's very important. And then I realized that I forgot to introduce my dear friend Angelo. So you will all see Angelo in the chat and of course you'll see him on screen. Angelo and I have known each other for over 15 years now, we sing in the New York City Gay Men's Chorus together and he's a good friend and he has also signed up to help me with communications for Hummingbird Humanity. It's one of those times that someone volunteered and then they're like, he's actually gonna take me up on it. So, Angelo glad you're here and I always appreciate your energy.

**Angelo Cilia:** Happy to be here, thanks Brian.

**Brian McComak:** Thanks Angelo. So Ben, I'm thinking back to one of our recent conversations, and you called me a couple months ago and said, "Hey, Brian, I wanna talk to you about my education and career path." And above your words of wisdom, if I remember correctly, you were planning to do a master's program immediately after your undergrad program. And you've started to do some speaking and you wanna do inclusion, and you're like which path do I take? So of course I know the answer to what you decided, but I'll let you share the story. So tell us about what you decided to do and what career path you're choosing to take.

**Ben Greene:** Yeah, so the last kind of, at this point, it's been about a year. The last year of my life has been like a whirlwind of just everything changing. So I had to give you a little taste of the roots. In high school I was one of the only trans people and it was my job to kind of educate everyone and I loved it. I taught the health classes, I trained the administration, I did all that jazz. And I was like, wouldn't it be amazing if I could do this as a job, but I had no idea what that would look like in practice so I said you know what that'll be like a the thing that you're like, that's my dream but a silly dream that's just fun to think about. So then I get to college, and I'm studying to be a teacher and I wanted to be an elementary school teacher. And I gave this TED talk I had an opportunity to give a TEDx talk in the April of my sophomore year. And when it got posted to YouTube, it kind of blew up, not in the scheme of like how much of a YouTube video can blow up, but relative to what I was used to, it was a lot. And this company Inspire Human Resources, saw the video and asked me to come and speak for them. And the CEO, Jaime Klein, who is also one of the kindest people I have ever met immediately kind of had a, an investment in me and my career. And so she introduced me to all these people, so I started doing more speeches and then she said, "We would love to have you come and be one of our HR experts." So the next thing I know I'm like in this whole world of my like far away dream that I decided was completely unachievable is just coming true right here. So now how do I reconcile my education dreams that I've decided would be like what my actual career would be and this like life dream that's coming true out of nowhere. And what I ultimately ended up deciding with some consultation from Brian and a couple of other, just asking my friends, staying up all night just agonizing trying to figure out what to do and eventually I kind of realized like this change that I

feel like I'm able to make. I wouldn't be happy doing something else, knowing that I had this open door, to be able to go and make that change. So I kind of decided that I needed to go and do that work if I had that opportunity. So now I changed everything around I added extra classes, so I graduated a whole year early from school, which is perfect timing now that I have this wonderful graduation ceremony to celebrate that extra work. I'm not bitter about it at all. So I'm graduating early and now I'm just entering into the world as a DNI professional, seeing what change I can make.

**Brian McComak:** Awesome, awesome. Well, and I feel like I might have bumped up your viewers, the number of views on that Ted talk in the last few months, is that right Ben?

**Ben Greene:** Absolutely.

**Brian McComak:** So, Ben and I just as a fun fact and I'm sure that it looks like Angelo just posted the Ted talk in the chat, thanks Angelo. Ben and I end up on lots of calls together and inevitably every time that we're both on the same call I make sure that everyone knows that Ben did a Ted talk, TEDx talk.

**Ben Greene:** Yes, I have to remind Brian that Isaias specifically was required to say that its TEDx and I am not allowed to call it a Ted talk and I forget sometimes and call it a Ted talk. They're very, very specific about the licensing of the name.

**Brian McComak:** Yeah, well, and I always forget. And what you've also heard is that Ben is an underachiever so graduating a year early, has already done a TEDx talk I'm gonna leave now and let Ben run the show. Well, I love the success that you're having Ben and telling your story and that's where I wanna go next and I'm sure it was one of the biggest reasons why everyone decided to join us today, is you have chosen to share your story personally, and to be an advocate for others. And I have a connection with that as someone who many years ago came out as a gay man and have chosen to share my story many times. And one of the things that we'll both share is, that there's this reality that every time we have to help people understand our identity, we have to come out each of those times so we come out every day, we come out multiple times a day, it's part of who we are and we both chosen to do that with the benefit of hopefully, or with the hope of helping others. But so I want to go back to sort of the beginning of that story, what was coming to terms with your identity like? And what did it look like to share that with others in your life?

