

Royel M. Johnson:

Before we jump into today's episode, it's important that we acknowledge that this conversation was recorded on the land of the Tongva and Chumash peoples. Panelists joined us from colonized lands throughout North America. We recognize the Tongva, Chumash, and all indigenous nations, tribes and peoples for being historical and continual caretakers of these lands.

Felecia Commodore:

In three, two, one.

Royel M. Johnson:

Greetings ASHE family and welcome back to the final episode of the ASHE Presidential Podcast, focused on the purposes politics and practices of higher education. You know me, I am your cohost, Dr. Royel Johnson, Associate Professor of Higher Education and Social work at the University of Southern California and Director of the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates. Shout out to the Rossier School of Education for being a sponsor this year of the podcast. I have the fortune and pleasure of working with my friend, Dr. Felecia Commodore.

Felecia Commodore:

Hi, everyone. Hello family. I'm your other cohost, Dr. Felecia Commodore, Associate Professor at Old Dominion University in the higher education and community college programs. We are excited to keep our conversation going as we discuss the purpose, politics and practice of higher education.

Royel M. Johnson:

So if you have been listening this season, we started earlier in the season the conversation around contextualizing the current and social political forces that are impending on higher education and what opportunities we have for enacting its purposes. We spoke with Dr. Brayboy and Eisenman as part of that conversation. In this conversation, we're going to turn our attention to a scholar and a scholar leader who are helping us chart new possibilities for higher education through innovative research and practice. And just as a personal note, I have been watching for a while from afar all the good work that's been coming out of SIUE, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Shout to the state of Illinois, my home state, and have been just so impressed with what they are doing to help us reimagine practice in higher education, specifically as it relates to how we recruit, support and retain very talented faculty of color. Felecia, tell the folks who are we speaking with today.

Felecia Commodore:

I'm excited. Join us in welcoming our special guest, Dr. Candace Hall, who's a Graduate Program Director and Assistant Professor of the college student personnel program at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and Dr. Robin Hughes, Professor and Dean of the School of Education at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Royel M. Johnson:

So before we jump into the round table conversation, we start off every episode with something that we call this or that. So we're going to give you two options to pick from. You can only pick one. And we're going to start with Candace. I learned that you are an HGTV fan according to the Twitter streets.

This transcript was exported on Nov 22, 2023.

Dr. Candace Hall:

I am.

Royel M. Johnson:

So we're going to give you two things to choose from. Love It or List It or Hometown?

Dr. Candace Hall:

Love It or List It.

Royel M. Johnson:

Love It or List It. I like that show too.

Felecia Commodore:

All right. So Robin, we know you are an avid sports fan, so we're going to give you a question that really causes people to wrestle and stay up at night. MJ or Kobe?

Robin Hughes:

Oh, Kobe.

Royel M. Johnson:

That was easy.

Felecia Commodore:

Yes.

Royel M. Johnson:

No contemplation needed here.

Felecia Commodore:

[inaudible 00:03:51] my own heart.

Robin Hughes:

Although I love the series that they did on...

Felecia Commodore:

Oh yes, The Last Dance.

Robin Hughes:

Yeah.

Felecia Commodore:

So good. I think Michael Jordan needs a therapist, but it was very good.

This transcript was exported on Nov 22, 2023.

Robin Hughes:

Yeah, it was great. His political stances and his support of African-American folks, black people, people of color. I have issues. He dances on the edge too much, either make a dunk or sit on the bench.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yeah.

Felecia Commodore:

I love it.

Royel M. Johnson:

And his relationship with Scottie Pippen was so interesting to see that they're not really boys in the way that we thought. At least I thought as a kid.

Felecia Commodore:

My favorite and most disturbing part of that series is that he made up an argument to motivate himself. And I was like, wow. There's probably a case study somewhere in there, but athletics...

Royel M. Johnson:

Okay, so last one. Everyone is a Beyonce fan, and if you're not, you can log off kindly right now. Renaissance or Lemonade? Favorite album of Beyonce.

Felecia Commodore:

Of the two.

Royel M. Johnson:

Of the two.

Robin Hughes:

So I haven't listened to all of Renaissance.

Dr. Candace Hall:

[inaudible 00:05:08].

Robin Hughes:

I'm just going to tell my age and I thought Lemonade was okay.

Felecia Commodore:

Oh, okay.

Royel M. Johnson:

Okay.

This transcript was exported on Nov 22, 2023.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Oh, that's such a tough decision. I want to say Four, but that's not an option.

Royel M. Johnson:

Absolutely.

Felecia Commodore:

Four is the one.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Yeah.

Robin Hughes:

I love her. She's a Texan.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yes, Houston. So to jump right into the conversation, how about we just start off with you telling us a little bit about you and the work that you've been engaged in?

Dr. Candace Hall:

I consider myself a creative academic, so I like to lead with creativity. I love to just spend time thinking of the most innovative things and then trying to figure out if I can actually do it or not. I also consider myself a vibe curator, so I spend a lot of time thinking about how people will experience time with me, if that makes sense. So when I think about my interactions with other people, I always want people to feel comfortable and feel at home. And so I like to be thoughtful in curating experiences with the people that I love and love to spend time with. And even in my classes, because I consider myself a back curator. And then thinking about the creative part, when I was in my doc program, one of the things that I saw reading so much great literature out there, I didn't see a lot of people actually taking it up and using it to inform their practice.

And so I thought, well, I don't want to write stuff so that it just only lives in a journal and no one does anything with it. Or they use it to cite for their own work. And that's where it ends. So I would start to think about how could my work live beyond the page and how could I maybe spend time with other people's work and think about how to translate it in a way that resonates with more than academics who are reading it for class or reading it to cite for their own literature reviews and whatnot. So that's where I spend a lot of my time when I'm working, thinking about and trying to be.

Robin Hughes:

So I always start off everything with this mantra that I grew up. I grew up in a sports household, so my father was always quoting somebody. He always says and Candace has heard it at least 300 times. If you have to tell people who you is, you probably ain't.

Felecia Commodore:

I love it.

Robin Hughes:

So I'm going to work really hard to not talk about me, even though that's our learned behavior in this space called academia, is to talk about us. Our dossiers are filled with bragging about ourselves. And then in five, six years, we go up for associate professor for P and T, and all we do for 20 pages is talk about ourselves. But what I do want to talk about is I am here and in this space and in the world to do particular things. And I think in particular, it's to get to work with a group of people who have in their gut, to prepare folks to do good things in this world.

