

Episode 1: The Pilot
Released on August 22, 2018

Sherron: Well, hello America. We are here today-

Cornell: Yeah, not quite that big.

Sherron: Oh, all right. How about east coast? Hey, east coast.

Cornell: Little smaller.

Sherron: Okay. New York state, we are here today-

Cornell: Yeah, no, no, not that big either.

Sherron: Ithaca?

Cornell: Closer.

Sherron: Cornell?

Cornell: There you go.

Sherron: Hey Cornell!

Cornell: Welcome, hello Cornell! This is Cornell Woodson, your Diversity and Inclusion Programs Lead for the university. I'm joined here by ...

Sherron: Sherron Brown.

Cornell: Yes, and we are your hosts for this podcast that we are calling the Inclusive Excellence Podcast.

Sherron: Inclusive Excellence Podcast-

Cornell: Right, we're excited about it.

Sherron: I-E-P-C.

Cornell: IEPC. Oh, goodness. And this is our first episode of this podcast.

Sherron: Yes, it's our maiden voyage.

Cornell: Yeah, and we're like really excited to bring this to the campus. And to be honest, we were being funny when we opened up, but the reality of it is that this could reach a broader audience, right?

Sherron: Yeah.

Cornell: It could be used as a recruiting tool for people to know that Cornell was doing things around diversity and inclusion and doing some new things to reach

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people. But yeah, for now we're focusing on Cornell University employees. Once again, my name is Cornell Woodson and I am the Diversity and Inclusion Programs Lead.

Sherron: I'm Sherron Brown, I'm the Administrative Assistant for the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity.

Cornell: So for this episode, we're really just going to sort of give you an introduction to this podcast, what it's about, what you can expect, and things of that sort. But the first thing I want to do, and Sherron has no idea that I decided to do this and I kind of wanted to go that way for the rest of the, I don't know, the season, I guess if you want to.

Sherron: Oh god, the shenanigans are starting now?

Cornell: Exactly, right? But I thought it would be cool to have a question of the day.

Sherron: All right.

Cornell: Like opening up with a question of the day related to the workplace, right? So I figured like the first episode I would have the question and then the next episode, you have the question and you would surprise me with it so that it's raw, it's authentic, and there's not time to really think of a really good answer. But it's-

Sherron: Well, I am okay with that because I know this is being recorded and can be-

Cornell: Right, touche.

Sherron: It's not live.

Cornell: Right, but we're going to try and be a one take show.

Sherron: Absolutely. That's fine, that's fine.

Cornell: So the question that I have for you is what makes you feel like you belong?

Sherron: Oh my goodness. I belong at Cornell University because Cornell offers so much for me to do and ways that I can express myself as the amazing human being that I am. For example, I get to do this podcast with this wonderful person in front of me, named Cornell Woodson.

Cornell: Stop, stop, stop. Yeah keep going, keep going.

Sherron: I mean he is so awesome the school named itself after him. What?

Cornell: I love it.

Sherron: But I have found myself many communities within the university and I have always felt I'm seen and heard, which is huge in my world because I come from a

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larger city, a big city. I came from Long Island where it's easy to get lost. And so I find that while a lot of people are not fans, let's say, of Ithaca because it's so small, I think that there is good to being that small. And one of it is that you are seen and heard. And I find that I also find that at the university as well is that whatever department I'm in or whatever program I decide to be a part of, I feel like I have a voice and people do hear me. So that's why I feel like I belong at Cornell.

Cornell: That's really good. You know, and it's funny, we've been working together for what, nine, 10 months now?

Sherron: Just under a year, yeah.

Cornell: I think September actually will be 12.

Sherron: What-

Cornell: So then we're 10 months in right, to our working relationship. And I find too, even just talking to you that you are very plugged in to different things that are happening. Not only here at work and at the university but just like around town in general. And that's something that I've noticed that you have been able to do and build that community and find your spaces. Not space, but spaces.

Sherron: Spaces plural, and that's super important because I do encounter a lot of people who are pretty new to Cornell University.

Cornell: Yeah.

Sherron: And my advice is always to those people to find your community outside of the university because your work life can't be your whole life. You need to just broaden your horizon, get to know people, get out in the community, try something different, go on the art trail or whatever it is you do. Go to a festival, go listen to some music that is not your music, quote unquote, but go anyway.

Cornell: Yeah.

Sherron: And get in into the community outside of the university. It'll really offer a lot.

Cornell: Yeah, absolutely.

Sherron: I love that.

Cornell: I think for me, what makes me feel like I belong, is as simple as saying hello to me when you see me. And not necessarily like oh my goodness, stopping everything you're doing and going Cornell, hello, how are you? But just an acknowledgement of my presence of just hi, how are you? Or hello, good morning. Makes me feel seen and it is as complex as validating my lived experience, even though you have no idea what I'm talking about.

