

Hummingbird **Humanity**

an LGBTQ+ owned business

Hummingbird Hour Marketing With Equity

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Brian McComak: - Hello, happy Tuesday, happy July. I hope you all had some time to rest and rejuvenate over the holiday weekend and spend time with loved ones and family. I was with my parents and it was nice to be home with mom and dad over the holiday weekend and just spend some quality time with my family. I am delighted for this week's Hummingbird Hour. For those of you who've been with us before, Hummingbird Hour is our weekly conversation series in May, June and July this year, which we are doing to celebrate Hummingbird's one year anniversary and we're sharing stories and messages from different voices who make an impact on the world and help make companies and organizations inclusive of everyone. Like the slide here says, Hummingbird Hour is recorded. When we share the recording on our YouTube channel and on our website, the closed captioning will be added to the video. We also include the transcript on our website for those who prefer to engage in the content that way. I'm gonna take the slide down. Again, happy Tuesday, everyone. Welcome to Hummingbird Hour. My friend and colleague, Rana Reeves is here with me today. Rana is one of my favorite humans and I'm so glad that he said yes. Rana and I met when I was working at Tapestry, which is the home of Coach, Kate Spade and Stuart Weitzman and Rana has worked with the coach brand for a number of years and we got a chance to work together. We'll talk more about that in a few minutes but he's someone I've learned a lot from over the years. Rana, thanks for being here today.

Rana Reeves: - That's okay, Brian, it's always good to chat to you.

Brian McComak: - Absolutely, would you share for our guests, viewers who don't know Rana Reeves? I know the Jennifer Brown community is a big fan of yours and so some of those Jennifer Brown community members are here. We probably have some people who haven't heard of you before. Would you share a little bit about yourself?

Rana Reeves: - Yeah, do you want me to share about me or the agency?

Brian McComak: - Both, we talk about who we are and what we do here at Hummingbird.

Rana Reeves: - Right now, I live in New York. As you can tell I'm from the UK. I grew up in Essex, which is just outside of London and I began my career. I've got a degree in politics but I began my career in '96, which is gonna age me in the UK and it was really at this moment when I've thought about this a lot, one thing I'm sure we're coming to talk about, Brian is the power of language and lexicon. I grew up in this time when they called it youth culture at the time. Youth culture was emerging as a real dominant cultural way of marketing to brands, so club culture, drag queens but they basically put everything which I now understand to maybe be DNI into this term, so black culture, South Asian culture, gay culture

was all put into this term youth culture. Looking back now, I can understand that but we didn't have a language around it then. So I kind of grew up in the industry. I started off as a publicist and then developed campaigns that were very much intrinsic to me and my identity. Certainly, again, now we would talk about it being intersectionality but being a British South Asian family of immigrants, being a gay man, all the different things that make up me would come through in my work. This is all still pre-internet. Then the internet happened and it really, I would say that now I'm considered someone that works in the ad industry but at the time, the ad industry didn't really want people like me. I didn't work in the ad industry, I was a publicist but the internet democratized the way the channels and the way the content is created and also consumed, which took it away from some of these ivory tower ad agencies to kids like me. I moved to the U.S about six years ago so I set up an agency, worked in loads of different brands, W Hotels, O2, Beats by Dre, Adidas. Did a for a year as Sean Combs, you'll know is Diddy's creative director and now I have my own marketing agency, I suppose you'd call it called Ranaverse and we work for a range of different brands. We work, as you said already for Coach, we work for SoulCycle, Equinox, General Motors. We're just in the process of working with them on their electric vehicle, Push, Boss and Unilever is a big client of ours that we do different work within the purpose-driven space, I would call it in our language. So that's a very small 46 years of Rana.

Brian McComak: - Wow, yeah, it's hard to encapsulate our career journeys when we get to be our age. In just a couple of minutes, here's a few highlights. We'll certainly cover a lot more. I wanna share with the group a bit about how I really feel like I've learned from you and what the power of our partnership and collaboration has been. It actually was part of the influence to the representation matters paper that we released a couple of weeks ago, where we talk about the four lenses of representation and those four lenses that we use are people, culture, community and customers. When we first met and I was still getting my feet under me as a head of diversity and inclusion at Tapestry and really learning a lot about the landscape of what it means to create an inclusive environment where we see representation really come to life in the company, what really emerged for me with what we got to work on at Coach was that the true importance of the, and the way I talk about it now with our clients is there's an internal expression of DEI and an external expression of DEI and we use different words sometimes so social impact can sometimes be the external expression. I think that was something that I really learned from you as we got to work together. I think that's why companies are calling you to help them bring their external commitment to the ad life. What's that look like for you as you're having those conversations with your clients?

