

Alexa Bigwarfe: Lose the Cape podcast episode 169 all right ladies, it's time for another wonderful episode of the lose the Cape podcast where we are bringing as many viewpoints and important issues to you as we can to help us all better understand what's going on in this crazy world that we live in. I am really excited to bring you Desiree Peterkin Bell. And when I say really excited, I mean really excited because I think we've had to reschedule this 17 times due to sick children, snow storms and all kinds of craziness. And also Desiree is just a really busy woman. She is truly walking the walk, not just talking the talk and is very, very involved in helping uh, diverse women get elected into positions to make this world our country a better place, a more diverse and well rounded place. Um, her official bio has so much goodness in it.

Alexa Bigwarfe: We will post all of this on the website so that you can read through it. But she's a two time bestselling author, an award winning battle tested political and communication strategist that world leaders, visionaries and change agents turn to when they desire to not only build a rock solid brand, but an enduring legacy with global impact. She is president and CEO of the public affairs firm, DP Bell Associates, and she serves her clients by leveraging her hard-earned expertise in problem solving, crisis communications, strategic counsel and brand development. So, you know, she's just a little bit busy so she's got a very impressive career. Um, being driven by purpose, not position. Uh, she has always been very self reliant and a critical thinker and she has been the director of communications and strategy for the city of Philadelphia and the former mayor Michael Nutter, she was the director of Communications for Newark, New Jersey Mayor Cory Booker.

Alexa Bigwarfe: By the time this goes live, we'll probably have announced that he's running for president. I know that the rumor is out there. Um, she, it has been the VP of government affairs for New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration. Um, so as you can tell, she, she knows a little bit about, um, all of these topics. One thing that I, well, welcome Desiree. Thank you so much for making the time to be here. Thank you for having me. I'm so excited that I'm friendly him. Yes, me too. I mean, I think there's so, so, so, so, so many things to talk about between you and me. Um, I mean the world is just absolutely nuts right now. Where do we even start? Be here? There's a lot to chat about. Well, you know, I, so, so Desiree and I co authored a book called women who influence, I think that was the one we were in together and I had the opportunity to, I, I'd seen her posting and I was following her on Facebook.

Alexa Bigwarfe: She does all these amazing things and I remember this one day she posted ladies, President Obama has a copy of our book. I gave him a copy of the book and I was like, holy crap, President Obama has a book that's so excited, but I've been following you and seeing all the amazing things that you do. But I got to hear you speak at one of Kate Butler's events and I was really, really, really, really, really just blown away by your discussion of these chat and chews that you hold at your house and how important they are. So I'd like to start there if you'll tell us about these chat and Chews, why you started them.

Desiree P Bell: Sure. So I've been holding these chat and since the election to be frank and it was really Cathartic and healing for me. Um, I started them in small spaces, but then we quickly grew to other cities or their locations and we've also had some outside of the u s the purpose of these chat and Chews was to bring folks together to have honest, open dialogue about sometimes muddy issues, um, sometimes issues that make people feel uncomfortable, but with the thought of trying to find common ground. And we put food in the middle of the table, uh, to basically take the, um, the, the pressure off of folks feeling like, um, you know, they can't really be themselves. And more importantly, food is really good. Everybody has to eat right.

Desiree P Bell: And it also allows the food to be a focal point as well of the conversation. Right. And so, uh, the first chat and chew that I held was, um, I was not fully prepared for it, but I learned a heck of a lot. And it was after the election, uh, to be frank, this is when the numbers started coming out about who voted for who and, um, opinions by many about why they voted for that person. Um, and the more stark a reality was the percentage of white women who voted for Donald Trump versus the number of black women who voted for Hillary Clinton. And I remember thinking, um, you know, that there's a disconnect here. And I couldn't understand why, um, we talk about the ideas of feminism womanism to be frank, um, and the idea of allied ship, uh, and accomplices. Um, but you know, nothing ring more true when the numbers came out and it revealed that women in this country, number one, and not a monolithic group, we all knew that.