**Ben Greene:** Yeah, so it was around the beginning of my junior year of high school that I kind of started to figure everything out. And it was interesting though the kind of the only resource that I had, was there was this Facebook group for the whole state of Connecticut called the G unit. And it was a secret online support network with like 400 people in it. So people from all different schools, there were like only two or three people from every school in this whole area of Connecticut. And it was just all like LGBT people. So I came out as bi in my sophomore year, my friend added me to it. And there were all these people posting like, I'm trans and I was like what does that mean? And so eventually I started doing some googling and kind of so I was like I feel kind of weird, I felt very uncomfortable. And I did some more research and posted more in the group and I kind of realized that being a girl was just not really my thing. And it was very scary 'cause the thing was, and there's something that I've since realized a lot is that no one around me was blatantly anti-trans, anti LGBT I'm from a very liberal area in Connecticut, but there was no one saying any pro trans anything. So I had no evidence to tell me either way and all of the stories I were hearing would lead me to believe that was gonna be a negative reaction. So I spent so long in the closet, not wanting to help people and really feeling just terrible, and super anxious and super sad. And because I just had no reason to know that it was gonna be

positive when I came out. So then I finally came out, at the end of a health presentation. Because we were supposed to give a presentation on just any topic we wanted, and I was doing a presentation about gender identity. And I had my intro slide in the beginning that had my birth name on it and I had my last slide, which was the intro slide again with Ben on it. My plan was that I was gonna get to the end and I was gonna say, and the reason this matters, is because I'm trans and I deleted and readded that slide like 500 times the day of the presentation. And then I gave it and I came out with that and it spread around 'cause it's a small Connecticut town and every piece of gossip spreads around like wildfire and the reaction was so much better than I could have dreamed. So all of a sudden I became my parents joked that I was like the Pied Piper that nobody came out in my town without talking to me first. So people would find me in the hallways, they'd find me on Facebook. When I got to college, I had somebody twice, two different people show up at my door that I had never met before and say, "Hey, I heard you can help me." And I would say, "Yeah, come on in." I have to finish writing this essay, let me submit it and then let's go. And I would stay up all night with people, just helping them figure out what their identities were. And it's been very fun and very like very rewarding. So, initially I was gonna go to college and I was never going to tell anyone I was trans again, that was my plan was for it to be a secret because I was like I love being this, but I feel like people only really liked me because I'm trans and that's my only defining feature. And I was like, I don't want anyone to treat me differently because a lot of the guys in my high school were not super nice to me. Again, there was no direct negative, they just didn't care. So they still use my old name they just acted like it had never happened. And so I was like, I don't wanna deal with that again I'm not gonna tell anyone and then I got to college and I was so comfortable that I came out within like 24 hours of being there. And then I never looked back. So it's been very cool.

**Brian McComak:** Wow, that's awesome. Well, thank you for sharing that. One of the things that I want to make sure that we're doing along our chat is helping, I'm still learning without question, but helping others learn in others a lot of other, DEI, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion champions on the call or leaders. And you mentioned your old name, is the correct terminology for that the dead name is that what I've heard others use?

**Ben Greene:** So people will kind of use whatever they want, the most common ways to refer to it is old name, birth name, dead name, dead name is the one with the most like it's the most explanatory and it is like it sounds bad it sounds like something you shouldn't say. It's like this name is done, it's dead. And it's very dark and I am a very positive, bright person, as you can see by the way that I dress. But it definitely like all of these are used by the trans community, but the general message is please don't use that anymore don't publicize it even if you're telling a story of someone before they came out, you can use their new name. You don't have to people, it's very funny the number of people that will tell stories and try to jump back and forth between using my old pronouns and using my old name. And I'm like you don't have to do that. I know this story is about me. It's sort of like, it's accurate enough because it has the facts of the story the pronouns that you use are not relevant. Please don't make me sad.

**Brian McComak:** Well, I'm curious to learn a bit more about how you became and you shared a little bit of how you became known, in some forums as the person that you could go to for help and guidance and support. But then you took that to this other place and started to do it on in more sort of formalized settings. So do you wanna tell us a little bit, maybe give us a preview of what the TEDx talk and that like what that story was and then what you created to be able to convey an understanding for people?

**Ben Greene:** Yes, so my big thing, everyone has their differentiator in their explaining method. So I came up with this analogy in high school that I use to explain gender I assume this is what you were asking about Brian. So I came up with this analogy in high school to explain gender identity that's in a way that people can relate to. So it was based off of people have seen the consent is like a cup of tea video. That's like can asking for consent is like asking you're someone

if you wanna make them tea, if someone is asleep, they don't want tea. It's so simple because it's in terms- that everyone is used to. So my analogy that I came up with is that gender identity is like sitting in a chair. So when people are born, they're born into a type of chair and that chair is their sex. And if you are comfortable in your chair, you don't feel it right. Everyone's sitting down right now you don't consciously feel the chair you're sitting in unless it's uncomfortable, then you are super aware of that chair so that feeling of whether or not you're comfortable in your chair, that's related to your gender identity. So if you're uncomfortable in your chair, what's the easiest thing to do. Just get up and move to a different more comfortable chair. And the two big things I always like to highlight is that I'm not saying no one's allowed to sit in a stool. I'm just saying that I would rather sit in an armchair. And the other thing I like to highlight is that I'm the same person sitting in this arm chair, as I was sitting on that stool, I'm just more comfortable. When I came out, everybody thought I was gonna be completely different and I thought I was going to be completely different. I spent the first, probably two months being like, hyper-masculine, not talking about my feelings really aggressive. And I hated it it felt just as performative as being a girl did. And then I realized like I can be a guy and the same way that I was before I identified as male and just be a guy and that is a great kind of guy to be. So I'm the same person, everything about me is the same I'm just changing the outside so that I feel more comfortable, changing my chair. And I expand it to include all the different non-binary identities. So some people wanna sit in one type of chair one day and in different type of chair a different day. Some people wanna sit in a chair that's a hybrid of a couple of different chairs or make a new chair. Some people say I don't get it, whatever chair I sit and I'm uncomfortable, I'd rather just stand up. And there are is an infinite number of ways to sit in a chair an infinite number of chairs that exist. And no one's chair impacts anyone else's chair there's no chair police just sit wherever you want, do whatever you want. So that's my kind of analogy and my big teaching thing that I like to highlight in all of my talks, 'cause I think it's like a fun, easy way to explain things so that's my differentiator.