Rana Reeves: - I think the weird thing, Brian is that it changes. It changes month by month as culture changes. What I would say is the first thing that I've seen, which is the seismic shift in my industry is the calendar the we work to. In the old days, and this calendar still exists, it would be Oscar's, Grammy's, Father's Day, Mother's Day, Coachella, Valentine's Day, holidays and they all still exist but there's been this overlay where brands have... There's been a schism and so in the old days, which is probably just about a year ago, they lumped philanthropy and human rights into this ball so you'd also have like Breast Cancer Awareness Month or December 1st, Global Aids Day, et cetera. At the same time, you'd have these particular moments like Black History Month or Pride and they were just lumped in with just the charity stuff you did when you weren't selling share. What there's been and this is very much, I would argue predominantly due to the George Floyd protests and Black Lives Matter is there has been a seismic shift into an understanding that there is a human rights scandal and a lot of these moments that we deal with, that you might deal with internally and I deal with externally are celebratory on the whole for brands. What I mean by that it's not the job or the right of brands to celebrate those moments, it's about how the brands show up in allyship to those communities in those moments. You can't divorce what is going on for black communities now from Black History Month, you can't divorce what is going on for LGBTQ communities now from Pride, you can't divorce from any of these moments what is happening now and I think that there has been this move where brands have had to come off of the fence as well as not just seeing as philanthropy, they've also had to understand that human rights are not political issues in my opinion. You can't stand for fairness, equality and these concepts in your brand values if you're not gonna get off the fence and stand for them. You can't or in my opinion, you have no right to celebrate Pride if you will not denounce anti-trans laws. You don't get to

post about Black History Month if you don't support the George Floyd Act because these are things that are intrinsic. So this whole movement and shift is still going on, which is why it's a very rambling answer to your question is that it's changing all of the time but I think that it's just a very exciting time because I think the communities that we deal with have understood that for a long time. The shift is on the brand side, the brands are understanding now and I would say that arguably, it's Gen Z that drive that because if you get it wrong, they will call you out and it affects your bottom line. The second thing, which is very unique, only America and Brazil have this population where it's practically 50-50 Gen Zs white and nonwhite. Also the economic figures stand up to that. I'm gonna get this wrong slightly but I think it's black people or black and brown people spend the equivalent of the GDP of Germany in America. Alongside the heart of it makes sense to be like, this is the head of you can't afford commercially to not be doing this anymore or you can try and do it but it's gonna be a rocky road. It's gonna take you down Chick-fil-A territory.

Brian McComak: - Well, one of the other stats that we captured in the representation matters paper and we talked about a lot in our work at Hummingbird is that, and there's a couple of different models but essentially by 2050, there will be more people of color in the United States than there are white people and so, when I talk to business leaders, I say, here's the thing, if you can choose not to be part of this if you want to but I think you're starting to then build your business or strategize your business out of business because if you're not including everyone, the viability of your business starts to really be challenged.

Rana Reeves: - This is what people have to understand, Brian but also it's here now, 16 of the 20 biggest cities in the United States are nonwhite majority and then if you go into culture, if you go into music, if you go into sport, if you go into film, if you go into TV, disproportionately whilst the people behind the scenes may not be black or brown, it's just unequivocal the impact in popular culture of black and brown people in this country. So that mixed with the demographic means that almost, you don't have a choice if you want to have, like you say, a viable business. Can you imagine a business now being able to comfortably say, "We're not really interested in black people and we don't really like the gays."

Brian McComak: - I don't know how you would do that and certainly there are some companies that do under the umbrella of religious choice, which is another conversation altogether and a complicated one. I wanna go back to this, what you were sharing about that standing by your values, standing by humans, human rights is not a political issue and I remember when I had the opportunity to work with Victor Luis, who was the CEO of Tapestry when you and I met, he and our head of HR and our head of communications, we spent some time thinking about, how do we really demonstrate our commitment to those values and also not be political 'cause of course, and I know this is true in places around the globe, certainly in the United States though, the last eight to 10 years, I think some people will say it's been this way for many years but the last eight to 10 years have been really volatile and contentious here and companies are having to say, well, what we stand for and sometimes what they stand for feels like it's political. They have this dance to... It's like a tight rope to walk but I love the Gen Z population. I'm like, thank you for being here and challenging leaders and saying, hey, you gotta do better. How are you helping your clients? I think about the voting work you did of how you're helping them walk that tight rope.