Desiree P Bell: And I think that women in this, particularly African American women and white women see the world very differently or they can see the world very differently. Right? So the first conversation I had, um, it was a call I just put out and uh, to inducing women, uh, decided to be my first, uh, significant participants. I had a number of other women participating in the first chat and chew, but it was a self defined white nationalists and woman. And I'm a member of black lives matter, a woman, African American woman, very highly educated, um, but an activist and uh, someone who had been on the front lines at Ferguson and um, you know, marching through the streets of New York City, um, around Eric Garner. Um, and so at the table I also had a single mom. Um, I had, uh, a law enforcement officer and I'm a young person who, um, had been in and out of juvenile facilities but was trying to rebrand themselves essentially as being an influencer.

Desiree P Bell: And the conversation really focused on trying to find commonality among all of these various women who had very different backgrounds and beliefs. And what I realized was we were breaking perception and stereotypes at this first chat and chew in ways that I thought we needed to do on a much grander scale. Right? So the woman who was a self-defined white nationalists had been taught, given her community that all black people were a certain kind of way, right? Well, I mean, she didn't really live around any other black people, so you're always telling her this. And so she was kind of shocked when the woman sitting across from her, the African American activist woman who was involved

in black lives matter when, you know, told her that she was a highly educated, um, lawyer who decided to become an activist when she saw, um, injustices are still happening in this country.

Desiree P Bell: And so, uh, and they both had kids. And so we focused on, well, what kind of world do you want to leave your kids? Right? Um, what do you want to teach your kids about compassion, about understanding, um, what do you want? What kind of opportunities do you want your kids to have that you didn't have? Um, regardless of your situation and context? And what we found through these two women and they still talk today. Wow. They still challenge each other, which is awesome. Um, what we found was we were able through the small conversations, completely disarm preconceived notions and stereotypes and offer information that folks otherwise would not have had because they allow themselves to be number one vulnerable, number two, open and get information.

Alexa Bigwarfe: I just got such massive chills on my arms and back and you know, it's so important and I've heard you tell this story before, so nothing you just said was a surprise. It's still just as impactful and I think that, um, it's so true that like you, you see these back and forths and these massive arguments, I'm going to use Facebook as an example because that's where it tends to happen because people I think treat each other in ways on social media that they would never do face to face. But also you can't just come at people from a point of anger and the why I'm right and you're wrong and expect to make any difference. Cause walls go up and it's, you know, but to sit face to face. Yes. Eating some really good food. Yeah. Talking about, you know, how we want our children to be treated and understanding that what I've always been told about you as a person is not what I'm seeing here and this woman and, and you know what big props to those two ladies for being big, you know, big enough to come outside because it's hard.

Alexa Bigwarfe: It's hard to change your mind on things you've always, always, always learned.

Desiree P Bell: Um, it is extremely hard. It's also hard to be, I mean, at the end of the day, the reality is, I don't know, one person who walks around saying, I love being vulnerable. Vulnerable is awesome.

Alexa Bigwarfe: It's not fun.

Desiree P Bell: Our natural inclination is to protect ourselves against vulnerabilities, to protect ourselves against hurt, you know, and, and you know, it's also natural to, to be frank, to align yourself with people who have common interests, who might like you or experiences because that's where you're comfortable. Exactly. And so I always talk about being uncomfortable and being, and having the freedom and having the courage to be uncomfortable because only in those spaces and places will you truly, truly build on trying to connect with people. Uh, you know, you have to, you know, I think, um, and I've had a lot of pushback. You know,

there are a lot of people who are like, oh, it's not my, you know, it's not my job to be uncomfortable. It's their job. I'm like, who's they?

Alexa Bigwarfe: Right. Well that is an interesting segue because I want to go into the next part of this conversation, which is really talking about, um, the role of women and supporting each other and how we can, cause I think you totally believe, and I think, I know, I totally believe that if we're going to see true change and true advances for women and the fact we're were dollar to dollar four men and all these kinds of things, you know, it's so many issues where nobody's grabbing your butt in the coffee room at work and thinking it's funny or you know, all these kinds of things. They're intersectional, which was a new word to me last year. And I'm glad that I learned it. Um, because when we help one woman grow and get better, we help all women, but because our issues are intermingled. So, so to, to before I pass this back to you.