**Brian McComak:** I love that. I wanna sign up to be on the chair police just because one title no chair police I love it. Angelo, could you do me a favor there's another talk that Ben has done on YouTube it's for Inspire Human Resources that takes this analogy to a whole other level and describing different gender identities, sexual orientations and there's another lens of that, isn't there?

**Ben Greene:** Like attraction in the differences between sexuality and gender. I like to say that sexuality is your relationship to others, and gender is your relationship to yourself.

**Angelo Cilia:** I will post it. Ben that's on your website, isn't it? I think.

**Ben Greene:** I have all of the videos of speeches that I've done I load it on my site as well.

**Angelo Cilia:** Great, I will share your website and the video that Brian just spoke about.

**Ben Greene:** Great, thank you.

**Brian McComak:** Awesome and we may go into some of those topics as we proceed, but didn't wanna forget about it because I think the two different videos that I've watched have different overlapping, but different versions of the story, and how the story is conveyed and they have different elements. And I found them super helpful and I share, I share particularly the Inspire Human Resources video a lot because those are the questions I get as well when people

are trying to understand sexual orientation and gender identity and how this all comes together. Ben one thing before I forget about it I wanna talk about, you and I were both on a call yesterday. And there was it was shared that there was a conversation around parental leave and there was a conversation about like how pregnancy is, is considered a disability under the rules of medicine. And so the leader was talking about their parental leave policies and how that intersects with the women who have babies. But you talked about like we as we think about understanding this world of gender identity, how that that's paradigm that we've all lived with for so long. And I say, all of us, most of us lived in that world where it's, which was a binary world, the world that's more expansive has existed forever and this is not a new concept. It's just becoming, we're becoming more aware of it today. So I guess maybe you might wanna share a little bit of how you think about that sort of ebb and flow of awareness around the gender being expansive concept, but also what you were sharing with us yesterday about thinking about even just how that applies to the world of pregnancy and some of the benefit programs.

**Ben Greene:** So one of the things that I had just added into the chat while we were on that call was that we should remember that it's not only women who are giving birth anymore. People who identify as male people, people who identify non-binary lots of different people can choose to become pregnant and give birth usually the two both happen. So it's languages shifting and one of the big things that I kind of just like to focus on is just saying people, there are very few instances if none, that it really makes sense to have something be classified by gender, or to have the name of something, be classified by gender. So to say, like, this is about women who give birth, is there a reason to say women instead of people, and a lot of people would say, well, that I think birth is one of the areas where people are the most kind of confused by saying like, men can give birth as well. People are much more open to the more simple societal things like a man can wear a dress, a man can identify as female like, or people can change their identity. So I think definitely the medical field is where I'm noticing a lot of the slowness to accept but as we move, just acknowledging that our language can be more inclusive and just focusing on using people instead of women, instead of men and instead of saying maternity leave for moms, like we talked about on the call on maternity leave for parents, because also that's a whole separate issue that everyone should have parental leave to go and talk or not talk to spend time bonding with their children and taking care of their children.

**Brian McComak:** And what I loved about that when in that moment of someone who has committed their career, and for many years of my life both personally and professionally to being an advocate for others and to understanding the experiences of others and how I can be a support and how I can make change drive change. There's always something more to learn as much as I have been a champion for sharing for those that are out live outside of the gender binary or for the transgender community and trying to understand those lived experiences, sometimes you don't connect all the dots and I had not in my mind connected the dots of those experiences and what I'd learned with how benefits play out, and what language we use to convey that. And I think it's an ongoing learning for all of us.

**Ben Greene:** There's too much information I think for everyone to be an expert on everything, the best we do is that everyone kind of gets to be an expert in their couple of things that they're passionate about. And then we connect with the other experts and we learn from each other so if we're both experts in things relating to LGBT identities, we're on a call and we make sure that we're including the voices of the other experts so that we don't miss anything. So rather than everyone having to know all of the knowledge, we kind of share with each other and build off of what each other are passionate about. So it's all learning and the pressure is not on us to learn everything it's just to make sure that we have the voices of other pieces of information in the space with us.