Rana Reeves: - Yeah, often it's about building almost like a team internally because we work with some really large brands so there'll be external affairs, there'll be the PR team, there'll be, as you've mentioned, HR, there'll be marketing and it's really all coming into sync. The general rule of thumb is to be nonpartisan, particularly when you're dealing with laws or the right to vote. Yes, we did the election last year, we got midterms coming up next year, which is something that I'm focusing on at the moment. So it's about things that, to me are just sacristan concepts. If you take gay marriage, the way that they did it was they talked about love. No one can disagree with love. On the whole, unless you're really

crazy, you can't really disagree with the idea fundamentally, that equality is a fair thing to do. Fairness is a fair thing to do. So what we look at is the right to vote and it's things like you look at what organizations can you work with. You can work with 501c3 organizations. When you're talking about... Those are the ways that I tend to hone in on stuff. If you take the election last year, we looked at the barriers to black and brown people voting, we looked at the barriers to trans and gender nonconforming people voting, so ID registration, a feeling of safety at the polling booth, misinformation and correct information, why your vote matters 'cause there can be a feeling of just, well, nothing ever changes and it's very much around your right to vote as opposed to, this is who you should vote for. When a law is actively discriminating against a population... Unilever are incredible so we thought the raft of anti-trans laws that have come out. Unilever came out corporately against those, Tapestry did the same thing, the Coach CEO did that, you were involved in that, too came out and said, this is not right. I think it's a case by case on what law or what piece of activity you're dealing with but it's always about not telling people what to do. At the bottom line, it's all about equity, isn't it? It's just giving everyone the same opportunity as other people have and it's staggering for me coming from Britain 'cause I'm sure there's some sort of that suppression but I don't quite know what it is in Britain but it's understanding, well in this town, they keep all the polling booths in the white areas open but they shut the ones in the black areas. That's not fair. So either we create volunteers to keep those open or we create transport infrastructure for those black or brown people to go to the white area polling booths. That's just about fairness. We're not at any point telling them you should vote. There comes a point where if you have a consumer that is just not interested in other people being equal, there's not a lot you can do with them. It is what it is.

Brian McComak: - Well, you're not gonna make everyone happy but if you stand by your values, what I found is the times, and I'll use my life as an example, the times of my life where I've made decisions that are inconsistent with my values, those caused me the most angst. As long as I stand by my values, and some people may not be happy with me but I can say, but I stood by who I am or what I believe in. I think that works for companies as well.

Rana Reeves: - You know the midterm demographics, you know what's coming by 2050. It's, what are you in for commercially? I think as well on the whole, one of the things that I've had to learn on a personal level, which I'm hoping will come through in my work more is this idea of unity. On the whole, people wanna see other people thrive in abundance, not in hardship if you take it on a human level and my clients, when you drill it down to that, far and wide just nice people that would like to see good in the world. They just also have commercial targets to reach, so it's how you marry the two.

Brian McComak: - One of the sections, I'm gonna keep going back to the representation matters paper 'cause it's really the way we're trying to engage companies in this conversation and all of the various elements of it, we have a section that says, it's titled good for humanity, good for business and I think you've already alluded to this in the conversation, more than alluded. You've I think made it clear but I'm curious if you have other things to add about these human centered commitments to different communities or to the experience of humans as a whole. When you're working with your clients, do you help them understand the benefits to their bottom line? Is that part of the conversation as well?

Rana Reeves: - Yeah, I think it depends on where you're drawing the line around stuff. From a personal level, I have a particular issue with rainbow based products because no one ever released how many of these things they sell and certainly walking around Pride, I don't see loads of people in rainbow t-shirts, sneakers, fanny packs, book bags, cans of soda, yada yada yada but I think for me, it becomes about nuances. For instance, if you're gonna use black culture to sell your products, which I would say by and large most brands are doing now, any brand that is co-opting NBA style or in music or in a certain nuance of something that to me, feels black in the American sense, then what are you giving back to that community? That's what I ask and those are the sorts of things that I really push brands on. I'm pitching for a

brand tomorrow actually and one of the things that I'm gonna say to them is that, what's changed is you can't just take from a community with one hand their food or their music or their culture or their design or whatever and not give back with the other, that's no longer acceptable. I look at the Latinx community, there's this idea of, let's all do Cinco de Mayo and let's take all these tropes from this community but let's not build immigrant populations, let's not understand what they're going through. That's what I mean about this difference that brands traditionally have wanted to focus on this idea of celebration, which is where they go into with Pride, where they go into almost celebrations with the wrong work. With Black History Month, it was all about these major milestones in civil rights but what's happening now? It's, how do you build some sort of substance and then how do you enable those communities to celebrate for themselves because unless you're black owned or brown owned or queer owned or women owned at that particular moment, it's not your place. It may be the place of some of your employees but it's not your place. So it's always for me about, how are you as a brand adding that value but also that doesn't need to be boring, it doesn't need to be uncreative, it doesn't need to be exciting and also, it doesn't need to be divorced from selling products.