Alexa Bigwarfe: Um, like one of the things that I felt, um, I started posting, so I started posting some things about black lives matter and about, um, and I saw a lot of the pushback and I, I understand the pushback because so many people are still stuck in this mindset of if you're saying black lives matter, then you're saying, I don't matter as a person and I can't get behind that. And they can't see that. What you're actually saying is we have a real problem that affects this segment of our community come together to see how we can fix that. We're not saying that you don't have problems, we're saying that this is a real problem that has to be addressed. Right. But I, like you said, if people don't know, they don't know. And it's an education and it's a conversation type thing, which will not be cured on Facebook.

Alexa Bigwarfe: But all that to say like I really, I started posting these things and it was actually a black male or African American, I don't want to use the wrong offensive terminology either. Hear it from both sides. So you know, please correct me. Speaking of being vulnerable and uncomfortable if I use it, if I say something, I want to know that I'm saying something that's not not good, you're good. It was one of my friends from high school and he reached out to me and he said, I really appreciate the things that you've been posting and it really makes me feel like there are people that still care. I'm to, I'm going to get choked up here, but it made me realize that the hurt like the heart that I will never understand that's going on. And so, uh, here's what I'm getting to. Like, I really, really, really want to support all women and women of color.

Alexa Bigwarfe: And I really want to be an ally as you said, but I've just seen a lot of stuff in the news about white women that are standing up as, you know, trying to get out there and support. But what they're really doing is putting, you know, I don't know, there's a lot of craziness happening. So I guess my question to you would be how do we make that happen? How do we truly joined forces? How do we truly, you know, connect and how do I do that without being offensive or, or putting myself, you know, I think I know what I'm saying.

Desiree P Bell: No, I understand that. Who they are. I will say that, I mean, the first step is the desire to, right? I mean, that's the first step, which there really is no set before. Then it's, you have to have a desire to understand, right? And it's not an a, and I want to be clear, there's a difference between being empathetic, sympathetic, and understanding. Because I can be empathetic and sympathetic means I can feel sorry for you. I can be like, oh right. Or just understand, right? Um, and understanding means that you have the context to be able to see things a little differently than you did before. Right? And so I think for, um, and I always, I always do this whenever I do a big his speeches around bias. Um, and for those folks who say, I have no bias, and those folks who say, well, first of all, I'm like, unless you were colorblind, but if you're not colorblind, that's problematic for a couple of different reasons.

Desiree P Bell: Number one, I mean, the fabric of our country is a big melting pot, right? So if you don't see colors, that means you don't see the very rich ethnicity and diversity that makes up the bedrock of this country, right? You're completely ignoring all of that pain and all of its glory. So I always tell folks that words matter words are extremely important. Um, I always use this example when I do these speeches, which is I take, uh, an African American woman and a Caucasian woman. I dressed them up. The same everything, same shoes, same as same alpha, everything. Um, hair might be a little bit different for us, some obvious reasons, but I tell them each to come into the room and I say one of these women is a CEO of a multimillion dollar, fortune 500 company, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I run through these things.

Desiree P Bell: And the room is you sometimes it mixed room, diverse room, sometimes small white rooms. And it's all black room. And it's interesting to see how many people automatically say the white woman is the boss. Right? And then when I reveal who the bosses, um, then they're shocked but quick to say, oh, what I, I didn't mean that. And it was like, but I know you didn't mean it, but there's a bias that you have that once you would knowledge, then you know where to begin to have heart on his conversations about how to challenge your bias. Yeah. And I think, you know, the reality is sometimes really hard for people to get right. I remember, I remember talking to her friend of mine who could not understand why my husband was stopped multiple times, um, on, uh, when he was riding his car multiple times.