**Brian McComak:** Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. Well, it reminds me of a learning I had about a year ago now when I was working with the pride group of tapestry, which was a group of individuals that were either transgender, non-binary or

people of color. If you had asked me a few months before that do I feel like I have a good sense of what the challenges are for the LGBTQ plus community? I would have probably confidently said yes. And well intentioned of course and that group of individuals who all have different experiences than I have in their lives, they expanded my perspective. They're really big ask was, we're grateful to see that there's progress being made that progress is really benefiting and from their perspective and I don't disagree with this perspective, or maybe I should say, I agree with this perspective, if their perspective is that it has benefited the gay white men in the world. And we now need to bring the rest of the community along with that acceptance. So it just reminds me of like, that was an aha moment for me. And they said, can we just make sure that our pride events are about the rest of the community. Like, of course let's do that. It was an easy answer, but it was so important to that group. I wanna go back to something you shared earlier, that when you started to come to terms with your own identity, you were googling and trying to find information, I'm curious, was it easy to find information, was it hard, was it like and you've now dedicated yourself to being someone who is helping others understand this, but you also had to learn it. I'm curious what journey you went on in finding information and gathering information and understanding stories and that's meant for you on your own personal journey.

**Ben Greene:** Absolutely, so it was a lot of first I went to see if there were any TV shows with trans characters, short answer no, long answer no. The couple of little, I think at the time I came out, there were two trans characters in TV, and both of them were the same archetype of like kicked out of parents' house these are the steps of my transition. I've gone through, like, they were in the same place in their transition and had the same experiences, because that was the trans story was that you come out and then you get kicked out. So obviously that's not the majority, but that was the only story that was being told so I was terrified and that was not by a long shot what ended up happening, but that was what I was hearing. So then I reached out to this Facebook group that I mentioned earlier, and that was where I did the majority of my research was posting in there and saying, I think I'm trans, what do I do? And the whole community, everyone who was trans, everyone who knew anything was like, I can talk to you, here's a YouTube video you should watch, here's some articles you should read, like just kind of came and was like protected me and it answered all of my questions so I had a lot of different people that I spent hours messaging and asking all of my questions and FaceTiming and then asking a day later, a million more questions. It was the community was what kind of did that for me. And then one of the biggest story that I'm gonna segue into because it's one of the most impactful things that I think has ever happened to me was the summer before my sophomore year of college, I went to go see a show in New York City that had a trans character in it, played by a trans man. It was called Log Cabin by Playwrights Horizons and it was an amazing show. And I was so excited to talk to the trans actor afterwards I was gonna get them to sign my playbill and he came out and then what's in like this whole lobby of the place. So I'm standing on one end, he comes out the door on the other and our eyes connect and he comes right over. And I took one look at him and I held up my playbill and I just started sobbing I did not say a word to him. My plan was that I was gonna say, it means so much to me to see a trans actor on a stage, gives me so much hope for myself and I didn't get to say any of it I just started crying. And he took one look at me and he just started crying and my dad was there and he just started crying. And this guy, Ian Harvie, who's now a friend of mine just pulled me in and we just stood there and just hug each other and then we finally stopped hugging he said, this is it. This is why representation matters. And in that moment, I decided that I was never going to be secret about my identity again. Barring locations that I have safety concerns in, I decided that I wanted to be for someone else what he was for me. That set the tone for my passion for speaking, that really amplified it, that I was just like, I really just wanna be able to do that and help someone else see me succeeding and say, wow, if he can do it so can I so that is then everything for me.

**Brian McComak:** Thank you for sharing that. It's a beautiful story. And I remember I heard you share that I think was it last week?

**Ben Greene:** I think it was last week.

**Brian McComak:** Ben and I spend a lot of time together these days, so it's together. It's such an amazing story and of course you know and many of you on the call today, may know this as well as I'm a huge champion for representation. And you've given a great example of one of the hopes that I have in that work of championing for what representation is. Moving beyond the way that we've talked about it for so many years of representation and an employee population, which is absolutely important not only just in the population as a whole, but in management and in leadership and on boards of directors. So it's so important that the vast voices are part of all of those conversations and that people can see themselves having opportunities for their career. That also needs to translate in how we think about benefits programs. Like we were talking about a few minutes ago, how we're thinking about our advertising and our marketing and the communications and the language we put on our communications externally, what images appear on our social media and our websites. There's so many aspects to accompany environment that where representation can really come to life. So, and I think what I love though, is the stories like yours is that is the heart behind why that's so important because it makes a difference in someone's life. So I'm going to go to another question for Ben, but actually before I ask a question, I'm curious Angelo, do we have any questions in the chat?

**Angelo Cilia:** No, we don't right now. So I'm gonna to encourage folks to do that. So please, if you have some questions, feel free. I think that-

**Ben Greene:** I'm not as scary as I look.

**Angelo Cilia:** No, the shirts so welcoming, but this story was so beautiful. I mean, I literally, I needed a little bit of teary eyed moment, so thank you for giving that to us.

**Ben Greene:** I am always happy to share I'm open about anything because this is it this is why representation matters.

**Brian McComak:** Absolutely, absolutely. So as Angelo mentioned, feel free to ask questions in the chat. I'll come back to Angelo in a moment, and also just as a side note, like one of the things that I've loved about these experiences in chats is share thoughts and ideas with each other in the chat, as you wish share your contact information, connect with each other. I think right now this is such a great time for community. We're also here to learn from Ben, so feel free to ask questions, Ben and I are both here because we wanna help those of you on the call, hear stories and learn or whatever we can do to meet your needs. So, Ben I've started to call you a teacher I'm not sure if that's the word you're gonna use as you brand yourself and you may be still figuring out your branding, but I know that you're working on a project that is going to help others learn. I'm gonna let you just tell what the project is.