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Sherron: Absolutely.

Cornell: Or can't relate to what I'm talking about.

Sherron: Absolutely.

Cornell: And so I think there's a spectrum of what makes me feel, and I imagine all of us, right, there's a spectrum, but for me the simplest is just like, hi. I always tell people I worked at another place and my cubicle was in the very, very front of the suite that we worked in. And people would come in in the morning and walk past me and never say good morning and they wouldn't say good night when they left. And for the first year of me being there, it really made me feel invisible and like I did not matter.

Sherron: And isolated.

Cornell: Right, right.

Sherron: Like I'm not connecting with these people, that's not a good feeling.

Cornell: Exactly. And it's so simple, right? It's simple as just a hi, how are you today?

Sherron: It's a little thing, but it's a big thing at the same time.

Cornell: Exactly, exactly. So that's what makes me feel like I belong. So I want to start off our podcast with that question of the day. So next episode you have to come up with a question related to the workplace.

Sherron: All right, because that didn't-

Cornell: Exactly, exactly. So what is the purpose of this podcast? So I wrote down a couple of things that I feel I really want us to convey through this podcast. The first one, Sherron, is what?

Sherron: To reach folks who may not be able to leave their office during the work day for a workshop.

Cornell: Right. And I mean I think the reality of it and timing on this one too, I think reality of it is that not everyone has the ability to leave their desk the way that some others can for an hour and a half, two hours. Many people are, their work, literally I think of our front desk people, right? Like the office would literally go up in shambles if that person was not there to assist people and help people to greet people and to do a really critical part of the work that's been done in the office. So creating an opportunity for people who really want to engage in the conversation but can't because they can't get two hours away to be able to still hear the information and things of that sort.

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- Sherron: Yeah, absolutely. And I mean there are different positions that are held within the university that doesn't allow people to get away. Could be a cashier at one of the food service areas.
- Cornell: Absolutely.
- Sherron: Yeah, that would be great. And you know the building maintenance staff only because their hours, I believe their work days generally and around two o'clock?
- Cornell: Right, right.
- Sherron: So depending on the time of the workshop, they may or may not be able to come and all these different professions that exists in university, we do not know when their peak hours are.
- Cornell: Right.
- Sherron: May be. So we may think, oh I don't know, 11:00 is a great time for a podcast, but that might be peak hour for the dining people because they have to prepare for lunch. So I love that we have the opportunity to share this podcast and get our information out there and you can access it whenever you are able to do so.
- Cornell: And that's so key, right? Because if you're on the bus or you're coming into work or whatever, you can listen to it then and things of that sort. And so I'm really excited about that. I think the second one is probably my favorite purpose of the podcast and that's the highlight colleagues around campus in their DNI efforts. I think that in my 10 months in this role, I've been here at the university for almost four years. So I was in another part of the institution before this. But one thing that I realize in terms of diversity and inclusion efforts around campus is that a lot of times people have no idea what's being done across the campus. They have no idea of the different work that their colleagues are doing in the colleges or in different departments that are really helping to move the needle around diversity and inclusion work. And so I wanted to create an opportunity for us to bring in some of those people. And I think this really came to head when we had the, what was it, is it the Staff Excellence? The one where they give awards out?
- Sherron: Oh like the Landmark Awards for people who have been here X amount of months?
- Cornell: No, not that one. It's the one that we had in the, I got an award. Me and Sue got the same award this year. What is the name of that ceremony? It's an award ceremony.
- Sherron: I don't know because I didn't one.
- Cornell: Oh see, petty. But no, but it was, and I can't believe I'm blanking on the name of it right now, but hopefully Mary Opperman will not hear this and be like Cornell how do you not know the name? But basically, you heard so many, as they were reading the things that, so people had to be nominated for the award-

- Sherron: It's an achievement award of sorts?
- Cornell: It wasn't an achievement award, I forget. We'll come back to that, but people had to nominate people for the award, for the various awards. And so they read things that people said about the person who got the award. And what I noticed is that a lot of people were referring to that, for example, there was a supervisor award and that person made people feel comfortable, made people feel like a part of a team, and they weren't necessarily using diversity and inclusion jargon, but they were talking about exactly the work and the end goal that we're working for, that people of all different backgrounds can come to work and feel like they matter. And that's exactly, so I would love to have an opportunity to bring someone and go, how do you make your employees feel like they belong? How do you make them feel like they matter? And talk about that. So other people can hear that and go, okay, wow, I can do that.
- Sherron: And also an opportunity to see that different things work for different areas.
- Cornell: Absolutely.
- Sherron: There is absolutely no cookie cutter way to introduce diversity and inclusion because those ways are just as varied as the people we work with.
- Cornell: Right.
- Sherron: You know, there's so many different ways for somebody, for you in your past job it was just a matter of saying hello, you know? And the next person may need to go beyond the hello and say, you know what, I recognize that you did X, Y, Z on this project. Thank you for your input.
- Cornell: Absolutely. And for some people it's wait until I've had my first cup of coffee. And for some people, right?
- Sherron: That would be me.
- Cornell: Exactly right? Like it's so many different things. And I think having that and highlighting that would really give people a lot of different ways in which they can engage in the work, I put the work in quotations, of creating a space where people feel included and feel like they belong and can show up authentically as themselves.
- Sherron: Yes.
- Cornell: The third one, Sherron.
- Sherron: Is to present a different way of engaging with diversity and inclusion content.
- Cornell: Yeah.

