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Chris Fussell: Welcome to No Turning Back, a McChrystal Group podcast hosted by General Stan McChrystal and me, Chris Fussell. Our goal here is simple, to have serious conversations with serious leaders, so we can learn from the best and navigate these complex times together. Thanks for joining us.

Over the next several weeks, Stan and I will be embarking on a new mini-series called Demystifying DEI, where we will look at how organizations are approaching the important work of diversity, equity and inclusion. In the series, we're excited to hear how industry leaders are authentically incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion principles into their organizations, and how they're investing in their people to drive change, and the lessons they have learned through curiosity and trial.

Danielle Tenconi: This week, Stan and Chris conclude the Demystifying DEI miniseries of No Turning Back, looking back on the four episodes and looking ahead to how we can all be more intentional in our commitment to making progress in diversity, equity and inclusion. We hope you've enjoyed listening to different perspectives of DEI, the lessons learned, and the individual journey leaders have taken. If you have enjoyed these conversations, visit our website mcchrystalgroup.com for resources on inclusive leadership. Now over to Chris.

Chris Fussell: All right, so we'll, uh, we'll dive into some reflections here at the end of our, our series on, uh, diversity equity and inclusion, uh, which I think we've had some fascinating guests on. Critical topic, uh, you and I have been talking about this, this area for, for years, really going back to our time in the service, um, where we, we both lived through different phases of this evolution, uh, when we were in uniform, um, and also post-military where we- we've seen it in our organization or organizations we work with, uh, in the, the [inaudible 00:02:37] that we, we teach together at, at Yale.

Um, so I've, I've really enjoyed these conversations. We'd love to kick it over to you, Stan to maybe start, um, 'cause you've seen, uh, sort of history evolve in this space. I mean, having grown up in north of Virginia in, uh, you know, segregated part of the country as a young kid, um, all the way through your military service. So any, any of sort of historic personal historic reflections bubble up during these last few, uh, conversations we've had?

Stan McChrystal: Yeah, Chris, thanks. And, and this is such an important topic and my own life overlapped with a heck of a lot of this. I was born in 1954, and of course that the Civil Rights Movement was moving in terms of race. And then I was in eighth grade when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr was murdered. And living in Arlington Virginia, and I remember that night, Washington, D.C burned, and that was more about equity than it was about what we would call DEI now, but it was one of the, the driving dynamics of my youth and it was important. But there were other more subtle things that I just didn't think that much about. I entered West Point in the summer of 1972. West Point was 170 years old that summer, and we used to say it was 170 years of tradition un- furnished by pro- or, uh, untarnished by progress.

And the, the reality was, it was more like West Point in the 19th century than it would be like West Point 15 or 20 years later. And while I was a cadet, I didn't think a thing about the fact that every cadet was male and the vast majority were white males. We, we started to have African-American cade- cadets, but not many. Uh, but we had no females. And then while I was at cadet, they started the process of deciding should the corps of cadets bring in females. And you'd have thought that the world would turn upside down. You know, to be honest as cadets, we didn't pay that much attention to it 'cause you're thinking about other stuff, but old graduates, alumni, you know, had these raging debates about what would happen to the corps and to the academy and to the defense of the nation if we let any women into West Point.

And we didn't let any women into West Point while I was there, but three weeks after I graduated, the first class of females entered West Point. And the sky didn't fall in, West Point didn't slide into the Hudson river, the nation's defense wasn't suddenly breached, but the reality was it took extraordinary energy and effort and a lot of conversations for that to occur. And then even after that, the progress of women in the US Army, and I think the, the services writ large was more uneven than it was a constant clear path upwards. In fact, most of my career, what would

happen is young female officers would be putting jobs like the protocol officer or something like that. It wasn't that they weren't talented officers, but you weren't giving them the same equivalent experience that you gave a male officer.

And therefore when it came time to compete for promotion later on paper and in experience, they weren't equal. Now, it wasn't the fault of either officer, but it was an uneven playing field. So as I went through this, sadly, I took a lot of it for granted, and I took it for granted that the elite units I was in had to be all male and we had to be a strict meritocracy because it was just too important otherwise. And the more, more I saw, the more I learned, the more we experienced, the more I realized that wasn't really right. That was just an incorrect assumption. I know when you entered the SEALs, it was not a very diverse entity.