**Ben Greene:** Yes, I actually have two projects. one of which I'm just, it's popping into my head because-

**Brian McComak:** You didn't tell me this in advance Ben.

**Ben Greene:** You know this second project, you were there. So I just started a new program called Out to Lunch with Ben, which I think is a very funny pond and I did not come up with it myself and pretty much it's free on my website.

And it's sign up for a time to ask any questions you want to ask for any support. I do a lot of one of the things I found when I came out was not only kids asking me questions about their own identity, but parents coming to me to say, I think my kid is trans or my kid is trans. How can I support them? So a lot of people just have a lot of questions for me. So if anyone wants to ask me any questions or wants to chat about their own identity, or anything else, any other questions, there is a little calendar sign up on my website in the meet Ben page. So I am looking to make new connections there, anywhere my emails there, please reach out.

**Brian McComak:** And I have a launch just for clarity is a virtual out to lunch.

**Ben Greene:** Yes.

**Brian McComak:** I think there's two parts of that, right? One is you can go out to lunch with Ben no matter where you are and you can share your lunch on zoom and have a chat with Ben and also just in our current times with social distancing, it's safe that way. Not that Ben isn't safe, I think he's very a safe person. But it's just good to know that you can still have a chance to have one on one conversation with Ben. I see Ben's reading questions as well. You're probably reading the same one that I, you're taking Angelo's job then.

**Angelo Cilia:** That's okay.

**Brian McComak:** So let's talk about the second project then we'll go to some of those questions.

**Ben Greene:** I'm gonna close the chat window because it is just distracting me and I keep seeing a little notification pop up and I just have to stop looking at it. So the second project, which is a much bigger undertaking is that I am writing a book, which is crazy. And I've been working in a group with Brian and with a publishing company called Publish Your Purpose Press. That's running like an Academy that's helping us all on our book journeys. And I am writing a book called, the working title is my blank is trans now what? And it goes through a ton of different relationships people might have with trans people. My student, my child, my partner, my patient, all the different areas where it's really, someone could make a big difference in someone else's life. And just kind of telling people what they can do to be more supportive. So it's like an ally one on one for people who are starting from square one or lower or higher if you want, but it's just kind of a how to guide for how to become a good ally to trans people. So I'm super excited about that project and hopefully we'll have more information about that soon.

**Brian McComak:** Awesome, awesome. Well, and as Ben mentioned, and I think I shared this last week if I remember correctly, I did because Lydia was on with us last week and I'm writing a book as well on humanity in the workplace. So it's great to share that journey with Ben, because our stories are well very different in what the content will be I think the purpose is the same as helping to make the world a better place and so it's great to have someone else in that group that's like minded, but we have some really cool colleagues in that group as well, who are writing some I think two that are writing memoirs and then one that's writing around, I think it's financial services management if I have it correctly, I'm trying to keep up.

**Ben Greene:** Yes, I think will understand.

**Brian McComak:** I'm barely understand my own book, so trying to keep up with everyone else's so and actually on the book front, one of the things that I'll be doing with my community soon and I'm sure that you're doing the same and happy to join forces on this is asking some questions that are our community of like questions they have or things that we could talk about 'cause you know were writing books to meet the needs of others

**Ben Greene:** Absolutely.

**Brian McComak:** So, Angelo.

**Angelo Cilia:** Well, you both read that one question and I'm gonna go ahead and ask the one from Denise and Denise asks, are there specific HR companies that you know of that, know how to work with the LGBT community to find career opportunities? So basically are there ones I'm assuming there's a lots of them that do that, but are there ones in specific that you can think of that you would just want to share a little bit about?

**Ben Greene:** I think the biggest thing for me that I know about is there are a lot of like, I think the question if I'm interpreting it correctly, is companies that help LGBT people in finding jobs. So there are huge LGBT job fairs that where companies who have either pride resource groups or just like are known for being supportive or have LGBT focused purposes come together and have these huge career fairs in, I think there was one that was supposed to be in New York a couple of weeks ago that I was supposed to go to that got canceled. But they happen all over and I think some of them are figuring out how to happen virtually. So I would definitely look into those groups and those opportunities to, but I don't know about any other companies that specifically.

**Brian McComak:** It's a great question and if there are others on the call today who actually have thoughts or suggestions, feel free to add those into the chat feed 'cause I think we can crowd source as well. I think what Ben's mentioned over the things that come to mind for me as well is more of events that are either put on by an organization or a company to bring together members of a specific community so it's less about the agency that's focused on helping a community, it's more about, there's a need to meet the needs of a community so it becomes an event focused thing rather than like a one on one focus thing. There is a firm based in London called Audeliss, which is A U D E L I S S that works on searches for senior level and sort of senior management level roles, and they focus on diverse communities and I know I have a friend who's thinking about starting a firm like that as well. But generally, what I've seen both on the front fulfilling roles in this space, as well as for meeting candidates in this space, it generally is focused on like the role of like finding a role and then the company finds diverse candidates. So it's not sort of targeted on the community, hopefully that translated well. But it's a question and I do think there are probably still some needs there. There's also actually I'm trying to think of the event, my friend, Jayzen Patria, who's a phenomenal, professional in the space of, personal branding. He is hosting a live webinar next week, I believe with an organization so similar to what Ben was talking about, but it's happening online and you can find that on Jayzen's LinkedIn page and his name is J A Y Z E N. And his last name is Patria, P A T R I A and I'll try to throw those into the chat as well. And I'm gonna go back to Magda's question real quick, 'cause I know you, like we talked about the book, is that what you're gonna redo, Angelo? I love it. Oh, thanks Jared. I see Jared was ahead of me and Jayzens LinkedIn pages they're now posted so thanks for the help, Jared. So I saw Magda had asked a question around what suggestions would you offer to allies of the transgender and non-binary communities? Whether it's, they're trying to learn or trying to be supportive, what are