Desiree P Bell: And for us it's like, you know what to do with your hands on a dashboard. I mean, it's a process. Right? Right. And you know, and we were one time she was actually driving with us and she was upset and challenging the cop and we were like, don't do that. Don't do that. You can do that, but you can't run with us. Right. Uh, but it was, it highlighted for her the difference about how people see, um, different people in the perceptions and the stereotypes and everything that goes along with that. Yeah. So I'll go back and answer your, your question and you should have, which is you have to first want to understand that the contact first have to understand, understand is one, the context is key in everything, right? So the idea of intersectionality is understanding that women are not a monolithic group. Right. To the idea of intersectionality. Intersectionality is also

understanding that not one person is you. Not One person is whole in just that one characteristic. We are uniquely and divinely created. So even a black woman, um, who grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and the projects may be different from a black woman who grew up in Iowa.

Alexa Bigwarfe: I'm from Iowa. I assure you they are different for many reasons,

Desiree P Bell: you know, and so I think the idea of intersectionality even cuts across race, but it's about socioeconomic background. It's about education. It's about, um, even, you know, gender conforming ideals and ideas, right? It's, it's about everything. And I think, you know, what we tried to do with these chat and chews is have all these honest conversations with folks to tell them that first you have to understand that there is different, you have to be willing to put yourself out there and be vulnerable. And then once you understand, connect with that difference. Yeah. Right? So connect with someone who is not like you, but someone who has a completely different experience than you do. Because it's not about being sympathetic, empathetic. It's about understanding what they exist in, in terms of what their life is, the context that they must, must navigate each and every single day and some of the struggles that exist in their life that may not exist in your own. Because I think when you understand that, um, then you can build unique relationships with other women and other people to be frank. Um, you know, like you said, there's a lot of conversation about, you know, uh, the relationship between black women and also it just women of color and white women. And I think the biggest misconception is, you know, um, some stereotypes that have existed in our time for a really long time. Number one from, you know, as I have said, and these are generals I want to be real clear before anyone gets English.

Desiree P Bell: You know, a lot of white women have come to me and said, black women seem intimidating, seem aggressive, seem angry. And um, that is that, that is based on some historical misconception and stereotyping. Um, because I believe historically black women have had to be strong, um, and have often spoke, often talk with a lot more authority, right. Um, and, and are very, um, uh, steeped in who they are because they've had to be. Right. And I think for a lot of white women who may not see themselves as as strong or as confident, um, for whatever reasons, and we can get into the history about why, um, you know, that is off putting to them because they have no idea how to connect with that kind of authenticity, that kind of strength. Right. And so, and, and nor do they know what the entry point is, right? So instead of saying, wow, you come and you walk into the room and you just really like it is, you know, it's often like, oh my gosh, she's so wound.

Desiree P Bell: Right. And only other side too, you know, I think the stereotypes with white women are that, um, you know, they are not, uh, willing to understand difference and are sometimes willing to go with the flow as opposed to, you know, separating sometimes from their quote unquote whiteness. And try to be uncomfortable. Right. Um, and so those two real, real, uh, historical challenges needs to be brought to the table as well. Yeah. Um, and you know, those are

things that we try to bring to the table. We have to have honest conversations with folks. I had a friend of mine, a white woman say, you know, she said, you know, it does what you just seen whenever you speak, you just seemed so passionate. She said that passion can sometimes be, uh, misinterpreted as anger. And I said, yeah, but that's who I am.

Alexa Bigwarfe: And you know what, if you are angry, you have good reason to be true. I can be angry too. You know? I mean, I hear your point and we see this a lot with women in just across, uh, across the board. Like if a woman gets passionate about anything, people are, it's a, he's out of control. She's out of control. It's like, why can't I just be, I mean, did you see Lindsey Graham at the Cavanaugh hearing? Let's not talk about passion, Brett.