Chris Fussell: No, it, it, um, it wasn't, um, the, and that would've been, so you graduated in '76, correct?

Stan McChrystal: '76.

Chris Fussell: 1980.

Stan McChrystal: The last great class from West Point.

Chris Fussell: That's right. And so if I'm, in my current remembering that the first, um, female cadet to graduate was also a Rhode scholar. I think, uh, one, someone in that class was.

Stan McChrystal: That sounds right. I'm not sure.

Chris Fussell: So they were, they weren't as smart as the '76 guys, but they were doing okay.

Stan McChrystal: Yeah [laughs] exactly.

Chris Fussell: [laughs] Um, yeah, so it- it's, um, and I, I entered the CLT teams in '97, so, you know, several cycles later, um, but it's, you know, uh, all of those military units, special operations units have had struggles with this over, over the years that they've tried to, to solve for. Um, I am hopeful about the, the evolution

that's going on right now. I think because, you know, some, some of this I think comes down to just, there are always gonna be conversations like this in, in society. I would say this is one of the, the most important ones happening right now. Um, but if you go back 30 years ago, 50 ag- years ago, et cetera, there were, you know, uh, desegregation conversations. There were women coming into the, uh, service academies.

Um, now we're here with this, the next evolution of those. And there's a, the, all of these are sort of downstream conversations, I think, from going back arguably in the United States to the, to the civil war, emancipation, proclamation under Lincoln. Um, and it's not gonna stop, right? Well, there'll, there'll be the next thing after this. And I think one of the responsibilities for the best leaders in every and in each generation is to recognize, um, and engage with that, that conversation, and sort of trying to, maybe as you identify, which is hard to do, identifying your own personal, um, i- inability to see the importance of that conversation when you're wrapped up in it.

As a 17-year-old cad- West Point cadet, you just have your blinders on, right? And you don't, you don't step back and say, "Wait a second, this looks kind of weird, right?" Because no one's asking your opinion, right? But at a certain point you become that leader and you have to say, "Wait a second, this, this actually does look weird. So how do we, how do we solve for it?" Um, and that, so, uh, fast-forwarding to now I think it's the responsibility of leaders to lean into and engage with this, this conversation. You are not gonna solve it entirely in your leadership journey, um, but you should be advancing it. Um, and you definitely can't be sitting back and just waiting for somebody else, um, to, to do the work.

Uh, so when I came into the SEAL teams, it was, um, a very homogenous force. You know, it's all, it's still all male, uh, although it's now open to women, that's been the case for a few years now. Um, they just, uh, haven't found the, the female candidate that can make it through, um, the program yet, but, but inevitably they will. Um, and she's probably right around the corner. Um, and then, and then just div- diversification of the force, um, across different, uh, socioeconomic strata, different cultural backgrounds, et cetera. The, one of the reasons I'm sort of long on that conversation is the, the role and responsibility and, and utilization of special operations, I believe is going to go through another significant change in the next 20 years.

Um, and you know, that we've been through a few generations of utilization of SOF. Uh, I happened to enter, you know, just a few years prior to perhaps what you could call the, the third chapter, um, which was, uh, heavily kinetic counter-terrorism direct action operations all around the world. Um, and for that, you, you could continue to select toward a certain type of, of personality, um, because of the, the physicality of that, that role and responsibility and all the other things. And then again, to your point, you're sort of head down like this is, these are life and death mission. We just gotta, we don't really have that much time to think up and out about bigger, bigger issues at play here.

I think now the, the, the there's going to be less of that sort of operation. It won't go away, but there'll be less of it. And there will be more need for special operations to do those weird and unique things that other parts of the force, uh, aren't, don't have the right personnel, the right training, the right funding and equipment, et cetera, or the right authorities to, to execute. And that's not going to be all, you know, 5'10 to 6'2 white men, right? There's a, there's going to be an absolute need for a much more diverse force, um, to enter that next stage.

So, but that- that's easy to say and hard, hard to do, right? That means you have to fundamentally start to change some of your, your selection models, your personnel structures, et cetera. And I think that's one of the challenges that that industry is now facing as well. Like we know the idea, that how do we reverse engineer that and make it possible?