Brian McComak: - I'm curious. I've used the stat of by 2050, over 50% of the population in the United States will be people of color and when I talk about, that's 25 plus years from now, almost 30 years from now, when I talk about DEI work, internal work at companies is I have to help leaders and employees often understand we're not gonna change it overnight, there's no switch I can flip as much as I would like to to make any place inclusive or diverse unless they've been working on it for a really long time but even that wasn't a flip of a switch that was intentional, thoughtful, considered work over years. Is it the same for the work you do with companies to help them build their brand reputation for as inclusive?

Rana Reeves: - I think it depends on the brand and depends on the activity. I'm fairly pragmatic so I'll take any brand that wants to do good. Obviously, they have to have not had a long history of doing really bad ideally but I'll start from day dot with a brand and like you say, it's about intention and I think that this is what I'm trying to say, Brian. If we'd had this conversation a year ago, I think I was more in a space of what I would call angry marketing. It's white people's fault, it's straight people's fault, it's men's fault and I'm moving towards this idea of teachable moments and unity, which is a softening for me because we have to, at some point look at solution-based activity. I'm looking at allyship, what does that mean? How can people show up because I think that it's really important to put out positive representation of communities but also actionable purpose of how people can show up. That's a lot of what I'm beginning to think about now but you can only do that when you've created an environment where marginalized people have some level of equity or are at the table. What tends to happen with the business is it depends on who they are. If it's an all white client and they're looking to reach black or brown people and they don't have black or brown people in their company, what they need to feel comfortable doing is stepping aside and centering the work, the conversation, the funds to black and brown people. If they have black and brown people within their company, it's how do we bring them to the table and then it's working with people such as yourselves, either externally or internally to build that structure within the company, so the two go hand in hand. I don't work on say, employing people or that side of things but the two, one begets the other. There's no point creating an amazing external, as you've seen with many companies actually, external image of black and brown or queer culture or whatever but it's really crappy to be a black or brown person working there 'cause at some point, you will get found out. Let's look at Nike, Adidas, it's a roll call of companies where this has happened and so the two need to go hand in hand but I'm a firm believer now that wherever you are in the journey, it's a start. You can't just be like, you've never done this so I'm never gonna work with you.

Brian McComak: - Who was it who I heard say this? I think it was DK Bartley who's the chief diversity officer at Moody's, yes, it was. I had a chance to hear him speak a couple of years ago and over the last couple of years, diversity, equity and inclusion work has really exploded, particularly in the last 12 months and if someone had asked him a question of, how do you feel about the companies that are just joining? He said, "Welcome to the party, I'm glad you're here. Spending

energy on why we weren't here before, it's not gonna solve anything. Let's move forward and make some things happen." I love that thinking. I have to say, though, I love this softer side of Rana, it's so beautiful and I hope you don't and I'm sure you won't. I mean, one of the things that I have shared about our partnership over the years has been that I'm so grateful for people like you who are gonna be a little bit no-holds-barred and say, this isn't okay, you need to hear this, you need to see this, you need to solve this 'cause one thing that I'm aware of is that, and I've had a number of moments of this over the last few years as I've come to understand how the systems of oppression have impacted how I do my work and how I show up every day is that I learned how to standardize things and make things okay and make things comfortable for often cisgender straight white men. I need people like you to push so don't lose that part, Rana 'cause we need it.

Rana Reeves: - What I'll say, Brian is I'm focusing that iron now on the ad agencies and the marketing structure because they are the ones that have really started to get on my nerves in the, you cannot move now. We've hired a black person, we've got a woman here, he's an Asian or will try adverts for stop Asian hate but your job is to shepherd and guide brands into the nexus of where culture is. I find that they are the most resistant in stepping aside for black and brown or other marginalized people to come through because that affects their bottom line. So what they're trying to do is co-opt and you can see it in so much work. You can always see queer work that is done through just white gay men or you can see black work that is put through the lens of a white executive creative director. It's this thing which I talk about over work that is professionally black or professionally Latin and it's the same people that get cast, the same directors that get hired, the same casting directors. My wonder is that there's this grip on black, brown marginalized talent, which is not changing. Why are none of the main agents black? I deal with one agent in Hollywood, amazing guy, Dan Armstrong, who is of color. A lot of what I'm working on now, Brian is who holds the keys to the stories that are told and who is advising the client 'cause the client's a marketeer. The clients are doing bottom line and spreadsheets for Walmart so these ad agencies and these media agencies, they don't know. They don't really exist in that intersection of class, race, gender. They were all the ones that were in the Hamptons for pandemic so how were they telling people how to buy? That's where I've got my particular bugbear at the moment.