Desiree P Bell: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Alexa Bigwarfe: You know, so to your point of understanding like I, to be very honest, like I try, I'm an empathetic person. I, I, I am an empath and I tried really hard to hear people's stories and to understand like where they came from and why things are the way they were. But I think the first time that I truly, truly, truly might have glimpse a tiny bit of what it's like to be an African American woman in this country was the severe disappointment that I felt after those hearings went through and they nominated him anyway for women across the board.

Alexa Bigwarfe: Like just that disappointment that we don't matter. And it struck me, I was like, this must be what it feels like every time another teen, unarmed African American young man is gunned down someplace, every time the police officer only goes to jail for five days, even though you know, or whatever it may, you know, it must be, this must be what it feels like ALL the time. And it really like struck me on how like I wanted to go bury my head under the sand and not come out for a week because I felt so disappointed in our society that we could say this behavior is okay and it doesn't really matter, he's going to live anyway. Um, so, you know, I don't, obviously, I don't know what it's like to feel that every single day, but it gave me a tiny glimpse I think, and it made me really realize that we do have to, and my podcast cohost that you didn't get to meet today, she said in one of our interviews one time, you know, that she thinks that the strongest role of the white woman is helping, uh, African American women get to be where they need to be.

Alexa Bigwarfe: And then stepping back and I don't know if helping is the right word. I don't want to balance, you know, you know, help, using the privilege for lack of other words that we have to be the voice until they can be the voice. And then, yeah,

Desiree P Bell: it was, yeah, that was, it was just going to say that. I mean, even during the hearings, I will say this and you still got to be in your environment and go home and live your life. Right. And so it didn't change. So I always caution, and it's funny cause it was a Saturday night live skit that was made and it was hilarious after the election where, um, you know, it was a, I think it was a election night party and there were two African American men there and they were like four,

uh, Caucasian folks there. And they were an older Caucasian folks were completely like dumbfounded, baffled, crying saying, oh my God, this country is so racist. And then the two African American men who were there were like,

Desiree P Bell: Yup, Yup.

Desiree P Bell: Um, and I think, so I also caution folks a couple of different ways. One is, so I always tell people, you cannot experience what the other, quote unquote, you know, with the African American man, with the African American woman, with a woman of color, what the person of color experiences. Um, and so that's just it. That's just not how it works. But what you can do is understand. So I do go back to understanding, right? Which is I think what,

Desiree P Bell: what, uh, is very true is if we can find, if we can find accomplices and I want to get into the difference between the

Desiree P Bell: ally and [unclear], if we can, accomplices, that we are better suited to dismantle the, uh, a lot of times the structures that seek to oppress other, right. Um, the less fortunate, often the voiceless, often the, um, the folks who don't have the power, but that has to be work that has to be done together. The difference between an ally and accomplice for me, and I've written about this and you know, it's been quite controversial, um, is, is this, so there was a friend of mine, and I think I mentioned this before, who wore a safety pin when the safety pins where the thing, right? So it was, um, people wanted to highlight, uh, Caucasian people wanted to highlight to people of color, black people that they were, in fact, allies. And so they were a safety pins so that people of color, black people can see it and say, Oh, you're an ally.

Desiree P Bell: I did not support that at all for a couple of different reasons. I don't need a safety pin to tell me that you understand my cause, my plight and that you're willing to be to, you know, to be quite frank, in the trenches with me, I need you to challenge the structure that you exist in every single day and I need you to be uncomfortable. So a friend of mine was texting me on Thanksgiving, thanksgiving after election that her racist father kept saying a whole bunch of things. He was so happy that Trump was elected because finally this wall is going to be coming up to stop all these people from coming in and all this stuff. And she's texting me but she's texting me that she doesn't support this and I can't believe, I'm here, thanksgiving. And I told her, don't text me, actually tell them, tell your father.