the things that you want to ask others to do, or that you've heard from other members of those communities? They'd like to see those of us that aren't part of those communities doing.

**Ben Greene:** Absolutely, I think the biggest thing that is super like super easy is to get in the habit of sharing your pronouns. It's such a small thing, but it makes such a big difference in a number of ways. The first way is that it's a way to let trans people know that you are a safe person who is intending, who knows about pronouns, who understands that some people might use pronouns other than he or she and who will be more than happy to use the pronouns that someone tells them. So if I am emailing someone and I see that they include a pronoun bracket in their email, I instantly feel like, okay, this is a person who knows about the community and who is supportive and I just feel safer talking to that person. And then it also sets a precedent that there's nothing wrong with sharing your pronouns. So for someone who uses pronouns that they might not feel comfortable people are gonna gender them correctly. If I go somewhere and everyone in the room introduces themselves and says their pronouns, I don't feel weird at all saying, oh yes, I'm Ben Greene, I use he him, his pronouns easy it's not weird if you're in a room and no one says their pronouns and I say, I'm Ben Greene I use he him, his pronouns, that feels a little weird and it makes me feel like I'm different from everyone else And like I'm the other, which no fun. I think another thing is just, the biggest thing is to talk to the people and ask them what they need, right? If you're trying to support a specific person, there's no set of things that you can follow that's like easy, here's how you'd be supportive of all trans people in this world or for everyone, check in with the person and see what they need. So for me, the biggest thing I needed was someone to correct people for me on my name and my pronouns being used incorrectly because it really stresses me out it makes me very nervous. So I had a friend in high school who would correct everyone for me and she asked me, she said, "Do you want me to do this?" And I said, "Absolutely." And other people would not want that at all someone might say, don't correct people, it's probably safer to just leave it so talk to your friends and talk to the trans people that you work with, or that you're related to, or that, whoever and see what they need from you. And then otherwise what you're doing now is great, you're learning, you're seeking out opportunities to open your mind to new concepts. So now after this, if you still have more questions, you can watch some of the videos I've posted or go find a book by a trans author or now there are at least three trans characters on TV. So just go, keep finding ways to answer questions and see trans people represented so you can keep learning.

**Brian McComak:** Absolutely. Thanks, Ben. Well, and I know that there's actually at least one show I know of and I can think of two, know that I that I think about it that have trans characters also performed by trans actors. So Pose is a show that's fully committed to that and then Transparent had a mix of that, but it's certainly about hers trans characters that has some of those characters that are played by trans individuals as well.

**Ben Greene:** Yeah, Pose, Transparent, Tales of the City, Fosters, Billions there are a lot now, now it's finally starting to pick up that representation. So there are more and more shows that I'm finding that are having that representation.

**Brian McComak:** I love it, I love it. Angelo, this is your time to shine.

**Angelo Cilia:** This is my moment. There's a couple of good questions. Angelo, there's another Angelo out there. Angelo asks, "How do you see the evolution of trans awareness in five years?" What do you see it looking like in five years the future if you had a crystal ball?

**Ben Greene:** That's a great question. There is how I see it versus how I dream it. I think are probably a little bit different for people who aren't aware, there's a big Supreme Court ruling that is set to drop any day now, and GLAD actually has a mailing list you can sign up for where they will immediately notify you when the ruling comes out with everything that it needs for you and then spaces to decompress, whatever the results may be. So people are looking for more information about that there is a fast source, but basically what they are deciding right now is if Title VII, which is a nondiscrimination set of laws, will extend to sexual orientation and gender identity. So if they decide no, five years is gonna look a little than if they decide yes. So, my hope is that they decide yes it does and within that time, people slowly start to get over their initial concerns and fears about trans people and it becomes more normal to know trans people, I think a lot more people are coming out and being more expressive with the way that they identify and I think gender is in general becoming a lot more of a fluid thing in gender expression especially, like ton of guys I know paint their nails, will wear heels to a party, like it's just becoming less of a thing that matters. So I think in five years, even more so people will be much more laid back there will always be the people that are kind of really anti and maybe they'll get there or maybe they won't but they'll stay somewhere else but my hope is that people are just much more comfortable because in five years, everyone will have met a trans person. I think at this point, everyone has probably met a trans person and the thing I like to say is, if you have never met a trans person, there's a chance that you've met a trans person that didn't feel comfortable enough to tell you they were trans. So statistically speaking, you have probably met a trans person and you have probably shared a bathroom with a trans person and nothing has happened.