I mean, we're here for something. We're not here just for ourselves and a place called School of Education, health and Human Behavior, in particular, the education part. We know that we're here to do good things for young people to do good things for communities to affect change in the world. And if I can help to serve as a leader or co-leader or whatever in this space, then that's what I'm going to do. And I'm going to look for the best of talent. I always tell people, I don't need your help looking for talent. I know who I want here. I know I don't want, I do not do prima donnas. And luckily we don't have that anymore.

Royel M. Johnson:

Anymore.

Felecia Commodore:

I heard that.

Robin Hughes:

Yeah. I think that I'm in a good space with some great people who are interested in impacting change in this world and doing and influencing young people and influencing this field, what it should look like, the changes that need to be made in this field. So I'm in a good space because I have good folks around me, and all of that stuff was on purpose. There was no happenstance. Each and every pick was on purpose.

Royel M. Johnson:

I love the intentionality around that. Candace. There was something you said around being a creative scholar, and so much of our socialization in the academy rips out, you're de-socialized to not be creative. How do you maintain and center that identity in partnership with your scholarly identity in a field in place that tells you and doesn't value in the same way?

Dr. Candace Hall:

Yeah. So a couple of things come to mind. One, I feel comfortable taking risk because I don't have to be in the academy, I choose to be in the academy. I have supportive leaders who believe in me and believe in my vision that will back me. And I have an amazing husband who has a great job.

Felecia Commodore:

Shout out, husband.

Dr. Candace Hall:

So I recognize-

Royel M. Johnson:

My man.

Dr. Candace Hall:

All of those things. Shout out to Dorian, Hall. All of those things allow me to take risk in particular ways because I know at the end of the day I'll be okay. So I feel comfortable doing the work that feeds my soul. Yesterday I was actually working on my paper for ASHE, and I-

Felecia Commodore:

Look at you.

Dr. Candace Hall:

[inaudible 00:11:14]. It is a paper that I've been working on for my dissertation for quite some time now, and I feel like every time I open the document I hit a wall. So I was spending some time thinking about that yesterday and talking with JT about what's coming up for me around finishing the paper. And something came to mind that my best friend Britt told me earlier this year, she's like, she's not in the academy, but she said, "I don't want you being in the academy to stifle your creativity." And as I was looking at that paper, that's exactly how I felt.

And so I had a conversation with JT about, I have ideas for how I want to use this it's just, I don't know that it's a paper. I don't know that it's a paper. And he encouraged me was like, then don't write the paper. Do what it is that you feel would be the best way to share this work. And so now I'm trying to recalibrate and think about how I will tell the story and share the work that means a lot to me. But it just, for some reason when I go to write that particular piece, I'm met with some resistance that doesn't happen with other pieces that I'm working on. The other thing that came up for me as I was thinking about yesterday, well, why do I feel this way when I approach this particular paper? When I think about other work, particularly writing projects, they have been done or are being done in community, and this is a paper that I am working on by myself.

And so I think about how much more different it is to create in the vacuum, so to speak, to write in the vacuum, to be off on my own, thinking about the word choices, thinking about how I want to articulate my thoughts and how different that is when I am working in community with people. So I was that kid that talked lot in class, [inaudible 00:13:12] separate me, and I'm still that kid. So now my office is away from my friends at the front of the office, now I'm in the back.

Felecia Commodore:

Not the desk in the corner.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Well, I wanted to keep my window so I didn't want to move up to the front. But we spend a lot of time in community with one another, and that helps me to think about my work in different ways. It helps me to think about new ideas. It helps me to help them. We help each other. And so it's just different than when I'm on my own just looking at however many monitors I have up at the time and thinking about, okay, now what do I need to do? Looking at the feedback, thinking about how do I fix this or how do I re-conceptualize this? Doing it alone feels, it doesn't feel like me. And so I just feel like, okay, then maybe this is not actually what I set out for it to be. Maybe this is altogether different and giving myself

permission to pivot. It's okay if how this started, it doesn't end up that way. It could be something else, allowing myself permission to take that risk.

Felecia Commodore:

I want to ask a question that I think, expand on what you already shared, but we know that Candace, your work has recently gotten a lot of well-deserved attention. Specifically, your critically acclaimed documentary, Clusterluck, and some would call this non-traditional scholarship. Could you talk a little bit about what's your motivation or your inspiration for approaching your work the way that you do?

Dr. Candace Hall:

Yeah, so I was thinking about that earlier today. When I started the documentary, it didn't have a audience in mind at all. It was just like, hey, this is really dope that we have each other. I think it would be really important to capture. I want to make a documentary. I had no intentions of showing it to ASHE. I had no intentions of it going anywhere beyond a file on my computer. It was something that, let me just see where this goes. And as I started through the process, it became apparent like, oh, this could be so much more. As I listened to the interviews, as I pulled research, they complimented the things that we were saying, the things that we all experiencing. Then I began to think, well, maybe this could be shared. I don't know how it might go over with the academic audience, but maybe this could be shared and maybe administrators may see this and want to take up this work.

Maybe department chairs may see this and want to think about what their department climates are like. And so then once it had an audience, I began to think about what it would mean for other people to engage with this work. As I said earlier, one of the things that encourages me and gives me permission to pursue things in the creative lane is having the support that I do. So if Dean Hughes wasn't here, if I was a single woman and this was my only avenue for income, I don't know that I would be as comfortable spending so much time living in the creative clouds because the reality is you have bills to pay. And so I am grateful that I am situated in a place with people that believe in me and believe in the scope of scholarship that lives beyond a journal, beyond the words on the page that encouraged me to do this work.

Royel M. Johnson:

Robin, I was wondering from a Dean's perspective, how have you created space in a school and in the field that doesn't traditionally value this form of scholarship in the same way? What's been your experience in changing and reforming structures in ways that support this kind of work?

Robin Hughes:

Let me quote one of the famous philosophers, Sheree Whitfield, who's going to check-

Felecia Commodore:

"Who Gon' Check Me Boo?"

Robin Hughes:

"Who Gon' Check Me Boo?" After I say that, I had to think about what's going to happen after I'm gone or what occurs structurally so that someone can go up through P and T, go up through full professor, and they are submitting documentaries. I just had a faculty member who had mentioned that he was leading a podcast and I wrote his P and T letter, and it was strong that that was a part of his scholarship,

is that podcast is considered scholarship. So one of the things that I've done in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior is I have to read, we all do, all deans have to read the P and T documents. And here they're called operating papers, which sounds just hella crazy. But anyway, so I read those documents and as I'm going through the documents, I'm thinking about Candace Hall, I'm thinking about JT Snipes.