Desiree P Bell: Right. Like that's helpful to me. Challenging your people in your community is helpful to me. Tearing at me in my face and telling me that you're wearing a safety pin, it's, you're an ally, doesn't help because an accomplice means that you have some skin in the game, right? That's what it means. It means that you weren't willing to be uncomfortable. It means that you are willing to have conversations with people who don't look like you. It means, you know, and this is a tall tale sign all the time. It's like, it means that you were willing to invite someone at your dinner table who does not look like it when your girlfriends are



going out. You have girls night out, look around your room and see who your girls are. Right? It's helpful for me if you're willing to have someone part of that group. With someone that you historically have not had anything in common with, but you're willing to invite into your place, in your space to learn and understand, I should say, to understand about the context in which they exist and the life that they live. Right? Like that is helpful. Um, and, and these are the things I always challenge people to do and folks are like, oh, but it's so hard. Well, it would, if it was,

Desiree P Bell: it was easy. Nobody would do it. Everybody would be. And like I said, nobody walks around saying, I'm going to be vulnerable today. Today is going to be awesome. I'm going to let all the things come to me.

Alexa Bigwarfe: You know, it's interesting, um, because I live in Columbia, South Carolina, which is a very weird combination of people, to be quite honest, because we have some, yeah, we have some super, some of small segment of super progressive people and, and, and we have multiple military bases, multiple major, universities here. So there's a lot of diversity. But if you really get down to it and we coexist together fairly well, fairly well, but if you really get down to it and you really look at things, you can tell if you're willing to look at things, that there is an underlying racism, under almost everywhere, that's pervasive. And um, it's challenging because getting out there and figuring out what it is you do, how you make those changes, what you, but I'll give you a good example. Like, we have my school district is what's called school choice.

Alexa Bigwarfe: You can choose, you can, you can go through the lottery process to check too. Like if you're zoned for one elementary school and you want your kids to go to this other elementary school, you can fill out an application. The catch is you have to be able to provide transportation to and from and all those kinds of things. To me, I feel like underlying that is a very racist structure because it's it, and maybe not just black, white, but haves, haves nots. It allows people with more means to pull themselves from a school where they feel like, and the reason usually is because they don't like the structure of the other ones were there. Nobody will come out and say that. Actually I have heard people say that before. I have heard people straight up say, I didn't want my kid to go to that school because there weren't as many kids that looked like my kid.

Alexa Bigwarfe: And it wasn't an African American woman that said that. Um, so you know that you see these kinds of things and it's like I've been very vocal about the fact that I hate the school choice program and that we're going, we're rezoned. And if we don't like what where we're zoned to them, we'll move. But we have, again, we have the ability to do that. So that's like, I don't know if fires me up, but I love the fact we lived in a very diverse neighborhood. I love the fact that my kids have grown up with very diverse friends and have been exposed from the smallest of age to people that are different than them. Because racism isn't something you're born with. It's something you 100% you know kids and you

Alexa Bigwarfe: know this, right? When kids are in the sandbox, in their plane, they only care about is who has a toy matter. It doesn't matter what color the kid is who has a toy. It matters who has the toy and I want the toy. That's right.

Alexa Bigwarfe: I have three kids and every year I've, every year as they'd gone through kindergarten, I've been the chaperone on the zoo trip. And I love chaperoning kindergartners because they love everybody. Hugs, doesn't matter what you look like, who you are, you just get hugged and loved on. And that's what been one of my favorite experiences. And my question to you is, how do we, how do we do that as adults? How do we, because I, I understand, I mean, I also understand my biases. I also understand that in order to be part of the solution, I also have to back down off of some of my defenses and stop saying, "but I had a hard life too", but I worked really hard too, I deserve this too. Yeah, I did. I've worked my heinie off. But guess what? It was never a question. If I was going to college, I've never gone to [unclear].

Alexa Bigwarfe: I've never worried about not getting something because of the color of my skin, you know? So, so I guess my, my final big question to you, because we're running short on time, my final big question is the concept of white privilege has, I think a lot of white people baffled because they see it as saying they're privileged, as in like wealth and all of these kinds of things. That's where people go. They say, I didn't grow up a privileged life and we've lost the idea of, but you did. But from your perspective, like I dunno, maybe we need to change the term. Maybe it's like this whole global warming, climate change. Like you can't bring people on board with global warming cause they don't understand it. So they had to change it to climate change. I don't know. I want to say like how do you, how,

Alexa Bigwarfe: how do you do with it?