Stan McChrystal: Yeah, I think that's right. And if I put myself in the position of a senior business leader now, and there's a tremendous pressure to sort of be right about DEI, to do enough DEI. It's like cybersecurity used to be a few years ago, "How much do I need?" "Six gallons." I don't know. I don't understand cybersecurity. Nowadays, they understand that they need real cybersecurity. So the question on DEI, I think we probably got some people that are, are still guilty of wanting to be enough that they are in this, the, the band of acceptability. They have made efforts in DEI to have the right distribution of gender and race and whatnot.

And I think some of us might be missing the actual metric that we should be measured, and that's how effective is the organization, and how do you track your diverse perspectives, diverse experiences, diverse talents to real performance in the marketplace. And that's a complicated, uh, set of connections to make. But I think intuitively, we sort of know that having the right team, which is this array of

different, uh, kinds of capabilities is gonna make you stronger. We're just sort of nervous to let go of the side of the pool because we've been making it so far.

Chris Fussell: Well, I, and I think that's a natural behavior in any, um, for all of us, like in, in, in a leadership role that sort of first move, even when we know it's the right thing, um, it's easier to follow the, the first move or set up movers who take more of the sort of personal, personal risk if it doesn't, if it doesn't work. Um, but I, but I do think getting the conversation from, "Okay, uh, tell me the exact demographic makeup you want of a SEAL platoon, and I'll reverse engineer to that." Like, well, that's not really the [laughs] what we're trying to solve for.

What we're saying is there's, um, I mean, and that's why I like the idea of special operations learning what it actually needs to look like to be effective, um, in the next 20 years, which some of it will be significantly different, I think, than the last one in, the, and the chapter prior to that. Um, and there are, I think on the, for those leaders in industry that need a little more maybe, uh, encouragement to let go of the edge of the pool. Um, one of the things that, you know, you and I have both been fascinated with for a long time is understanding the human networks inside of an organization, how those, uh, you know, you've got your org- org chart on the wall, which means one thing, and then you have the actual relationships that exist underneath that, um, that sometimes support the structure of, of the organization, sometimes they are a counter to it. Uh, but it's that sort of mysterious space where a lot of things happen.

One of the things, and there's a lot of, uh, some great studies out there now that you and I have both, um, been exposed to, that say that the, the ability to really change the demographic, the future demographic of, of industry, or I guess any, any space really, is tied to programmatic and changes in regulations and recruiting and all that sort of stuff, but it's also hugely tied to the human networks, that sort of gray area. That's hard to see behind the curtain and what happens is oftentimes, and, you know, we could tell many stories about this in the military. I mean, uh, you, and I would be an example of this, right? Where people come up underneath someone that they can see themselves in as, uh, "That's the type of future leader I'd wanna be." And that the really good leaders create big networks of those, of those types of individuals.

And that happens in, in the DEI space, um, with less represented groups. If I join that organization, I might not see myself in, you know, Chris Fussell, the former

military white male. I might see, see myself in a, in a mid grade leader who looks like I look, who comes from a background that I can connect with, which is just absolutely natural. That person might not be my, uh, my senior leader. I might seek out their mentorship through the, the hallway and the, and the, and the conference room after, after discussion, that sort of thing. Um, and if that person who then develops their own sub-network hits a bit of a ceiling in how people from th- that community are represented at the senior leadership level and they decide to move, it fractures their, their network who may be 20 sort of junior potential high performers, 18 of which get frustrated, two of which stay around and become that next mid grade, and they develop their network, but then they get frustrated and roll.

So these things are long cycle problems that have to be solved for. And so I think organizations that can, uh, understand and sort of think with both parts of their brain and say, "Look, we need, we need structured approach to this, um, in how we recruit and retain these, these different communities." Um, but we also need to be very aware of who are the internal mentors in the human networks that are allowing us to, or will allow us to be successful over the next 10, 15, 20 years, to not just get those candidates in the door for the first year of their career, but pull them up through the system as they themselves become part of the next, uh, executive leadership of, of the business.

Stan McChrystal: Chris, I know from experience that you can walk into a special operations unit in combat and a couple hours tell whether it's effective or not. There're just indicators that you learn. If you are going to, to walk into an organization now and tell them how effective they were at DEI, you know, there are numbers that they could put on a sheet you could look at, but, you know, as you've sort of just described, that's not the full story. Where would you look, and then how would you communicate to sort of mid grade leaders, "Here's what we're talking about"?