I'm thinking about all those faculty members who are creative, who write op-eds, who do documentaries, who may do films, who may do podcasts, et cetera. And I've incorporated that in our operating papers. So now when the first set of folks read those documents, they know that scholarly work is also defined as a documentary. Scholarly work also includes podcasts, it includes op-eds, it includes et cetera, other forms of scholarly work. It was very broad, but I was intentional about that because I knew that Candace was going up, because I knew that JT would be going up. And I also know that they're concerned about the world. They're not just concerned about themselves. Would I be willing to do that if it weren't Candace and JT and they were just here to do work in their silos and by themselves, I don't know that I would do all that.

Felecia Commodore:

Well, Dean Hughes, we know that you yourself were a trailblazer when it came to the way in which you approach research on collegiate athletics. And so we were wondering how have the experiences that you had as a scholar breaking down walls and making people rethink scholarship in the academy and particularly in the field, how have those experiences informed your approach to the deanship and supporting and evaluating faculty?

Robin Hughes:

So we had to learn to do things differently and to deconstruct and to reconstruct. I remember Satterfield, and we were talking about this the other day. We had submitted something to ASHE way back in the day in the 90s when we were grad students and it was rejected. And one of the rejections said, "What do student athletes have to do with universities?" We said that we were going to save those evaluations, and I know that we have them somewhere. I keep hoping that I run into them. And they used to do it in pen. I had one of the most evil dissertation chairs, Ivana Lincoln. She said, "I think that we can analyze the handwriting and find out who this person is." Anyway, so we thought about... It wasn't just us that had our work rejected. There were a whole lot of folks who did things on sports and athletes and we weren't getting anything accepted by the Association for the Study of Higher Education. So James and I and a couple of other people, Eddie Comeaux and Joy Gaston Gayles and some other folks got together and we said, "What can we do to make sure that we're incorporated, our work is incorporated in the grand scheme of things?" So we created a journal, we created a sig, and we created an ASHE reader. And it wasn't easy to do. It was not an easy thing to do, but we did it and we were able to help support a lot of folks who do this work, all of us from the 90s. Gosh, what seems like 10 minutes ago, that was what? 20 some odd years ago. Oh my God. Almost 30, or it is 30 years ago. And we typically don't share those stories. We probably need to share those stories, but what we do is we share the intentionality of the work so that the folks that are coming through now don't have to deal with those structural silliness.

Felecia Commodore:

I appreciate that because I think when we were having a conversation last night that sometimes happens in the academy is people have these experiences or they're socialized or trained for lack of better words, in ways that are harmful that cause them to have to go through a lot of unnecessary



barriers and hurdles and obstacles to move through the academy. But then they turn around and when they get in positions of power, they replicate those same harmful practices.

Royel M. Johnson:

How quickly forget, yeah.

Felecia Commodore:

And so it's really encouraging to hear you as a dean. Let's try to get rid of those structural barriers so that we can have more diverse scholarship. We can have conversations that we need to be having that the structures and powers of being, gatekeepers have kept us from having for so long.

Royel M. Johnson:

Now we recognize that that doesn't come without challenge and pushback. I was in the College of Education at Penn State, and there was a white lash in that 2020 moment when our dean was advancing like lots of colleges were doing and interests converged to do so, to push an anti-racist agenda that folks were acting a fool. And there was lots of resentment around the targeting resources to hire faculty of color and to change structures at the institution that would begin to reward things that folks of color had always been doing. So what's been your experience in the tensions and challenges and moving a college forward?

Dr. Candace Hall:

I'm thinking about the faculty meeting, a school-wide faculty meeting in particular.

Felecia Commodore:

Now, don't send your heart rate out thinking about faculty.

Robin Hughes:

You can tell them about my [inaudible 00:24:18]. Yeah. I was full on Sheree and a little bit of NeNe.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Because it was just that. There were some white faculty in the school that took space in the evaluation. I think it was a campus climate survey actually, to address their issues with the cluster hire that Dean Hughes initiated when she started here, while we were in the room. Well, she read the responses while we were all together. And so one of our colleagues that was a part of the cluster hire spoke up and was like, whoever wrote that realized, you're talking about me, talking about my other colleagues who are sitting right here saying we don't belong here.

Felecia Commodore:

People you're talking about, not some phenomenon. We're a person.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Right. This is not in the abstract. We're sitting right next to you, whoever wrote this. We're in the same space together now.

Robin Hughes:

Right. Questioning not only the hires, but the validity of the hires, the qualifications of the hires. They've always questioned me. I just, I know how to ignore it. I've been around long enough that it doesn't... Well, sometimes it bothers me. I sit in front of the mirror and think about all these responses like I'm in the fourth grade again, this is what I should have said. So yeah, so there were questions about me when I first got here being the diversity hire, there was pushback on everything. Just everything that I did there was pushback. And I would just keep barreling through. I would just say, I hope that the provost has my back and she did most of the time. And now we have a great chancellor who I know has my back and I have his, I wish somebody would try it.

So yeah, lots of pushback on everything. And I still get some. We still get some. And this has been the fourth year. Am I going into year five?

Royel M. Johnson:

Wow.

Felecia Commodore:

Oh, wow.

Robin Hughes:

2019. I don't care. What I care about is that we're doing the work that we're supposed to be doing for communities. Who I care about are those kids in educative spaces that are receiving backlash from people who have been trained in colleges of education, much like the one that we have, who are disproportionately placed in African-American males in special ed, they're on Adderall, methamphetamine, they can find, talk about drug dealers.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah. And something you said really stood out for me. When we think about having to overcome obstacles, particularly not just folks who do non-traditional diverse scholarship, but often faculty who hold marginalized identities or who are minoritized in certain spaces. And thinking about how really at the core, a lot of times it's your commitment to that community in which you're engaging research with or trying to advocate for and with, and how sometimes that... At least for me, that's what I care about most. And so if you don't like my scholarship, well, that's yours, if it's not your cup of tea. Or as Solange said-

Dr. Candace Hall:

It's just not for you.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah, what Solange said, "If you don't get it, it's not for you." And so what always is most important to me is that the community that I am engaging in research with, advocating for them with, they find value in what I'm doing and that it's helpful and supportive in them doing the work that they're doing. But that's real challenging though, when you're in the system that has these rewards and reward structures and value structures and things of that sort. So it can be tough.

Royel M. Johnson:

I'm sitting here listening to the conversation, and we've used the word non-traditional a couple of times, and I'm sitting with that term and what it means and who gets to define what's traditional? That's a Eurocentric construct, and it's shrouded in epistemic exclusion that some folks are determining what knowledge is counted and what is traditional. And so even just language is so important because when we say non-traditional, it's departing from the center still, and who gets to define what the center is? So maybe there's another conversation needed around the language of how we categorize and talk about scholarship as not being marginal, but no, this is scholarship, period.