Brian McComak: - Yeah, I'm glad to hear you didn't lose that passion. Of course, I wasn't actually worried about it but I wanted you to hear that we need it cause it's helped me and I know I have no doubt that it's helped others as well. The other part of what you shared is something that I continue to explore, though of and I'm gonna use my language here is, I feel like we have cast cisgender straight white able bodied men as the villains in the story and they were the villains, there's some truth in that. The country was founded on systems of oppression but the men of today are, whether accomplices or either innocent accomplices or active accomplices but they didn't create the system that is today. I continue to think about, how do we take them out of the villaincy and how do we find ways to, cause we need that group of individuals to be part of the work and part of the conversation? What's the language, what's the approach? What are the things that will get them in the room and get them engaged?

Rana Reeves: - A lot of this is systemic, Brian. This is why I have an issue with the ad agencies because they are often perpetuating systems 'cause it's about their bottom line. The client's not even really interested in any more. If I think about Unilever, my primary client and the person that brought me in is a black woman, AC but my day to day client is a stray, watches football, Bob Master, amazing guy and that's what I mean about unity and allyship. What he displays for me is openness and willingness to listen, I feel heard. It's the same with the team I work with at General Motors. This is what I mean but also, that's my personal journey, Brian. It's like, as I come across these clients, which on the whole, it's more that sort of client than the other sort of client, particularly in the style of brands I work with, it validates me, it makes me feel positive. I'll call out as well Leo Burnett, which is Leo Burnett Detroit that I work with. I sit at the table. What you find is this all becomes about individuals and this is what I mean, then I'll come across other individuals that will gaslight me or will really not wanna hear about this stuff. For me, they are still the villain but like you say, it's not a

one size fits all. What I think has come into the lexicon, which is different is my ability to call those people out. Terms like white fragility, unconscious bias, all the terms that you know is basically gaslighting. I didn't know that that was the thing that would happen but now there is a language around that. Also, people are more aware that if I act in this way, I could lose my job. It's not about full frontal racism or homophobia or transphobia, it's about a way that you're behaving to me as a vendor or as a partner or whatever that is just inequitable, that's changed. I've had it with some clients but it's such a case by case basis. I think it's about the individuals that you come across but I also think it's gonna be really difficult to hold a CMO role nowadays and be a closed-minded person. That's not my experience of CMOs. The experience where I get the barriers is often at the middle manager level.

Brian McComak: - Well, that is one of the areas that is a real challenge just in DEI as a whole is the middle manager. I know there's a lot of work and research being done to figure out, how do we impact that population? Something else that I'm hearing as we're having this conversation and really some of the things you just said is, something that I know you and I both believe in and why I think our partnership at Tapestry and Coach really worked is that DEI and commitments to inclusion and commitments to diversity, it's not just one part of the organization, it has to be throughout the whole organization and everything you do and otherwise it's inauthentic or it doesn't work. It's, to your point of, you can hire a queer person of color like yourself to do a marketing campaign but if you're not inclusive and you're not gonna let your voice be heard, then you're gonna miss out on the possibility of what that could look like. Do you partner with other DEI leaders? I know that you and I talked a lot.

Rana Reeves: - Yeah, not externally. I think in nearly every brand that I work on now has it in some sort of way DEI and I think that where it makes my life easier is it's this coming off the fence, Brian and we've talked about this before that once a brand posts that they're black square or they're rainbow or whatever, then I know I've got them because once you've publicly said it, you have to live up to it, otherwise it's performative. What I've seen grow is the role of the DEI professional, maybe even you were probably the first person I've met in that role, I'm trying to think back on clients. The other thing that has grown, which didn't use to be around for me is the employee resource groups, that was new as well and I'll often start to deal with them now. I'll take as a great example where they have one for black instructors and workers, then they've got brown, LGBTQ and that also can be its own issue where we start to hit intersections. Pride was a big one where I was starting to get pushback from white gay men about, why are we focusing just on trans women of color or whatever, pride is our thing, too. Everything has layers upon layers but I think my thing is in a way, the more the merrier because if the organization is coming along, the staff have to feel correct. One of the big things for 2022 for me is looking at the shop floor or the factory floor. What I find is a lot of the stuff that I'm doing is benefiting or is involving head office but isn't necessarily involving and again, that to me is an intersection with class economics but I'll give you an example. If a brand gives its head office Juneteenth as a federal holiday but you don't have your employees on the shop floor able to do the same thing but predominantly, your employees on the shop floor are made up of black or brown people or whatever, it's not working for me. These are new things that I'm learning to look at. I'm also learning to look at, how do I work with external affairs and the grown-up governmenty bit? It's learning this, Brian and I've learned that from Tapestry as one of the companies 'cause then when I go into a new client, I can understand, would you have this person, do you have this person 'cause you know from working inside corporations that otherwise, it's like these small where the DEI person is doing their thing, the HR person is doing their thing because there's no forum where they all talk to each other but sometimes, the external agency, we are the fulcrum for talking to everyone and bringing people together.