**Brian McComak:** That's a good reminder Ben, we're all okay. Well, one of the things that sparked for me as I'm hearing your talk is, I'm fortunate to live in New York City and I know many of the numbers on the call here, and I know you live in a liberal town and you're closer to Manhattan, live in Boston or you have been living in Boston places that are fairly open-minded welcoming and safe places but there's places across our country and certainly places around the world where that's not true still today, and we have a lot of work to do. And I think, that's where the hope of the legislation will help to move that conversation forward. The work that companies are doing to demonstrate their commitment to diverse communities is important. The work that we get to do is important. And sometimes I get overwhelmed by it to say like, am I making a difference, and I have to remind myself, as long as I'm making a difference in one person's life, then that's worthwhile. And I also know I have so many people, like me and like you, and so many colleagues that do this work. And with the collection of all of us all over the world doing this work, we're going to drive change, but we do need all of us.

**Ben Greene:** There's no feeling of like seeing other DEI professionals and especially other trans DEI professionals. There's no feeling of like, that's my competition. There's only ever, good another who's on our team who's working towards that same goal. When I first was debating whether or not to go into this field, one of the things that my parents and I talked a lot about was is this a field that's going to last, is the desire and the need for professionals helping with trans inclusion? Is that gonna be a longterm desire in 30 years? Is that field gonna disappear? And I said, "If that field disappears, I will be so proud to have been a part of the reason that it disappeared." The goal is, is to destroy the field. The goal is to make it so that we don't need people to go in and say, here's what trans people are. People will just know. So I think we're all working towards that same goal and that's what kind of makes me feel more confident to, as I get to know more people and enter into more of these spaces in community calls, I'm seeing more and more people who are passionate about this and who are doing that and that's what makes me feel so confident that within five years or within 20 years, whenever amount of time, we will get to a point where it's just, we know it and we're fine with it and it's just a part of life.

**Brian McComak:** Let's hope that day will come and hopefully in our lifetimes, sooner rather than later. I saw a question pop up from Stephanie and thanks for being here, Stephanie and sharing with your community, 'cause I saw your post and she tagged a bunch of people and said, please join us on Wednesday, which I love. So thanks for helping to build

the community. Stephanie was asking what policies would you like to see companies implement to support the trans community?

**Ben Greene:** Great question. Let's see, the biggest ones I think to be prepared is to kind of have steps in place for when an employee decides they wanna transition at work. Know the places that employee is gonna need to change their name, make sure that it's easy for them to get a new email or a new login or a new sign for their desk, make sure that so A make sure there are the systems in place to help people who transition while they're at work and more generally, making sure that there's gender neutral bathrooms or safe spaces for trans and non-binary people to use the restroom and making sure that your other policies aren't gender specific. So maternity leave, like we talked about earlier on the call is parental leave because it's not only women who are giving birth and it's not only men and women anymore who are becoming parents, non-binary people are parents as well. So just making sure that our language is inclusive and extends to people and especially depending on what this law, what the Supreme Court case comes out to be having those nondiscrimination policy, I think makes a big difference. So right now I know there are a lot of states that have them individually. And when I have been looking at jobs and looking for places, I look to see if in addition, these companies have their own non-discrimination policies and inclusivity statements to make sure that if this Supreme Court passes as a no, that the company is still going to be protecting me. So that's having your own protections in place for nondiscrimination, making sure that there are people who can answer questions or just having some collection of resources, people can go to if they have questions rather than saying that it as if someone's gonna come out, the entire company is gonna email them their questions while they're trying to be in account and don't want to answer a million questions, making sure just that you have all the support mechanisms in place.

**Brian McComak:** And one other that I would add. So I would second everything that Ben just shared, the one other I would add, which I've had some conversations about is more often than not, unfortunately trans individuals are part of a marginalized community and resources they have available to them for their transition process are limited and so there's the benefits coverage for medically required aspects of that journey then there are elective surgeries that can be covered, but are often not covered. And then there's a whole bucket of legal fees, name changing fees, things of that nature that they also have to find money for. And so there are companies and there are very few of them that will cover the aspects of transition in each of those three buckets. More companies than not are covering in that first bucket of the medically required. Particularly those of us who are those companies that are meeting the needs the requirements of the Corporate Equality Index from HRC. But I'm a big advocate for let's expand that coverage to include all aspects of that. And Ben you may know more about this, but is there anything you would add to what I've just shared?

**Ben Greene:** Yes, absolutely. And someone had said, they would love to see a blog post or something about this. If you look on my website, the talk that I gave to Inspire Human Resources is kind of all of this information in a much more planned out and visual way but so twofold on that note of medical accessibility. One is that with elective surgeries, that's what they're formally called. But for a lot of trans people, the feelings of dysphoria that go along with feeling uncomfortable in your body can be really debilitating. So I have had top surgery where I had my chest flattened and I had that just about a year ago and before I had that, there were so many things that I just wouldn't do and I was so much more stressed all the time, the amount of mental, emotional stress that I was under just because of the way that my body looked, really inhibited a lot of work that I was trying to do. And I've become so much happier and more productive because I'm happier and have an easier time focusing. So they're elective surgeries, but they're really crucial for a lot of members of the trans community. Not all there's no right or wrong way to transition, people can choose to do whatever they wanna do, but for people that decide that they do want them, they make a massive difference. And then the other thing is the accessibility of these doctors. So there are like in each state, there are probably two people that do top surgery. Growing and depends on the state. In some States, there could be five, and in some states there