Felecia Commodore:

Right.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Yeah. And so when I talk about my scholarship, I talk about it as creative scholarship. So I don't use the term non-traditional scholarship. And I think some people think like, oh, well, I don't like to write or I'm ant-journals, and it's not that. I actually love writing. I was an English major as an undergrad. Words mean a lot to me. I love to sit with my thoughts and to just write for days on end, but that's not the only way I want to articulate my thoughts. And I don't want my work to only live on the pages of a journal. And so I do have things under review. I am still writing and also-

Royel M. Johnson:

And still publishing in journals like The Journal of Higher Ed, which we've read already.

Felecia Commodore:

That's right. That's absolutely right.

Dr. Candace Hall:

But I also want to make sure that I make space to do other work that feeds my soul before I get to tenure. Because I think sometimes people are like, oh, well, I'll put that off until I get to tenure. I'll put that off until I check all of the boxes. And so, one of the things that a good friend, colleague said to me, Dr. Steve Mobley, he's like, "You're taking risks pre tenure and people are just not doing that." And I hadn't thought about it like that initially it was just like, oh, I'm just doing this because I want to. But I'm taking risks, spending time and resources on things that sometimes I'll make expensive mistakes. And things don't always pan out how I thought they would. But there's beauty in that learning about the pitfalls and about the ins and outs of what it takes to create and produce a documentary or put together a show, what it means to work in community and to collaborate with people, to trust people with your vision in the creation process. Those are all things that I'm learning, and they're all things that help me in the collaboration process when I'm working with others on some of the journal articles I have reviewed. So it's been a beautiful, messy, [inaudible 00:31:18] journey.

Royel M. Johnson:

Something you said really stood out to me about doing work that feeds your soul. That is such a radical thing to do pre tenure in this academy because so much of the academy conspires in your spirit murdering and tells you that you can't do work that feeds your soul. Especially us as folks of color, because it's not seen as objective in the same way, but in the traditions of how we define science. So the

idea of doing work that feeds your soul, why is that such a radical phenomenon? Shouldn't we all be doing that?

Felecia Commodore:

Well, I think you socialized that way before you become a faculty member. I think the academy... As many organizations are set up to replicate itself, so if you don't happen to be socialized in a space by people who are already in they system-

Royel M. Johnson:

Who are doing what feeds their soul.

Felecia Commodore:

Who are quote, unquote successful, they're not doing things that feed their soul. You are taught to replicate what you see and what is seen as quote, unquote successful. And so it isn't until sometimes for people that they're midway in their early career that they're like, oh, I don't actually even like the topic that I'm studying, but somebody told me that this was the way to get a job and this was the way to get published.

Royel M. Johnson:

This is going to be the hot topic.

Felecia Commodore:

And so I do think there's a... Which I appreciate the model that Dean Hughes is showing. I think when we see possibility models of being able to do work that you're passionate about and still be seen as successful in the field, it changes our viewpoints of what is possible or who we can be as scholars. And I think similarly when you talk, and I like that creative scholarship, to me and I tell this to my students, scholarship is just a creation on communication of new knowledge. And so when I think about your work you did with Clusterluck and we had the great opportunity for you to come to my institution and show the film and talk about it. I talked until I was blue in the face about the same things that you were mentioning. We brought up research, but it wasn't until they watched the film and had that discussion with you that it was like some of those light bulbs clicked in. And so to me, that's communicating knowledge in a way that people who weren't knowledgeable of these opportunities or these pathways or things that can be done until you... Well, it didn't click, I should say, for them until-

Dr. Candace Hall:

It clicked in a different way.

Felecia Commodore:

Right. You're a documentary. And so I think there's something to be said about seeing scholarship as not products and more as knowledge and world building and things of that nature.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Yeah. So earlier I talked about being, considering myself as a vibe curator and spending time thinking about how people will experience the space around me. I also think about how do I want people to experience my scholarship? So even when I'm working on a paper, what is the feeling that I hope that

people will walk away with after they've read this document or after they watched this documentary or experienced this art installation? What do I want them to feel? I don't know that a lot of people spend time thinking about that part. Because I think if we could get to the heart of people and make them feel something, then I hope that would spark some change, some transformation, desire to transform what they're doing.

Robin Hughes:

I don't know that it always pan out, but...

Royel M. Johnson:

Your comment about how does scholarship make you feel, makes me think about Robin's work, the CRiT walking piece. And I always want to dance every time I hear the title of it, but just in terms of-

Felecia Commodore:

You are in LA now, you're going to-

Royel M. Johnson:

I know. Well, I got to be careful with that.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah.

Royel M. Johnson:

I won't be doing that in here.

Felecia Commodore:

You'll just be walking. Let's not [inaudible 00:35:20].

Robin Hughes:

Well, and you know where I got it from?

Royel M. Johnson:

Well, I was going to ask something else. So if we think about higher education as an ecology, the local context, what you all are doing at SIUE is one immediate context that you all are creating systemic change within that college. But it's one domain and then we step outside of that, there's this larger sort of field, there's these larger set of institutions and so forth that we still got to navigate who haven't caught up to the cool things.

Felecia Commodore:

They haven't even got up, let alone [inaudible 00:35:53].

Royel M. Johnson:

Yeah, at all. So what should we be doing outside of the local context to build on the momentum of the good things that you all are doing already?

Dr. Candace Hall:

The experience that I'm having and most of my colleagues are having, we are in the same school with our phenomenal dean. We have other colleagues who are in other colleges on our campus that are having very different experiences. And so what my goal or something that I desire to do is attend to the people that are already here on our campus who are still the only in their departments, who are still facing very toxic environments. How do we rectify that first? How do we start at home? So I'm grateful for supportive administrators who are like, okay, we are excited about this documentary that you produce, the research that you are working on, the ideas you have for how to transform black faculty experiences. We will create space for you to do so here. Because that's the work I want to do. Yes, it's cool that it's a documentary. I'm going to write about some of the stuff. There are going to be some other pieces that come from Clusterluck. And the most important part is that it begins to change how black faculty experience the academy.

Because that is the part that I want to happen. When people remember me, when I'm not here anymore, I want people to remember that I was a part of transforming the experiences of people, how they experience this institution, how they experienced their department. So I'm really excited to have an opportunity to start doing that work this fall.

Robin Hughes:

I'm hopeful that there are more conversations other than the ones that I have on the phone weekly or via email or whatever, about how did you all do that over there? You got Wakanda going on. Well, there are some risks. Everyone's not going to like you. You're not going to be invited to all the parties anymore. You're not going to be invited to serve on committees because you have a big mouth and you're a risk-taker. But I think it's important that we take those risks so that our people who are coming in who are new don't have to deal with that. I'm like, you are a full professor. What are you scared of?