Desiree P Bell: I mean, I think it's still going back to what you said, which is I think the definition of privilege is not that people, it's not about the wealth that they had. It's about perception and it's about access. Yeah. That's what it's about. And so when people, when we talk about white privilege as a whole conversation around, around the, and it's very simple, right? And I go back to the two women walk into the room, black woman, white woman who's a CEO, right? Right. A black man and a white man, a black man and a white man are both driving down the same highway. Who do you think will get pulled over? Right. A uh, and I've done this study too, which is, it's always interesting, which is the African American, a young boy with his pants sagging and then the Caucasian boy with some chains and a whole bunch of tattoos on himself. Who Do you think people are going to hide their purses from? Right,

Alexa Bigwarfe: right. I mean I tell people all the time, they both scare me, which is a bigger conversation.

Desiree P Bell: Privilege is understanding that despite your socioeconomic status, despite your education, despite your parental, you're a single parent home, both parent

home, there's still a perception that people will judge you differently. People treat you differently, you will have access to certain things. Right. And then we, you know, cause I didn't get, I can talk about this forever. You get into the whole conversation about what happened in the drug wars in the 90s and what's happening now, you know, around opium and meth, right? And access, um, in different communities and why, right? I mean that's a whole other conversation. But the idea of white privilege, and I think that's what people have to, and that's where people get defensive, right? It's not that it's not the idea and it's not the definition that you had an easy road. It is the reality that your road was easier than someone who would be in the same position of a darker hue,

Alexa Bigwarfe: Right.

Desiree P Bell: And that is a reality, unfortunately. Yeah. Until bias changes, until there's no discrimination, until there's no racism in this country. That is a reality that people have to understand. You know, and I, I, you know, I, I'm a mother of a 10 year old who's a gymnast. Um, and there are certain realities. My daughter was not conscious about race at all, to be frank, until she started competing in gymnastics.

Alexa Bigwarfe: Oh Wow.

Desiree P Bell: And it was a conversation, not that she, you know, all of a sudden realized, oh my gosh, I'm different. But it was other kids telling her that her ponytail didn't flop like their's did. Right. Because her hair is natural. She has a big beautiful [unclear] Afro. She competes. Right. And so that's a reality. So her teammates have the privilege of not being asked that question.

New Speaker: Right,

Alexa Bigwarfe: right. Oh, that's such a, it's such a great visualization of what the difference is when you really, when you really boil down to it, there was the article in the news about the kid, uh, the wrestler with the dreads. It was basically forced to shear his dreads right off right there. And I posted that article and I was very, very disappointed at some of the responses that I saw about how it's a sports rule and it's this and it's that. And I'm like, what? And he could have chosen to, to, um, to leave the competition. What athlete is going to, I'm going to forfeit my match. Of course, he made the only choice that he thought he could make at that time. Of course he did. And what are the white kids been forced to shave their head off in front of everybody before they were, I don't know if was done in public or not, but either way, you know? Yeah. So it's, it's those situations where you have to take a step back and say, and the, all the people that were said, rules are rules. How many times did that ref not pay attention to somebody else's hair? And whether or not it fit perfectly within the regs.

Desiree P Bell: Hundred percent or I even, the funny thing that I always say is, you know, or just go to an expensive store. It happens. Same thing had happened to Oprah Winfrey when she was outside of this country. Um, you know, the idea that, oh, if you look a certain way, you look suspicious, right? You can't afford to purchase anything in this store or, and maybe you're looking to steal something.

Alexa Bigwarfe: Right, right.

Desiree P Bell: And I think that's a, so that's privileged, which is, you know, there are some women who could walk into stores and no one will follow them.

Alexa Bigwarfe: Right.