could be zero. So to find, and this isn't just for trans specific procedures, a lot of regular doctors will say, I don't know how to treat a trans patient. I took a whole class on this last semester and one of the phenomenons is the trans elbow that a trans person goes into a doctor and says, my elbow hurts. And the doctor says, I'm sorry, I don't know how to treat trans people. And the person says, well, it's just an elbow it has nothing to do with me being trans but there are a ton of doctors who just won't treat trans people. And this is more guidance from the US administration saying that it should be okay to turn away a person based on their gender or sexuality. So it can be very difficult for trans people to find doctors that they feel comfortable going to, both for trans specific care and a general care. So making sure in your policies that you are understanding of trans people meeting maybe a little extra time off to be able to get to a doctor's appointment, because they may not have a local doctor, especially if you are not in a place like New York City or Boston, if you're in a place that's a little bit more rural or just anywhere more Southern that doesn't have a lot of access to those doctors being more flexible with the time off that you provide for people to get to the doctor.

**Brian McComak:** So great, thank you Ben. Well, that was helpful for me and the work that I try to do to be an ally. I know we're approaching four o'clock, I know we have a couple other questions that we can get to, and we can hang out for a few more minutes. So we'll come back to those outstanding questions, and in a moment, but I just wanna say thanks to everyone for joining today. If you do need to jump off by all means of course everyone has commitments and schedules to meet. Next week, we have Chelsea Williams, who is the founder of College Code and another phenomenal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practitioner, someone who I've had a chance to work with myself. So she's going to join us and share her story, and then more to come in June. So if you have to jump off by all means, but we'll stay here for a few more minutes and then get to the final questions. So the one question that I see here that I wanna make sure we ask Ben is, 'cause I love this question which is, what one question you wish people would ask you more often, aside from your preferred pronouns and one you wish people wouldn't ask about your experience as a trans man. And I have to thank Elizabeth for asking that I know Elizabeth out in California, I'm in Los Angeles so Elizabeth, thanks for waiting in there.

**Ben Greene:** It's a great question. One of my general personal policies that I like to kind of tell people about question asking 'cause a lot of people say, I get so worried about asking any questions what if I say something offensive because why do people love to say offensive things but people get so worried about what they're gonna say and if it's going to be offensive. So I say the easiest way to tell if what you're going to say as offensive is, imagine this situation was flipped how would you feel if they asked you that question? So you think about how well you know that person, think about if you're at the office water cooler or if it's just the two of you hanging out and where you are. So a big question that people love to ask me and all trans people that I have ever met in my entire life is, what's in your pants? People love to know like, have you gotten the surgery, which there's not one surgery but everyone loves to say have you've gotten this surgery and then give it a look like that, I would love to never receive that question again. And I'm very open about the procedures that I have gotten so there are more specific questions Like what steps have you taken in your transition? My job is answering these questions I have made a career out of the questions that people have, but not everyone wants to be asked those questions. So I think for me the questions I would like to be asked more are just like, what was one of the most meaningful experiences of your transition or just things that are like looking for stories. I love sharing stories, I'm a storyteller through and through. But for all trans people in general, just ask is it okay if I ask a question about blank because not all trans people want to be answering questions all the time. And also one other tiny note about preferred pronouns. So, there's generally a movement away from using the phrase preferred because it implies that they're a preference and if you could use them, that would be great. But rather than just saying, these are my pronouns that says like it's a fact that these are my pronouns that I use and they're not an option, right? So the way a little analogy cause I love analogies that I like to use is if you ordered a pizza to your house and they asked for your preferred address, there you would just feel a little bit uneasy, right? Like, is that a hundred percent going to get to my house? Why is there a need to include the phrase preferred if you're just going to the address anyways. So just say, what are your pronouns, is an easy shift in language that just makes a little bit of a difference.

**Brian McComak:** It's a great analogy. And I love my pizza so better come to my address. For those of you who are new, I wanna make sure I introduce you to Bosco. This is my little guy here who keeps me smiling, he is also the chief happiness officer for Hummingbird Humanity. And he likes to make appearances upon this time because it's dinnertime for Bosco. So he's reminding me to make sure that he gets his dinner. Angelo, I think we might have one other question.

**Angelo Cilia:** There was one other question in the Q and A. What are some things that people can do every day to help advance-

**Ben Greene:** step up. And I will just say quickly to anyone in the chat who needs if anyone wants to contact me, ask any questions, get any support about their own identity. Anyone else you can reach out through my Instagram, my Facebook, my website, my LinkedIn, email, whatever stalk me do whatever you want. I would love to be your friend.

**Brian McComak:** Great, and I'm going to share those in the panel discussion too.

**Ben Greene:** Wonderful, thank you.

**Brian McComak:** When and I froze for a minute, but I'm grateful for Angelo and Ben to keep the show going while I disappeared from the technology. That's real life for all of us right now. So thanks everyone again for joining, for week three, join us for next week for week four, with Chelsea Williams.