Felecia Commodore:

I want a T-shirt that says that because it really is fascinating to me.

Robin Hughes:

Right.

Felecia Commodore:

What is going to happen to you?

Robin Hughes:

I'm going to wait until I become associate. Wait until P and T. Then you get P and T, you're still not [inaudible 00:38:35].

Royel M. Johnson:

Exactly. That's exactly what I was going to say.

Robin Hughes:

Then you get full, you still scared. Then you become an administrator, you still scared. What is it going to take? You need to be the president of the US or you still [inaudible 00:38:47]. My gosh.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yeah.

Felecia Commodore:

I agree. You said something, you may not get invited to spaces anymore, or there are these social risks for doing what's right or standing up or advocating in certain spaces. And I just think that we have to start to build people who are okay with sometimes having to stand alone on their principles. And I just think that's so important. I've seen situations where people profess this commitment to diversity and we're really working to, in this particular case, to diversify faculty. And then you see four hires in a department pop up, and they're all not people of color. And people are like, I don't know what happened. You're the dean. What do you mean you don't know what happened? You're the dean. So either you're committed to it, you're not, or you're willing to take that social risk or put your neck out there for what you say you believe or you're not. And my stance is I'd rather you not say you're something than to say you're something and show up as something else.

Robin Hughes:

Right. Yeah, I'm glad that you said that. One of the things that I always say is that you cannot show up as Condoleezza Rice and then get in there at the table and decide you're Angela Davis. Angela, the entire [inaudible 00:40:21].

Royel M. Johnson:

It's inconsistency.

Robin Hughes:

And there are some risks. There are some significant social risk, but you also have to hope that you have people in other roles. And that's what we have at SIUE. There are people in other roles that'll say, why didn't you invite Robin to be on this committee? Why is she not in the room? This is her area of expertise and she's not in.

Felecia Commodore:

I've had that experience.

Royel M. Johnson:

That makes me think about my next question in terms of what recommendations do you have for early career folks also who are on the job market, who are considering opportunities and all the messages about how they ought to show up and what they need to tone down in this process. What suggestions, recommendations do you have for them?

Dr. Candace Hall:

No, I think it's important to show up as who you're, we spend a lot of time at work, so even being faculty and owning your time, you don't necessarily have to work from the office. You still spend a lot of time with your work and in your work environment. So I think it's important to be authentic and to think about that even in the search process. So I've heard people like, oh, I really want to be at an R1. It's like, do you know what it means to be a faculty member at an R1 institution?

Felecia Commodore:

Talk about it.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Do you know what that life is? I am privileged that. I got to see what that life was like from a department administrator side and to be like, oh, no, that's not ever what I want for my life. At least at the moment. I was like, that's not me. And so really thinking about what are the environments that you would thrive in, not what people say you should go after. Because I think a lot of people are going after what is popular or what they've been socialized to believe in, not really interrogating what are the spaces that will feed their soul, that would help them to thrive. I remember coming to SIUE and I was like, this is a place where I feel that I can grow, and this is a place where I feel like I can help put us on the map. I don't know how, but I just feel like I can make a contribution here that really helps the program, the school, the institution. It was less about being at a quote, unquote big name school or being in community with particular faculty members because of status or anything like that. It was like, this is a space where I feel like I can grow and I can continue to learn.

And it was also a space that took a chance on me. So that part, that's not nothing. It was more like, you all want me to come? I remember my department chair saying, "Oh, Dean Hughes is really excited that you're coming." I was like, how does she even know who I am? Nobody knows me. But to be able to see the promise and to be invested in me in particular ways, even when there are times I didn't believe in myself, that's something that I was looking for in the space. And so I want incoming faculty, aspiring faculty to really think about that. Think about the spaces that will really help you, the kind of spaces that you thrive in, and think about the people that you'll be in community with, because those things matter. And I think sometimes people don't think that it will matter. Like, oh, I'll just do my thing off on my own. Yes, and you're still going to have to interact with these people.

Felecia Commodore:

Yes, you will.

Dr. Candace Hall:

It's important to suss that out. So even in the recruitment process, I used to be on the side where I was setting up the search processes and all of that in my previous role. I probably wasn't supposed to, but I was talking with the clinics, make sure you figure out if this is a good fit for you as well. Do you see yourself here? Do you have questions about the city? Do you have questions about what it's like to live in St. Louis? I'm from here, born and raised. I can answer any questions that you have about my own experiences. If you are a partner or with family, how are they going to experience it because all of those things matter. And all of those things will impact how you are able to engage or not engage in the space that you choose to be in. So I think we talk a lot about fit, but I think people often talk about it from the department side, like, oh, this person wasn't a good fit. But is that space a good fit for you?

Royel M. Johnson:

It is courting, yeah.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah.



This transcript was exported on Nov 22, 2023.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Right. This is both, we both got to want to be in this.

Felecia Commodore:

And I think you brought up something. It's something that, a couple of things that brought to mind when I talked to folks about being on the market or looking for places. One, I think particularly faculty of color, and I'm a black woman, so that's the viewpoint I can speak from. I think sometimes we are socialized to compromise our happiness to secure a job. And I don't want to trivialize, people need to pay their bills and eat things like that. But I feel like sometimes we get this messaging that like, oh, well go do your time in the wilderness or just get through it. And it's like being happy is important. Our happiness should matter and we shouldn't have to put it on the shelf for five years to survive and do the work that we want to do. And the other thing I think is people will be like, well, what kind of institution should I be at? And I'm always one that will let you do your work in peace.

Royel M. Johnson:

That part, leave you alone.

Robin Hughes:

All of that.

Felecia Commodore:

Where can I do my work in peace?

Royel M. Johnson:

Right.

Dr. Candace Hall:

With my soul intact.

Felecia Commodore:

Yes, and be a whole person and live a whole life? And sometimes that expires because things change and then you shift. But I do think sometimes we're just like, well, this is the golden ring, or this type of institution is going to give you a certain type of clout. And it's like you can go there and be miserable.

Royel M. Johnson:

And be miserable.

Felecia Commodore:

And not do the best work you could do because you're miserable and that stuff matters and you become resentful of your job, of your work, and then you're not even servicing the communities that you're supposed to be doing this work for the best you can because you're not in a space that you can be your best self. And I think that's really important.