Desiree P Bell: You know, I always have to be cognizant of that. Right. Like, I, I have to be cognizant of that. I always try to dress up. I'm going to, and these are realities, right? And this is something that, you know, I think, um, when we talk about privilege, you have the privilege of not having to think about that and not having to think about that.

Alexa Bigwarfe: So this is a small thing, but I saw this after I watched this video of an African American man with long dreads. He was an older man and it was the sweetest video I've ever seen. But he was like, Hey, my name is Harvey. I'm terrified of spiders. I like big hugs, you know, and it was just like him making himself a real person and it was, you know, part of this and he, and he said something like, I don't like it when women grab their purses and run from me when they, you know, so I started making a point, this is just a stupid, silly little thing, but when I see somebody who might intimidate me, I smile at them as I pass by. Just try. I just, you know, to just try and be, be something and I'd say it, there are some scary lookin' white biker dudes that, but you know, I tried to just like, you know, smile and move on my way, but I want to end this with, just for in case it hasn't become super clear to people as they'd been listening. If you could help a woman today who's listening to this, that really wants to be part of the solution, not the problem, a few things that she can truly do. And I know you've covered understanding. I think we got that we have to learn how to understand, but is there anything else that someone can do to truly be an accomplice?

Desiree P Bell: Yes. Don't be afraid. Be uncomfortable, and a lot of it starts with, you know, with podcasts like this to be frank, which is having open conversations, number one, reaching out, first step, right? Um, and number two, allowing yourself to be vulnerable, allowing yourself to ask questions. Um, now I want to be clear and not everyone will be receptive, right? People are people. So I always say that you're going to have some folks who are like, it is not my job to teach you, look it up. There are folks, um, and I have, you know, taken this mantle, who want to at least provide context for folks, right? So that we can have a starting point so that we can potentially launch off, you know, launch from this same pad and make as much impact as possible. Um, and so I would say the first thing really is to reach out, allow yourself to be vulnerable, listen, and then you have to figure out what those next steps are going to be for you after that. For some people, it

may be hosting their own chat and chews with folks who don't look like them around their own dinner table. Right? For others, it could be reaching out and having conversations with folks also who don't look like you on a regular basis or sharing information and trying to get their perspective and understanding their opinion on certain things. But I think that's a personal decision. I think the first thing, like I said, is the ability to reach out, uh, understand, uh, that context and experiences are different. Um, and number three, being vulnerable.

Alexa Bigwarfe: And I think we could talk about this topic for days on days on end, but I know you've got to go. Where can people find you so they can follow all of your stuff and see what you're doing. You're supporting some incredible women that are coming up, that will be running for election, which is great. How can we get involved in all of that?

Desiree P Bell: Yeah, so I um, you can follow me on my website, which is dpbell.com Giv. You can follow me on Twitter. I'm very active @DPbell. Um, and you can follow @DPbell chat and chews. That's also our Twitter account. My Facebook is @DPbellandassociates. There, we post often a lot about what we're doing in the field, trying to connect women, building coalitions, identifying accomplices and having some hard conversations, um, that allow women to be both vulnerable but impact.

Alexa Bigwarfe: Well, I hope you will consider us Lose the Cape an accomplice.

Desiree P Bell: Yes,

Alexa Bigwarfe: yes. If there's anybody you want to send our way to have their voices heard to our community, we would love to um, interview other women who are fighting this good fight.

Desiree P Bell: Excellent. I will do that and thank you. Thank you. You're amazing for, you know, opening up this podcast and having having me on. I really appreciate it.

Alexa Bigwarfe: I appreciate your time so much and everything you just said and, and I can't wait to see happens in the next two years and I'm just going to say go women because if we would get together, Beyonce would be right. We rule this world. Thanks, Desiree.

Alexa Bigwarfe: Would love to hear your feedback on this episode. You can hop on over to [losethecape.com/169](http://losethecape.com/169) and either comment on the blog post there. You can go to the Facebook page. It's just @losetheCape on Facebook. You can come join Your Mom Squad, which is, are, are, are not secret, but our private group on Facebook where we talk about these types of issues...