Brian McComak: - All of those pieces have to connect and they have to align and they have to coordinate with each other and amplify each other's messages. One of the stories that I really think about, and you're part of this as are many others is, we were able to increase the candidate pipeline for people of color at Tapestry and it was because we did a bunch of things. It was that we started to demonstrate our commitment in external advertising and marketing and the

imagery. We had messages about what we were doing internally, we reached out to partner with not-for-profits to build additional relationships with the communities and all of those things. I think one of the things that is tough about this work is it is so multi-dimensional and so getting your head around all of the different pieces of it can prove to be a bit challenging. What are the biggest pitfalls that you've seen or you encourage companies to avoid like, here's how you can get it wrong when you're trying to focus on diversity in your marketing campaigns?

Rana Reeves: - I'm gonna paraphrase AC because she's been a huge influence on me, AC at Unilever. I was fully in the say, how is this gonna reach people? What I wasn't focusing on was the do, what is the meaningful measurable change that you're looking to make? This is how I start now with every single brand that I work on, where it's purpose led in their activity. The traditional act of purpose is to give money and to say you're giving money but that's not enough. Unilever really showed me, I look at their work with the Crown Act around hair discrimination that you can change laws. I didn't think you could do that in this type of work that I do. I really look at, what is the do you're looking to do, so if we take Unilever, if we take Pride 'cause it's fresh at the moment, Unilever is working with different cities that have scored zero on the human rights municipality index. So they're creating frontline and systemic change in cities where there's no meaningful LGBTQ protections or infrastructure. SoulCycle are doing a thing called community bikes where they're working with a network of different queer and trans led organizations across the U.S to open up bikes to people because there's a direct correlation between physical health and mental health. If I take Coach, Coach is looking at safe spaces both online and physical for young people, so working with , CenterLink, Hetrick-Martin Institute. What I say to the brands is, let's look first and foremost at what is it you're gonna do and then on top of that, as we talked about before is, how are we centering this around those people? How are we building equity in the entire marketing process? Who is commissioning the content, who is casting the content, who is directing the content, who is creating the messaging, who is starring in front of the campaign? How is it being cascaded through an organization? New stuff that I learned this year is that you can get a CEO to do a letter on LinkedIn. I didn't know you could do that. So every year, it's a bit like a building blocks. I learned like, here's another bit that we can tinker with that I didn't think was in my toolbox but how important is it for young or any age black people, queer people, women to see the CEO of the company they work for saying, I see you, I to you, I believe in you and I stand for you, that's allyship but also within that to saying, these are the things that we're doing, not just... Then the new thing for me is the factory and the shop floor. How am I making sure that the so-called worker and not just the head office that this is reaching them and then I work with people like yourselves to say, if it's Juneteenth, how are these people getting time off? Why is it those people? That's almost your job to do with HR is to work out... There's my equity verticals or whatever and then they mirror with your equity verticals and the two, you can't have one without the other.

Brian McComak: - They work in symbiosis, absolutely. The orientation to action, the commitment to action, the demonstration of action is so important in... I have this belief and I don't have a lot of evidence to back this up but you'll have worked likely with Jennifer Lehman at Tapestry, the head of communications. I don't know if you've met her, she's phenomenal. I learned so much about communications from her. She does not, I would say buy into the old systems of how corporate communications were designed, which was risk mitigation, sharing just what you need to share. It was really about protection and she helped us make and deliver communications that were very human and very real and were balanced and included commitments and actions. I think there's still a lot of work for the companies who make these statements and you're right. I think that there's still a place for those statements because a CEO saying, I see you as a transgender person or as a person of color or as a person with a disability and I'm here for you and I want to support you, that is important and if action doesn't follow, then at some point, it eats away on the credibility of that.