Dr. Candace Hall:

The other piece I was going to add is to listen to your trusted mentors. So I know a lot of people sometimes will make decisions in a vacuum and it's like, oh, I'm a big girl. I'm grown up. I can make my own decisions. Yes, and? Have some conversations with a couple of people. So before I came here, I had a conversation with my mentor, Dr. [inaudible 00:47:10], who was like, "Yes, that's why you all [inaudible 00:47:13]. I keep telling you that's a good space for you." So I think having conversations with people that know you and people that have your best interests at heart and taking heed to what advice that they're giving you.

Royel M. Johnson:

Absolutely.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah.

Robin Hughes:

I just wanted to add one thing to that, and that is the affirmation that we get from living in a space that is traditionally white and striving to get to that particular space. I remember when, I'm sure you all do, in the last couple of years, Harvard just hired their first African-American female president and everybody, kudos, all over the place. Wait a minute, they were one of the first... the first institution in the 1600s over here-

Felecia Commodore:

[inaudible 00:48:06].

Robin Hughes:

[inaudible 00:48:06] fools because they finally realized that there is a smart African-American woman.

Felecia Commodore:

Exactly.

Robin Hughes:

Great for her, but they should be ashamed of themselves. And then I hear people talking about this being their dream school. I'm like, you need to find another dream. And then there are schools that they talk about that are dream schools, and you look at the faculty and they're mostly white folks, deans white, the entire cabinet is white. I'm like, man, there is no MLK there because you're having a whole different dream.

Felecia Commodore:

That's very real.

Royel M. Johnson:

The conversation about socialization sticks with me because folks are not always thinking about what they're being socialized into. And it makes me think that you've really got to know yourself before you come to the academy or be striving to get to know you or be engaged in some reflective process of

awareness of your values, your own indigenous knowledges that you bring, and being able to value that because if not, you'll be socialized into anything. And then you find yourself, what is this I am in? Now, I don't think that folks think enough about the organizational culture that they're being socialized in and what they're losing, what they're giving up as a result to be in that environment.

Felecia Commodore:

And not realizing that there's only so much of yourself you can give up before you lose yourself. I think sometimes we think we just keep making these small concessions and keep giving these little pieces of ourself and we're going to get some big reward back. And sometimes you keep doing that and doing that, and then you look up and you have no idea who you are because you gave yourself away. And that's why I think the spaces that we see at SIUE are so important to the field because Candace you said Dr. Mobley said that you were doing risky things as a pre-tenure faculty. And I would argue risk is relative to whether or not we mitigate the risk. So riding a bike is risky, but if you put on a helmet, you got your parents somewhere nearby in case you fall off or guiding you on where to go, you're in a neighborhood that you know well, you might fall and hurt yourself, but not as bad. It's not as risky.

And I think it's really important for administrators to model what I think we see Dean Hughes doing is like, yeah, what you're doing is risky, but we can mitigate some of those risks. We can rebuild and restructure and reorganize and push the culture in a way that we can look up and say, you doing creative scholarship, you doing scholarship and community-based is not as risky because we've made it so it won't be.

Royel M. Johnson:

Because we value it.

Felecia Commodore:

Right.

Royel M. Johnson:

I wanted to ask you for other leaders who are perhaps interested and ready to push an anti-racist agenda within their spheres of influence, whether it be a department or a college or university campus, what recommendations do you have for them for navigating the politics of higher education and the tensions and pushbacks that are inevitable, but how do they overcome some of those challenges? What lessons might you derive from your experience?

Robin Hughes:

For me, because I have this conversation weekly with someone who is different at least every week or every couple of weeks, is that you've got to figure out how to become fearless. If you are scared, you are going to have a hard time, it's just going to be difficult for you. But you have to also be careless. And I don't mean careless. You have to care less what folks are going to think about. The administrative decisions that you make that are going to impact the change in your school and that are going to help to support faculty who are new. Have to have, and I know everybody says we got to be in communication, but we do. We have to have communications. There should be some sort of institute or something at ASHE and at AERA that just talks about how we affect change in our organizations, in our own disciplines, in our own schools, and how we go about making those changes.

We're not having those really difficult conversations. The conversations that I have heard and have sat in with other people of color are not about being fearless. It's about we have to take these particular steps because we want to make sure that we don't upset whatever group. And I'm like, well, that is not the tactic. That is not the route we're taking over here. There are going to be a whole lot of people upset, but they'll get over it. And then you have to think about protection, protection for the folks who are going up, like your faculty members, your lecturers, your administrators. You have to shield and protect people, which means again, you have to be fearless. You just have to be. You have to be a warrior in this work. So there's teaching, research, service and fighting style. So you [inaudible 00:53:40].

Felecia Commodore:

I love that.

Royel M. Johnson:

You need to be evaluated on that. That was a new [inaudible 00:53:45]. Where's the AAIP?

Felecia Commodore:

I think for myself, what I would consider a mid-career faculty, so I'm over the tenure hump and I find myself trying to be fearless and push and really bring light in ways that I find to be risky. But at this point I'm like, whatever, because things need to change. And from people who are kind of in the mid-career space, from your view as a dean and your expertise as a dean, how do we play a role in and clearing paths for junior faculty or pre-tenure faculty, pushing the administration in ways to restructure and reimagine what our departments look like, what our colleges look like, these systems that are broken and not working, particularly for faculty of color. We are in this betwixt and between place. We have tenure, but many of us are still trying to get to full. And so I'm just curious for those of us who are in this weird middle space of our career, what is it that we can do to help push, continue to push and push for us to reimagine and restructure?

Robin Hughes:

So again, I would have to say, you have to think about living in the framework of fearlessness because you won't be invited in to any parties.

Felecia Commodore:

I've learned that already.

Robin Hughes:

It will absolutely stop. Hopefully you have a critical mass of people who are there to help support. So when I was going up for, I went up for a promotion. And at the time, so I was at IUPUI and we had a core campus relationship with IU. So Lori Patton Davis was there and I was there, and Lori was a full professor. So she was a full professor. I was dean as associate professor. I knew that Lori had my back all of the time and when I went up for full guess who presented my dossier? Lori. And at the time there was a structure that was in place where they doled out a person that would talk about my dossier. It wasn't supposed to be Lori and Lori and I were like, well, that's not going to happen. Let's just fight this. And we did. Was I being invited to anybody's party during that or afterwards? Absolutely not.

Felecia Commodore:

Right.

Robin Hughes:

So you have to, 100% have to be fearless, but you also have to know that you are not going to get the invite. And that can hurt for someone who really needs an invitation. I don't. I don't need to be invited. However, it can be hurtful because sometimes you'll want someone on a committee like a lawyer or whomever. You all know Lori Patton Davis.

Felecia Commodore:

Yes.

Robin Hughes:

So you'll want that person on the committee, but since she's been ex-communicated, she's not serving on that committee. And folks will tell her, well, they said this about you. My first question is, you sat in the room.

