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Person-Centered Practices and Systems

Culture & Person-Centered Care Practices – “Collective Conversations”

SPEAKER(S)

Danyetta Najoli

Julia Bean

Kachelle Cunningham

Danyetta:

Hello, everyone. My name is Danyetta Najoli and I'm a community builder.

Julia:

Greetings, I'm Julia Bean and I'm a business owner.

Kachelle:

Kachelle Cunningham.

Danyetta:

You're an artist, right? An artist.

Kachelle:

Yeah, I'm an artist.

Julia:

And a superstar.

Danyetta:

And entrepreneur, business owner.

Kachelle:

Oh, yeah. I'm all that.

Julia:

All that and a bag of chips.

Danyetta:

We're just so glad that we have this opportunity to just share together. Maybe we should share about the Artist's Collective.

Julia:

I think so, yeah, that's a good idea.



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Danyetta:

And how it kinda came about?

Julia:

Yeah, because it started with you, right? Why did you start the Artist's Collective?

Kachelle:

Oh, well, my painting and my drawing and my skills and all that.

Julia:

What made you wanna start this Artist's Collective in Lower Price Hill?

Kachelle:

Well, I started since I was in school. I used to paint and draw, you know.

Julia:

Oh, did you? So that was your passion even when you were younger is to paint and draw.

Kachelle:

Yeah.

Danyetta:

Okay. So you're saying it didn't just start with the Collective, right? It's something that you already had inside of you. It was an interest and it just kinda came out.

Kachelle:

Yeah.

Danyetta:

I know when we first met, you know, one of the things you said to me that really stuck with me, was that you wanted to be around children, and you wanted to get your hands messy with paint. And I'll never forget that. I was like, okay, I think we could do something with that and figure out like who we can meet. We had met Alicia who is also an artist. I didn't know that she was an artist, but she had done some community things in the same neighborhood. And we all live in the same neighborhood: you, myself, Alicia - she worked in the neighborhood. And so, when we met her, we found out that not only does she do gardening because I think you started out with feeding the chickens in the garden as far as, you know, helping out there. And then we discovered that she was an artist in her own apartment doing art by herself, and she wanted to do art with community, with other people. So, then we thought, well, why don't we



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just get together and see how this could, you know, shape up? And we just started meeting and other people started joining over time, and then it just kinda grew into a collective where we met weekly, and people began to depend and come to rely on, oh, this collective is gonna be here on Thursday afternoons. And so, we, you know, we just expanded it, but we would do paintings and things like that, initially. And so, the Collective, once we got that going really firmly, we were able to expand it to have an artist-in-residence kind of program. And Kachelle, you had applied for that first artist-in-residence. You came up with, remember? You came up with, like, three different ideas, you know, to work on.

Julia:

What was that called? Where people wrote down what they wanted in the community?

Danyetta:

“I wish this was.”

Julia:

“I wish this was,” that’s what it was. Yeah, “I wish this was.” Can we talk a little bit about that? Because to me, that’s amazing and that’s again, a great example of community coming together.

Kachelle:

It was like, we had a tree, and you would go to it, and you’d write your name or you’d write what you want on the thing.

Julia:

So there was an actual tree?

Kachelle:

Yeah. Mhmm.

Danyetta:

I think that’s where the posters were put up, on a tree or on a place. It was initially put up in places that were considered blighted spots in the community that we could put these big banners. And these banners allow people to put little stickies up there to say what they wish that space was instead of the blighted space. So, they could say, “I wish this was a coffee house.” Or “I wish this was a playground or a bookstore.” You know, just to ignite the imagination of people around us, right?



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Julia:

And for people to have a voice in the community and what they want.

Danyetta:

That's it, that's exactly why, yeah.

Kachelle:

I wanted to be connected to somebody who was in Lower Price Hill. We'll all just get together and we'll all just do something. That's it.

Danyetta:

So it was based on a shared connection, right? Like, neighborhood. One of the things that the Artist's Collective wanted to do was to answer the question, "how might we bring people together in Lower Price Hill that are from different, you know, backgrounds?" Whether they're from different cultural backgrounds, different socioeconomic backgrounds, racial backgrounds. Because what we were finding was that people were in their own, own little pockets. They were all still here in the neighborhood, and they still are to a large degree, sort of like that too. But what we found was that they were still kind of staying in their spaces. But with the art, that was a language that everyone could speak and could understand, and they could all do something. And so that's what we landed on as far as doing art together.

Julia:

And that's the beauty of community.

Danyetta:

It is. Yeah. And then when you bring in the layer of culture there's all kinds of culture. Like, the Artist's Collective could have its own culture. Like, you know when we come in, we do things a certain way. But then when you think about, you know, our own culture, whether it's from our own ethnicity or our own - just any other way to, to look at it - I just wonder, like, how does that show up? You know, I think for me, like, what I'm seeing with you, Kachelle, and you can tell me if I'm right or wrong on this, but I feel like the level of respect that you receive in general, like when you're in community, in community spaces like when we connect on a regular basis at the Collective. You know, you're an artist and you are a creative person. Receiving that respect and acknowledgment as a person coming to the table, being an artist, I think that's a big part of culture. You know, like how you receive respect and how you give respect. And that



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makes you, you know, and I could be, like [wrong], is that something that's important to you?

Kachelle:

Yes.