Chris Fussell: Yeah, it's, it's a great question. Um, I think one of, you can sit down with a special operations unit and pretty quickly get a s- and you can do, is that any, any team in industry really, um, and sort of sense the dynamics, you know, they hold back information, or they, can you sense the trust in the room? That sort of thing, which will give you that indicator, um, which you don't, what's less effective is just looking at the metrics, right? Um, even in the battlefield, like there can be all sorts of reasons why one unit is looking effective and another is not,

right? And you, you have to understand sort of higher math of how, how that world works to, to be able to differentiate between this two.

But there's also this other sort of line of thinking that, that you always, uh, pay close attention to is how, how do you use your, uh, senior non-commissioned officers to give you that deeper cultural sense? Like if you couldn't immediately sense, "Why is this unit struggling?" I, I would watch you use that, that senior Sergeant, you know, for the non-military folks who had been through all that and understood the nuance of those, those sub tribes. And they would go out and say, okay, I spent time with them. Here's what's actually going on, right? Um, after Smitty had to go home, he was sort of carrying the load for a lot of stuff. Um, and so they're, they're struggling right now to figure out who the next Smitty is, and Smitty's not on the org chart, but represents this like important dynamic in the culture.

And so I think one of the things I would do in industry would be, um, let me do the obvious stuff, go spend time with teams, et cetera, cetera. But I also want to go to those, what are the communities you're trying to really pull up through the organization? And I would go to some of them and say, "You know, I know you work for, for Chris or whatever, but really who's, who pulled you into this organization? Who- who's mentoring you along? And before long, you would see a lot of 'em are going to this one particular person. And she, you know, came from a similar background to a lot of these folks and, and that, that's who they have lunch with every, every Thursday. She runs sort of a, a, a round table discussion with, um, people she's trying to pull through the org. And it doesn't take a long time to find those, those folks.

And they might be a senior VP, they might be someone that their leadership's never really heard of. And then you go to that person and you say, "What's going on? This is what the leadership really want. One of their priorities is they wanna, they wanna develop more high performers like you." And I've talked to 15 people that aren't known yet as high performers, but they all talk about you as the person they go to. So tell me what's going on here? Is it, are you gonna be around until you're in the C-suite or are you burning out. Uh, d- does the leadership understand the critical role you're playing and the, are they hearing the right voices or are they not? Then you can get to some, I think, actionable stuff that you can bring up to leadership and say, "Look, on paper, you've got all the right programs, your recruiting is great. And you're doing, uh, you, you got a, you know, an equitable

compensation model that you're really focused on, but here's what's not happening." Right. Here are three, three people inside that sub-network that are really holding this thing together for you, and I bet you couldn't name 'em. And so you need to connect with them and figure out how are they listening to those voices? And what's the actual sort of cultural realities on the ground that they can inform you on.

Stan McChrystal: Chris, let me put on a, a very specific example. Let's say you're in a company that, uh, is very big on comradery. And so three days a week, anybody who wants to shows up early at the office and they go running, and there are some people who are former athletes and they really like to run. It's completely voluntary, everybody's welcome, but a small subset comes. And there's also at the end of the afternoons, a couple of days a week, there's groups that go off to get a beer together and whatnot. And that's a certain demographic that, that goes. And really the question of inclusion arises. Those things are generally looked at as positive team building kinds of events, but there are some people who have kids and can't come in the morning to go running, or for any other reasons don't want to go out for a beer in the afternoon or have other things they have to do.

At what point to good things become negative things, and how do you get that balance, right? 'Cause do we wanna throw out all of those team building things just because not everybody can or wants to do 'em?

Chris Fussell: Yeah, it's a, it's a, um, I mean, I wrestled with this over the last decade, as we tried to figure this out for our own organization. I've seen it in others, um, and it's, it's a, not an evil, but it is a, c- certainly can be a blind spot for folks coming out and definitely the units we, we served in, in the military because, um, you, again, sort of like your first year at West Point. You don't, you don't see what you don't, you don't need, what you don't think about, right? And, um, physical training in, in, in the military is a huge team builder. Um, but in the SEAL teams, you're, they're literal standards you have to maintain or you get kicked out. And, you know, relative to the general population, they would probably seem like pretty high standards, right?