Felecia Commodore:

What did you say?

Robin Hughes:

You listened to it and then you're going to come back and tell her what they said.

Royel M. Johnson:

Listen and why were they comfortable saying it in front of you?

Felecia Commodore:

And why were they comfortable in front of you?

Robin Hughes:

Exactly.

Felecia Commodore:

No, that's very real.

Robin Hughes:

So making sure you get the right people in there. You have to try and serve on committees or get people to serve on committees or get people to make sure that you're on those committees. They're sitting in the room saying, where's Robin or where's Candace? Why aren't they on this committee? You have to have that.

Felecia Commodore:

That's good. Well, thank you both for this really great conversation. And we hope that our listeners heard these jewels of wisdom. And thinking about as we think about the purpose and practice and politics of higher education, what is possible. I think we talk a lot about what has gone wrong and what

isn't working, but thinking about what's possible and then also being honest about what it takes to bring possibility into reality. And I think that's really important. So we do have one final question for the both of you, and that is what keeps you engaged in this difficult but important work?

Robin Hughes:

For me, I'm always thinking external to the institution and specifically external to the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior and in even more particular, the E part, the education part. I am on this earth so that I can support and affect change so that I can support people, communities, young people, et cetera. I know that's my purpose. So that keeps me going constantly. What stops me, and one of my colleagues, Natasha Flowers says, "You spend way too much time thinking about little evil things you can do to people who are not doing the right thing." But what stops me is I get worried when there is someone who is not on the same page that is just thinking about themselves, their career, the prima donnas drive me bats, just drive me batting because there are so much stuff for all of us. All of us can become great. There is so much room for all of us to be great. You don't have to be a prima donna.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yeah.

Felecia Commodore:

That's right. And we're not competing with each other. I'm not competing with anyone. We're all supposed to be working together as a unit to shift this stuff and deconstruct and rebuild and world make. And we can't do that if we're competing with each other and trying outdo each other and tearing each other down because we think that's going to get us a leg up. There's enough for all of us, and we all need-

Royel M. Johnson:

A scarcity model.

Felecia Commodore:

We need each other to do this work. None of us can do it by ourselves. That's really important.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Yeah. I think for me, one of the things that keeps me engaged in this work and committed to the work, there are a lot of people that have invested in me over the years in many different ways. A lot of people that saw the promise within me and have done something to contribute to my career or just to my wellbeing, to me as a person. And I want to do their investment and in some cases, their sacrifice, justice. I want them to have a good return on their investment. And so when I think about people that took a chance on me, people that sacrificed so that I could have things or be in particular spaces, I feel a responsibility to show up and do the best that I can each day. And so that is what sometimes gets me out of bed when I'm like, I have a creative block. I hit a wall where the work that I'm doing doesn't matter. When I'm in a rut, I think about there's somebody who sacrificed for me to be here. And so there is a reason. I can find a reason to keep going when I think about them, when I think about what it has taken for me to get to where I'm, and so I just want to do good work.

Royel M. Johnson:

And you are.

Dr. Candace Hall:

Just want to do good work and be around great people and do my part in investing in others and helping them along the way.

Royel M. Johnson:

Well, you are doing good work, and we see you all the way from over here. I could not think of a better way to end this season of the podcast. Thank you so much for engaging with us, for being in community. It was an honor to share space with you all.

Felecia Commodore:

Yes. I really think this is a hopeful, optimistic way for us to end the podcast. And I can say for myself, and I'm sure many others, I think both of you, I think Dean Hughes, the way in which you are walking out and embodying being an administrator, being a dean in our field and in the academy strengthens my faith in what the academy can be. And I think seeing you Candace and remembering you as a grad student and watching the way your career has evolved, but also seeing how true you stay to yourself and your work and your craft and your commitment to community gives me hope in what the field can continue to be. And so I really appreciate both of you and the work that you're doing and your colleagues at SIUE. Dr. Snipes, JT is like everything and all the things to me. I adore him. That's my brother.

Royel M. Johnson:

And he just had us on his podcast too.

Felecia Commodore:

Yes.

Dr. Candace Hall:

And Dr. Fine, shout out to Cherise.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yes, Cherise. Yes.

Felecia Commodore:

And so-

Dr. Candace Hall:

Derek Houston.

Felecia Commodore:

We don't always look at the SIUEs as models and as beacons of light. But I think you all have awakened some eyes to see what the best of what our field can be and the future that we can have if we commit to it and work through a framework of fearlessness, which I love.

This transcript was exported on Nov 22, 2023.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yes. We see each other as Kandi Burruss would say.

Felecia Commodore:

We see each other.

Royel M. Johnson:

Thank you to our guests, Dean Robin Hughes and Dr. Candace Hall for joining us today and giving us so much hope for the future of higher education as we actively work to create space for all forms of scholarship and challenge oppressive structures and systems to aim to maintain status quo. Cultural change isn't easy, but it's so necessary for where we have to go as an association and as a field.

Felecia Commodore:

So as you all know, we usually wrap up our conversations by asking our guests one question, what keeps you engaged in this difficult but necessary work? So since this is our last episode of the series, I think it's time we turn the question on ourselves. So Royel, what's keeping you engaged?

Royel M. Johnson:

Probably the possibility of a better future. I don't have any kids. I don't desire kids, but I have nieces and nephews, I have students. And it's the possibility of creating better conditions, a better world for people beyond my time here. So I'm committed. I committed my work, my scholarship, advocacy to improving material conditions of folks, and I hope that continues far beyond me. How about you?

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah, I think it's similarly, other than my whole aspiration to be Wendy Williams' sidekick. Completely fell through the cracks.

Royel M. Johnson:

How you doing?

Felecia Commodore:

How you doing? I feel what keeps me engaged in this work is really thinking about the communities that I am a part of as well as committed to. And that's what keeps me driving to do my best work, to do good work, honest work, work that is collective in nature. Really to not just build a better world, but to build a world that is more inclusive and a world that makes sure that people aren't kept in the shadows because of power and greed and things of that nature. And I think about where I'm at today and the privileges and opportunities that I've had, and none of those things would've ever come to fruition if there hadn't been communities and people and committed persons and committed organizations that invested in me and invested in spaces that gave me opportunities to learn, to access information, to be exposed to different things and to become better versions of myself over and over again. And so I feel that my responsibility and my duty is to pay that forward and to make sure that those coming behind me and also even my peers have opportunities to do the same. And that if we all have opportunities to become our best selves and to become the full fruition of who we are, that we might see a world that we've only ever imagined.