Julia:

There's a lot of beauty in culture, but it can be restrictive in some ways too, right? Especially on the outside, like people on the outside looking at you and based off of your cultural identity, they may put you in a certain box, right?

Danyetta:

Yeah.

Julia:

So, I think that's part of the struggle too with culture is that people think that based off your lifestyle, you know, then that's who you are, right? I mean, we can get into even, you know, ethnicities or religion or whatever it is. And so there's always this fight to just be human.

Kachelle:

You know, like, some people, don't get that. No, they, you know, they have no understanding. You know, what? I don't know what I'm trying to say.

Danyetta:

Yeah, it's okay.

Julia:

You said some people don't get that as far as they don't recognize you as being human, right?

Kachelle:

Right.

Julia:

They wanna put you in this box and say, "this is what you are, this is what you're capable of," and just limit who you are.

Danyetta:

It speaks to stereotypes. It speaks to sometimes people can look at someone and they can see, oh, they're part of this cultural group. So therefore, they must be this way, or they must think this way. And that may not be farther from the truth until you get to know the person.

Julia:



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Until you get to know them, yeah.

Danyetta:

Right, so that's the key right there.

Julia:

Right.

Danyetta:

And that's where culture comes in with the Collective a lot of times because what we're doing like weekly is getting to know each other. You know, we're connecting every week. It gives us an opportunity to do, I call it, do life together. And in so doing, we get to know each other. We are sensitive to each other's, you know, interests and things like that. So that's, I hear you when you talk about how culture could be kind of a broad thing and then how sometimes people tend to wanna stereotype cultural groups. I think how we get around that is by having humility, having a sense of, there's a phrase called "cultural humility" where you're literally, every time you are interacting with a person, it's fresh and new, and you're not putting like this big bank of information about what you think you know about the person. In fact, it's almost, cultural humility is what you don't know about the person. And being able to ask questions versus, you know, like, "I already know this" or "I already know that." And it takes work to do that every time, but that's the space I feel like we are in, in the Collective because we are getting to know each other. We're asking questions.

Julia:

Right. Culture embraces all, you know, in that beauty, in that uniqueness through respect. And coming into the community, one of the things that was part of the vision was to kind of remove some of the cliquish behavior in some ways, where, you know, groups of people may just stick together instead of just everybody coming together.

Danyetta:

Yeah.

Julia:

And I think that, and I felt that way in being a part of this as far as seeing how it's like, you're embraced as a whole instead of, okay, you know, you over here. You go over there and you go over there. Right?



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Danyetta:

Yeah.

Julia:

It wasn't like that. It was more so like, we're all in this together. Let's just share. We all have knowledge and wisdom that we can bring to the table. Right? And we always invite everyone in. Like, this is not where, okay, it's exclusive.

Danyetta:

Right, right. Yeah. That's huge. Yeah, I love that. I'm glad that you brought that up as a part of culture. Like, it's part of, like, our culture because it is true. We wanna invite everyone. Everyone belongs and everyone has gifts to share and that's what's so positive about it. We love that. And what we've been able to do with the Collective over the years is, it evolved to a point where we've had someone that started a grocery store - community based grocery store - who wanted to partner with the Artist's Collective so that we could have goods and services, well, really goods. Like, there's a makers and farmers market that happens every Tuesday afternoon and it's comprised of, like, the stuff that we bring, the things that we've made, your paintings. Kachelle's a local vendor, a local artist, in her community, selling, you know, to the community, making that money like you said, you got a job.

Julia:

Yeah, and also, you were able to fuse your passion, make money doing what you love, again, right, that's that theme. So, would you like to add anything to what you have?

Kachelle:

It looks good.

Julia:

It does look good! It's beautiful. You did a great job. And so, you started off by selling your artwork, right? And then from there, again, it organically, just from everyone meeting together, right? It was just like, "hey, what's the next level of this?"

Danyetta:

Because it's about equity, right?

Julia:

It is.



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Danyetta:

It's also about people getting paid, you know, for good work.

Julia:

Culture and community is something that is not just identified as a group, but as an individual, right? And it starts probably as an individual, right? And then it expands. And I think that when it comes to cultural community, it starts with being rooted in something, right? And once you're rooted in something, that's when you plant those seeds and it blossoms.

Danyetta:

It starts with the self and knowing what we want in our lives like Kachelle so beautifully said. I mean, you know, she said, "this is what I wanna do." "I wanna work with kids and I wanna get my hands messy." And that's something that came from her. So, if you look around, like, culture is happening based on, like, what you personally want, what your own identity is about, and we can have our own identity that, like you had said, our own unique culture within ourselves. Even within the group that we belong to, like we've been talking about, you know, sometimes it might not even jive up or match up with the big group, the cultural group that we belong to, to acknowledge that. That's why it's so hard to define a lot of times. You know? But it definitely comes out through, you know, foods we eat, clothes we wear, you know, the way we speak, you know, how we speak to our, you know, our friends and things like that. It's just so many aspects of it.

Julia:

I would love to live in this utopian society where we all can just embrace each other as humans, right? And recognize that we're all, no matter, we have some common roots but we also have some very unique flowers in those roots, right and so, and we can just bring it all together and just live as one. I think that's, at the end of the day, what I would love to see happen.

Kachelle:

Okay.

Julia:

You said okay. Are you for that, Kachelle?