Rana Reeves: - No, 100% Coach is a great example, they have a great team that are just willing but you are right that there's still that don't complain, don't explain if we don't say anything but those days have gone. Social media took that away 'cause don't complain, don't explain works when you have a monologue relationship with your customer base but

when it's a dialogue, when they can leave comments, when they can call you out, when they can go on LinkedIn and look at what the people look like that are making this stuff or saying this stuff, they can be so forensic. Now, your marketing, your equity, your purpose has to have the same level within it.

Brian McComak: - Absolutely, and I feel like I should just, given this conversation mentioned the reason we know each other is because there was an authentic conversation that happened on social media. For those who don't know the story, there was an email that was sent to Dominique Jackson, one of the stars of Pose who was representing Pride at The Pride Ball three years ago now, I think and the email misgendered Dominique. While I do believe it was an honest error, it was also not okay and it should've never happened. There was this debate and there was the debate of the traditional corporate rules of communication. Do we send that message or do we send a message that is authentic and real and we said, "Dominique, we got it wrong and we would love to talk about how we can make it right and what does that look like," and Dominique graciously accepted that invitation and that's how you and I met. It is having that dialogue. I remember sitting across from Dominique and her sharing about her fight for recognition as a woman every day and how that moment, it just unlocked, unleashed years of pain and hurt and it was upsetting. I'll never forget that moment but I think to your point, Coach is a brand that says we're not gonna shy away from real conversations, we're gonna engage.

Rana Reeves: - Coach is amazing. The other point I'd make, it wasn't just about misgendering to me, it was an expectation that queer people will show up for Pride without being paid.

Brian McComak: - Yes.

Rana Reeves: - I think there were multiple layers to it but again, look, people make mistakes, it's human. What they say, to err is human. It's about how you deal with that 'cause like you say, Brian, it wasn't from a space of malice, it wasn't from a space of evil, it's what you do to make an amend and I remember us all having this conversation that an amend is amend. We go to someone and say, how can I make this right? I prefer not to be called in at that stage but when you call me in that stage, because people just hunker down, nothing gets sorted then. It's about, how'd you go in and often, that formed the basis for what I would say now is that Coach, certainly within the fashion space, do some of the best LGBT work I see each year. That's led to that. They support all these different organizations. It wasn't the best start to something but they pay equitable money to people now and they learned from that situation. That's what I mean is like, you can't just be about punish. What do they say now? It's not just cancel culture... There's something else, there's another scene--

Brian McComak: - Oh, I haven't heard this yet, I'll have to look it up.

Rana Reeves: - Consequence culture. They understood it and they came through and that's a good thing.

Brian McComak: - One of the messages that I try to reinforce as much as I can is I believe that all of us get up and wanna be a good human today and that looks different for different people, then some days you have better days than other days but if you start from, we're all doing our best and that means sometimes we're still gonna get it wrong and then the question is, did I learn from those mistakes? I just prefer that way of living and existing and certainly, as you said, Coach learned from that moment. The other thing that I actually say about that moment. First of all, I agree with you and one

of the things that we really encourage our clients to do and probably beyond courage, push and nudge and ask them multiple times if we need to is, are you going to pay? You mentioned those employee resource groups, those leaders of those employee resource groups are giving time, energy and sharing their lived experience to benefit the organization. Are you paying them? Are you paying your inclusion advisory council members? Are you paying people that you're asking to share their lived experience with you for a brand purpose or product design? What does that look like? The other thing that I share is, and when I share the story with the Dominique email and the partnership that was transpiring there was, I also think that a brand has a responsibility. If you are going to engage a community, whatever that community is, a marginalized oppressed community, that you have a responsibility to understand that community at some level. I'm not gonna say you have to understand everything about every aspect of that community but you gotta start. I think that was part of what felt like was missing there, which I know Carlos was like, how did this happen as a gay man who's really committed to celebrating the LGBTQ plus community. One thing, actually, I wanna make sure that we bring this up and we filled into this a couple of times in the conversation already is, our Pride programming for Hummingbird Hour this month or this year really centered around everyone but cisgender gay white men, people who look like me because we need to elevate the other stories and the other messages. I'm curious, how has pride felt for you as a person of color who's part of the LGBTQ+ community?