Um, and so there's nothing wrong with like saying, "Yeah, this morning, we're just gonna get together out back and do a, you know, 150 pull up workout or something, right? And if you can't do that, like, you're, you're just not in the tribe, right? So you could come up with creative, for us it was creative fun, interesting

stuff. And you, you, you build this real comradery as a result and you can get into this habit of like, "Yeah, we suffer together and we do these, these silly workouts and we're... but that, that brings us together as a, as a tighter team." And it's easy to try to map that model over into the normal world, forgetting that, um, that's just not a standard that most people should have to live up to unless they really want to, like, it's, it's a, it's an arbitrary choice outside of the, of, of the military.

Um, but that doesn't mean, um, that you should back away from all that stuff. This is sort of my evolving conclusion, which is, um, it's, I think it's okay to have the jogging league and it's okay to have the bowling league and the Friday beer league, um, but you also have to respect the fact that you don't have people that wanna run, or that are comfortable going to a bar, right? So think, constantly thinking through what are the other opportunities that we're creating for folks to engage with? And then I think as a leader, pushing yourself to say, "You know, as a young person, I just did the bowling league 'cause that's what I like to do. But now I'm leading a whole spectrum. And so I have to try to find ways to engage with those, those other gathering, uh, styles in- inside the organization so that I can have that sort of off hour conversation, not just with, with the running club, um, but with the other parts of the org as well.

Um, and I think, you know, that it's never going to be perfect 'cause there's, there's as many, um, types of things that people are interested in, uh, a- as there are types of people, right? So, but I think, and I think we, we, we certainly try to do this in, in our group when we do, um, you know, our leadership ventures that we do a few times a year. Uh, I, I lead one, that's just rock climbing, which is, um, I think a great team builder, but also understandably, um, uh, intimid- intimidating, or just an unfun activity for, for plenty of people, which is, which is totally fine. And so we've asked ourselves over the years, like, "Are we building in enough, you know, ventures like that, that are appealing to a broad range of folks who we try to attract in our organization?" And, you know, every year, every year you do it, you learn lessons about, uh, expanding the aperture there.

But I think sort of like the DEI conversation more broadly, it's just something leaders have to, you wanna build cohesive teams, you want people engaged, but you have to be constantly pushing yourself to remain, you know, in a listening mode to the members of your organization and ask yourself if you're, if you're pushing yourself hard enough to be inclusive.

Stan McChrystal: Yeah. Let's connect to the word trust. Uh, both of us have spent a long time teaching at Yale, but we're also in other organizations that try to be very thoughtful about DEI. But at the end of the day, it's an, the eye of the beholder. I am typically unhappy with things if I think they're not fair. You know, if everybody faces exactly the same challenge or whatever, or gets the same opportunities, then I'm sort of happy with that. But, but how do we map DEI to trust? How do we actually build trust?

Chris Fussell: Yeah, that's a great question. Um, we've got some PhDs on our team that I'm sure could give the right scientific answer to this. Um, I'm gonna think out loud here, because when we talk about trust, we actually, you know, break it down into sub-components of, um, you know, what I always think of, of as emotional trust. Like when I trust you to watch my kids. Um, intellectual trust, if you send me something, do I know you've, you've done your homework on it? And then this, do I, do I trust your consistency? Um, which I think probably that third component relates to the fairness bit, um, inconsistency translates over to unfairness very quickly, right?

And so there's probably a component there, like if you want your organization to trust that you are trying to be engaged in the DEI conversation, I think consistency of action is gonna be one of the critical components. Um, and I think that pretty obviously maps over to like how people are treated and promoted and all that stuff, but being seen as consistent, which will never be perfect, but talking out loud about it and trying to really hold yourself to a consistent standard there as an organization, I think will be a critical part of it.

Um, and I think the, the emotional, the intellectual trust would come through, you know, do, have we done our homework, right? Do we have, um, are we recruiting from all the, the demographics that we say we want as the future of our organization as an example, right? That's, that's sort of stuff you can see on paper. Um, and then the, the emotional trust perhaps comes back to your, in some ways to your previous point, like what sort of, uh, connectedness are we trying to create inside the organization? Um, is it just one thing or are we, are we trying to create that sort of relationship in, in a way that represents all the different, um, people inside of our organization?