Royel M. Johnson:

There was something that Dominique Baker shared earlier in the season about the collective fight and being able to take breaks and knowing that there are other people who can step up. So there's something beautiful about being able to show up to this fight with others who are equally committed, and that when you are fatigued and tired and need to break, that there are other folks who are ready and staying ready to continue it. So I'm motivated also by the collective action and the community approach to it.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah, I think if we think about systems, and that's how I think systems and organizations, the way in which we disempower those who really could be powerful is to separate them. That's why we see this push for this rugged individualism that really isn't for many non-Western cultures native to their culture. Collective action community tends to be more of a indigenous ways of thinking and moving and living. And I think that's because there's so much power in the centering of community and collectivity. And so as we've been thinking about how do we make a more equitable and just higher education space, I think it's looking towards that principle and practice of centering community and collective actioning. And we can fight against the powers that be that would hope to disenfranchise many in a way that gives power to the few instead of power to the people.

Royel M. Johnson:

Power to the people. Shout out to Sean.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah, shout out Sean Harper. But yeah, can you believe this is it, we're done. This is the final episode. We did a season two.

Royel M. Johnson:

We did it. I'm feeling real Boyz II Men right now. How do I?

Felecia Commodore:

And this is why he's engaged to the work.

Royel M. Johnson:

Say goodbye.

Felecia Commodore:

Because singing wasn't a-

Royel M. Johnson:

To what-

Felecia Commodore:

Oh, dear. Okay. We apologize.

This transcript was exported on Nov 22, 2023.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yeah, it's crazy. We are at the end of season two, I think back to the beginning of season one, and that conversation we had with Joy and Ash, Puerto Rico to how far we've come, we had no clue how to produce script co-host a podcast, but we have done it for two consecutive years in a row. Stay tuned for what's in store for maybe a season three.

Felecia Commodore:

Maybe.

Royel M. Johnson:

I'm not committed to sign up yet. We got to think about some things.

Felecia Commodore:

I got to talk to my agent. No, I don't have one of those, but yeah, no, it's been really great. So as we think back, what have been some of your favorite moments or your favorite moment of the podcast this season?

Royel M. Johnson:

There were lots of good moments. I was so excited about the conversation with Representative Harold Love and Demetri Morgan.

Felecia Commodore:

I was in like a kid in a candy store.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yeah, I knew you were already. We couldn't have picked a better group. And Rep Love offered so much context around the legislative governance process and its implications for higher education. I also really enjoyed the episode with Dean Hughes and Candace Hall. I have been such a fan of the good work coming, I said this earlier, the good work that's coming out of Southern Illinois Edwardsville and have been following along with the transformative leadership and system transformation that's happening there to be able to really incubate and support early career scholars of color who are doing work that's really pushing the field to reimagine what impact is, what scholarship is and what it could look like. So I just really enjoyed that conversation. I hope that lots of higher ed leaders will listen to that one and pay attention to key nuggets and wisdom that was shared from Dean Hughes and from Dr. Hall about the ways in which she's approaching her work and thinking about embedding to describe herself as a creative scholar. And I hope that more department heads and program coordinators are creating space for scholars and their students to censor creativity as part of their scholarship.

Felecia Commodore:

I think for me, of course-

Royel M. Johnson:

The governance one.

Felecia Commodore:

You all already know and shout out to one of my favorite people in the world and favorite collaborators, Dr. Demetri Morgan and also Dr. Love. I really enjoyed what they had to say and how we think about governance and influencing governance and bridging the gap between higher education researchers and those within either state legislator or governing boards. How do we bridge that gap of information and really make sure that we're informing each other? And in that essence, I think also overall, I really enjoyed the season of being able to, in many times put together folks who were on the ground in practice and policy, and those of us who would call ourselves higher education scholars. I think we need each other more now than ever. And being able to have those dialogues in this space has been really important to me. And then lastly, I'm going to take with me forever and always-

Royel M. Johnson:

The good times.

Felecia Commodore:

No, that wasn't... Sean, Wanyá, Nathan, Mike, we're very sorry for the way in which we are disrespecting that song.

Royel M. Johnson:

[inaudible 01:12:19] good times.

Felecia Commodore:

Dean Hughes saying that we should work through a framework of fearlessness, that I will hold to my heart forever. Not just in higher education or as an academic, but I think in life of thinking about how important it is to do what we do or do the things we believe are right and just even when it's fearful. And so I will always be grateful for that nugget of wisdom that she shared with us.

Royel M. Johnson:

And with that, I think we've come to the end of the road, love, light and joy to each of you, thank you for embarking on this journey for a second time with us. It's been wonderful to learn and grow with each of you. It's been wonderful to read all of the comments on Twitter and social media to see how you're engaging.

Felecia Commodore:

Yes, be nice.

Royel M. Johnson:

Yeah, please be nice. Folks have been good. But it's been wonderful to hear about the ways in which you all have been using the podcast to supplement instruction, to share with friends and family who may not be familiar with some of the topics, but some of the information is so important and relevant to them. So thank you for joining us and being along for the ride. Continue to be fearless. Do good work within your spheres of influence, and we will see you when we see you.

Felecia Commodore:

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Wait.

Royel M. Johnson:

Okay.

Felecia Commodore:

We have just one more order of business because I cannot let us go without sharing our last scholar soundtrack. So you made it this far, you know that at the end of each conversation we like to engage in a segment called scholar soundtrack as we reflect on what musical selections ring in our minds as we reflect on the day's conversation. The song that came to mind after today's conversation was Do It by Kate Renata. Because sometimes to change and make space to create scholarship that not only has impact but feeds our souls, the only thing there is to do is just to do it. Do it when it's uncomfortable, do it when it's risky. Do it when it's scary. We can do hard things when we work through what Dean Hughes so brilliantly shared as a framework of fearlessness and higher education is calling us to do hard things so we can be better, more inclusive, and more impactful.

Don't forget that there will be both a scholar soundtrack and syllabus for today's episode and all of the episodes in the ASHE Presidential Podcast series.

Royel M. Johnson:

And I would like to thank all of you out there who took the time to listen to the series without any clue what we were about to do. It has been an honor to be in community with you all over the past few months. Make sure you share the series with your families, friends, and other higher ed nerds. And if you start to miss us, you can always pull us up on your favorite place to find podcasts and hit the replay button.

Felecia Commodore:

Until then, in the words of that classic Sounds of Blackness song, you'll always do your best if you learn to never say never. You may be down, but you're not out. You can win as long as you keep your head to the sky. Be optimistic.

Royel M. Johnson:

As the great philosopher once said, Obama out.

Felecia Commodore:

Oh my God.

Royel M. Johnson:

Peace out. You all.

Felecia Commodore:

Be fearless.