Rana Reeves: - I think it's draining that you're still having to have the same conversations, that I would say. I think that for me, I had a naivety that, Biden will get in and it'll all be good and then this whole new front line of laws and statutes and city ordinances have come to the floor but also, what I see is this generational schism and I look at it from how New York is being that I went on the Reclaim Pride March and I think that there's a battle for what is pride. What is it as a concept but my general line of thumb is, until all of the community have those rights and privileges, then to be honest, that's where the focus is. I'm really unequivocal about that. I think that it's kind of... What I'd say, Brian, that is coming to the fore is much more of an education around LGBTQ history. I even see the documentaries, the FX stuff that was on Hulu, stuff that I didn't know, I didn't understand, no one teaches this stuff. It's this thing again of, who gets to celebrate and how and then what are the messages that we need to tell and how do we find the balance between that? I think that that is the, not necessarily the battleground but I saw it a lot with brands where they would center in front of the camera transgender, nonconforming people but it's still a white photographer taking the picture. They're not really understanding equity. If I could count the number of brands that just is, that the sum total of our activity, If I could count the number of brands that just hide behind a rainbow and don't show any queer people. I live in Chelsea, the pride is already off the Google. It's like July 5th, they must've gone overnight to do that. What I thank is I heartfelt thank the black community and the activists within the black community because everything that they are doing is having a domino effect on other communities, what we will stand for, what we'll accept, how we can learn and I also learned that that's always been the case. I learned that at the Black Panthers talk at the gay liberation front, how to be activists. I learned these things. I see the intersection between activists like Qween Jean, who is leading the Stonewall protest every week. On the one side, it's draining that this is still not changing at the pace but on the other side, I have to live in this idea of joy, abundance, thriving in what different communities deserve and I have to stay in a level of hope because otherwise, it just drags you down.

Brian McComak: - Absolutely, when I have my moments where I'm feeling overwhelmed or I just think that this work, how is it gonna be possible 'cause as I continue to understand the systems of oppression that exist more and more, I'm like, how are we gonna tear them apart 'cause they're invisible and they're so powerful and they're self perpetuating. Then I remember and I remind myself that there are so many people who every day through are doing something to try to make the world a better place and through a collection of all those small acts, we're gonna change the world, I believe. That's where hope comes from.

Rana Reeves: - Absolutely.

Brian McComak: - One of the things you said at the very beginning, which we didn't come back to was, and I guess we did it in some ways but the power of language and how things are evolving. I'm curious, what do you think is the next evolution of this work for companies to represent everyone in their brands? What's gonna come next?

Rana Reeves: - I don't know, it's difficult. We're looking at 2022 now and I think that systemic change is gonna be a huge thing. Next year is a tumultuous year, you can't divorce anymore what happens, the midterms is gonna be a hectic time. You can't divorce what is going on in society from what is going on in the brand world. New language comes up all of the time and lexicon comes up all the time. I think it's, for me how that language is created, who's creating it, who's centering it. One of the things that I'm really on the fence around is this term, Latinx because Latinx feels like a business term whereas Hispanic communities don't seem to wanna take it on. It's also understanding all of the nuances that exist within different communities. The black community is not just one mass of people that are all the same. You talked about disability and people with disabilities, there are so many front lines that are colliding and integrating at the moment that it is an exciting time and also, just the channels that exist. One of the things that's really interesting me at the moment is this so-called strike by black TikTokers because white TikTokers are making all the money off of essentially black culture, which again is about who gets to commission, who gets to tell the stories, who gets to be elevated and who is doing that in the brand world, who is spending the money, who are the casting agents and all of this sort of stuff. So I don't have an easy answer for that, Brian 'cause it changes daily. There wasn't a TikTok strike but it makes complete sense. All of these dance moves come from black culture so why are all these white TikTokers making all of these massive money doing black dance moves? It changes daily because then that allows me to say to brands that I'm working with, we need to look at the TikTok strategy. Why are you just paying all of these people all this money but not these people? It changes all of the time.

Brian McComak: - I think businesses continue to grapple with this every day. I didn't live in the '50 and '60s so I can't speak to what business was like then, my sense of the stories I've heard was it was fairly static and stable and over the last 40 years, businesses had a fair amount of disruption and the current pace of change means you have to commit to continuing to listen and to learn and to engage different representation in the conversations. It's one o'clock. Rana, I could talk to you for hours, always a pleasure. Any final words you'd like to share with the group?

Rana Reeves: - Not really, just thank you for having me. It's always good to talk about this stuff 'cause it helps me percolate where I stand on stuff 'cause often, you don't get to just stop and think and these conversations really help me do that.

Brian McComak: - Absolutely, 'cause we're cause we're often doing and I feel the same way. I always think when I have a Hummingbird Hour conversation or join a panel conversation, I'm always learning. I hope that I'm adding something but I often take a lot of ways. Thank you so much for your wisdom and for your passion and for your work and wishing you a peaceful July after a very busy June and we'll see you soon. Everyone out there listening and watching, thank you for being with us and until next week, be well and stay safe. Thanks, everyone.