Um, but I also think that piece comes through, you know, what you and I talked to leaders a lot about, which is just the, the storytelling inside an organization. You

know, uh, the more comfortable leaders are with being honest in their, how they're communicating this to their organization in saying, "Look, I, I know we're not perfect at this, um, and we're probably far from it, right? But here are the things we're trying to do to get to what will look better. This isn't a two week conversation. This is a two generation conversation. Um, here's where I think we're winning at it. Here's where I think we're coming up short." Uh, just letting people get inside your head, I think, can add to that sort of emotional trust.

Like, uh, now I actually believe this leader is trying to solve for this and taking account where it's working and where, where it isn't.

Stan McChrystal: No, I think that's fair. And I think data can help there because one, data can start to remind senior leaders that if they are justifying actions in the short term and they actually believe they're right but then the data basically says, "Yeah, but..." Over the sweep of the last 20 years, the numbers just say that this is not an even playing field at all. You've got to at least respect the fact that data will point out larger trends that maybe in the near term decision, uh, aren't as evident for you. So I think that builds trust too, because if everybody can see that, they'll start to say, "All right, I, I get where things are going, they're getting better or worse or, or they're not changing at all." So like it's key.

Chris Fussell: Yeah. And the, the on the data side, there was a really interesting study that we've talked about you and I b- before. It was sort of a, um, a study of studies, uh, essentially in this space that looked at because we all know and, I mean, I would argue [laughs] a lot of us agree intuitively like a, a in today's world when you are, a lot of the problems you're facing are sort of multi-dimensional and very complex, an equally diverse team can solve that more effectively, right? 'Cause you, you have different perspectives and backgrounds that can bring creative thinking to the table.

Um, and so we t- sort of take that as the intuitive end state we're trying to reach, but this one meta study that I've, I, I've dug into over the years, um, makes a, a data driven argument that the, on the whole, the effectiveness of diverse teams sort of is no better or worse than every other team out there, um, but when you are deeper on it, that's because some are excellent and some are not good at all. And the one of the reasons I think this is a hard, uh, but important challenge for leaders is the ones that don't do well, don't do well because the leadership fails to make it clear that they are, what they are trying to accomplish as a collective organization,

communication from the leadership, keeping them aligned on the mission of the team, um, is one of the key variables in inside of making a diverse team effective.

Because if you try to lead a diverse te- team through like the 1990s playbook, as soon as they go out into a complex environment and things get bad, the just human nature will kick in and we'll drop back into our sort of silos. And you and I, as the military folks on some team will go over to the corner and say, "All these civilians don't get it right." Or whatever it is, right? We'll find our sub tribe. But if you have a leader that's constantly reminding like you're here because you're diverse and we're gonna hit hard, hard times, and when that happens, that's when we need to get everything on the table, because remember we're here to accomplish this sort of problem.

And the leaders that, that approach their diverse teams like that far outperform just the average thrown together team. But the interesting point, and this study is a little dated but it's probably improving, because people are learning the importance of this, but just a few years ago, they sort of neutralized each other. Um, so it's easy to kind of throw it away like, "Ah, it's not worth it." Well, no, it actually it's, it's, it's incredibly effective if you lead it recognizing that there are challenges that come with that, but you as a leader have to lean into that, and you can get far ahead of just the normally structured, structured team as a result.

Stan McChrystal: Well, I mentioned, uh, at the outset of this that when I was young, the civil rights movement had a lot of energy and focus, and I would've never guessed that this many decades since then that we would still have as many challenges. What do you think we're gonna to be saying a decade from now about DEI? Are we gonna be patting ourselves on the back? Will it be something that we take for granted? Or will we still be struggling with it?

Chris Fussell: I, looking at this in the context, you know, as, as we do with our leadership seminar, you can go back, you know, many hundreds of years, but in US sort of using this, the civil war as, as the anchor point to really opening up this conversation, um, it's, it has, it c- certainly hasn't been solved. Um, we've seen the conversation evolve and mature, and I think we're getting into my hope is, um, sort of more nuanced and precise versions of that conversation generationally. So I would imagine in 10 to 15 years, my, you know, my children are 11 and 13. So let's say when they're, uh, you know, 35 year old professionals in, in industry, if

that's where they end up, um, so like 20-ish years from now, they will be having similar conversat-

They'll be having conversations in this neighborhood, but I hope they look back at what this generation of leaders has done, sort of like, and this is the very, very broad collective, sort of like, we look back as the, at the, uh, thoughtful leaders in the, in the c- civil rights era.

Like, yeah, they, they, they really tried to, to advance the kind conversation, they were able to get quite a few things across the line, and there were a few things that they didn't get there. And they s- those sort of sat underneath the surface and they'll, uh, rear their head again. And, and so I hope that's how I, I don't think it will have gone away, um, but I hope it's much better. And I hope they're, what they're wrestling with is even more, um, sort of specific issues that they're, that they're solving for. Um, and it's an interesting way to look at, you know, we, you and I, wh- whenever we talk about case studies historically, there's this, this very normal trend. When we look back at pick your penny sort of classic leader case study of social change.

And what they do is because they're smart leaders, they have to, right? They set this incredibly high bar and they give themselves maneuver space to sort of back it down, right? So I'm, I'm gonna win sort of the general momentum and, uh, form a coalition around this very high, high bar. But I know when we get into the, the nuts and bolts of making this happen, there are things I'm gonna have to give up result to, to get, you know, the center on board, et cetera. And so we judge them for that through, through an historical lens, like, well, they, they said they were gonna do this and they only did 80% of it, um, forgetting like, well, they probably knew they were gonna give up X%.

But they did make advancements, right? And so I think that's gonna be one of the inter- interesting part of this conversation. Like what are the, what are the things that we're able to get across the line, and what are the, the next tw- 10 or 20% that needs to be pushed forward?

Stan McChrystal: Yeah, last question. Um, there's sometimes a view that this is sort of like glacial movement and it's inexorable or tides coming in and out. Does it happen automatically, or is it gonna take specific leaders to wrestle this forward? What do you think?

Chris Fussell: I don't, I mean, I'd love your thoughts on this. My, my sense would be, there will be, I'm thinking about this two ways. There'll be specific leaders, 'cause like when you look at social change throughout history, there's always the specific leaders you talk about. But we're also in this very networked, sometimes leaderless movement world. And so there's pros and cons to that. Um, so I don't really know how this will, will play out. Um, I'd be curious, of your thinking on that. Do you think, do you think it's waiting for leaders to step up?

Stan McChrystal: The answer is, I don't know the answer, but my gut feeling is it won't happen automatically. There may be some thrashing around and there's certainly a, a consensus that sort of moves in certain directions, but that consensus is fickle. We see it move like a herd and sometimes directionless. I actually think we're gonna need some courageous leaders, uh, effective courageous leaders to, to get this and keep it moving in the right direction.

Chris Fussell: Yeah. I mean, history would argue that it, that's necessary, right? Um, I guess this is a whole nother conversation when you think about it like that, where, you know, the interplay between think of, uh, you know, Martin Luther King and, and civil rights as, as you know, sort of a pinnacle leader there, by building out, by becoming that voice and building out a structured movement underneath, um, and there's a whole very sophisticated way as, as to how he and his, his other leaders went about that.

Um, that, that created a, a structured system that could engage with other structured systems on the, on the, uh, the governing side, like, uh, engaging with elected officials and having their voices heard, but also presenting like structured plans, "Here's what we want you to do." Um, so it wasn't just a, a high energy conversation that existed as a network does in, in, in sometimes countless different pockets. There was that underneath this very structured movement that Martin Luther King created, uh, other leaders as well, but just oversimplifying it.

Um, and to your point, I think anytime there's social change conversations that lead to actual, um, political, economic legal shift, it becomes structured at some point. And structured conversations happen underneath leaders who structure them, uh, who have an organized approach to how they want to, uh, engage the conversation. So, um, I don't know, I don't know how it's gonna unfold, but my sense is I w- I would agree with you someone's gonna have to start to, to play that role.

Stan McChrystal: Yeah. I think hopefully it'll be a bunch of our listeners.

Chris Fussell: That's right. And I, I'm sure there's people out there that would say, "That's what I'm doing right now. I just can't break through the, through the noise, right?" Which is also another real, real challenge in a com- you know, such a, a tightly connected, uh, information age conversation. Um, well, I've really enjoyed the series. Uh, great, great guests. We appreciate all them taking time and, and, and sharing their insights.

Stan McChrystal: Perfect. Great Chris. Thank you.

Chris Fussell: Thanks Stan.

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