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Sherron: And I got to tell you something, Cornell University is big. And even though we do the diversity and inclusion work, we may call it DNI work, just so you know, that's what we're talking about. Even though we do that as part of our work, there's still so much going on that we don't even know is happening until we're at an award ceremony.

Cornell: Right, right, that we can't think of the name of.

Sherron: So it's wonderful to just be able to hear everything that's going on. Even the folks like Cornell and I who are doing this work, there are still so many people who are doing it quietly, quietly and we love having opportunities to have different ways of engaging with that content.

Cornell: Absolutely.

Sherron: And so that's another thing that we're going to try to cover within this podcast is to make sure that we offer one thing and here are ways that that one thing can look in your environment, in your space, on your team, and so on and so forth. And also the stuff that we are sharing on this podcast, they're great for the workplace, but you're also going to get tools that you can take outside of the workplace.

Cornell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sherron: Because the more you use a tool, the better you get at it.

Cornell: Yeah, yeah, I love that.

Sherron: So it's just like working out.

Cornell: Yeah, absolutely. And which I need to go work out today. And I think another way that I've taken that third one of sort of presenting a different way to engage with DNI content is also getting away from only doing workshops.

Sherron: Right.

Cornell: Right? You know that workshops, yes, it does provide the face-to-face opportunity to hear people. But I think for some people who may not feel comfortable going to a workshop because they feel like, well, I don't know enough or anything at all about what they're talking about. And so I don't want to go because I'm embarrassed, right?

Sherron: Or they don't want to be seen as a person who doesn't know.

Cornell: Exactly. So this gives people an opportunity to still get the content to understand, to unpack it for themselves, and almost in preparation for going to a workshop.

Sherron: Yes.

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Cornell: And I see this as a pipeline, that someone will hear this podcast and go, oh wow, that was really good and I enjoyed that content and I feel like I know a little bit more about it and I have some questions now, right?

Sherron: Right.

Cornell: And now I can go to the workshop and I can ask those questions and I can engage and I feel a little more comfortable. So it's just creating different ways for people to enter into the conversation and make it feel comfortable for them.

Sherron: Right, and the last one?

Cornell: Yeah, the last one, to engage new people in the DNI work being done here at Cornell University. So the reality of it is, is that people have the comment of, we're preaching to the choir, right? And that we're talking to the same people we always talk to and I know that there are other people out there who either can't leave their desk during the day or are intimidated by coming to a workshop or you know, let's be honest, there are some people who are like, I don't understand what the problem is, I'm not sure how this relates to my work. And all the different ways and barriers that might keep a person from engaging in the dialogue. I'm hoping that this might be a safer way for people to enter into it and that we start seeing some new faces and therefore getting some new ideas and some new thoughts that hopefully can cultivate some really creative solutions to some of the workplace issues that we see.

Sherron: Yes.

Cornell: So I'm really excited about that last one.

Sherron: I am too. And also the ... I lost my thought.

Cornell: You lost your thought.

Sherron: You can edit that out.

Cornell: It's all right, it's all good. It's all good.

Sherron: Doing the diversity inclusion work, we can also hear different voices. So if we are, quote unquote, preaching to the choir all the time, the podcast is one of the ways where you can listen anonymously. You may have some ideas and things you want to share, but you know, you don't want to make a mistake. Or you don't want to say the wrong thing in that space live with people so you have a way of processing information on your own. Maybe come up with a list of questions that this podcast has brought up for you.

Cornell: Right, right.

Sherron: And then maybe that'll steer you to finding another person where you can share some ideas and thoughts and say, wow, they said this on the podcast and tell me

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about that, like let me know more. I've heard some terminologies I'm not familiar with.

Cornell: Yeah.

Sherron: Maybe I can go and Google something.

Cornell: Right, right, exactly. Give me a place to start.

Sherron: Yes, give me a starting place. And also, I think one of the best things we can do by offering different ways of sharing diversity inclusion information is to give people opportunities to make the uncomfortable conversation a little less uncomfortable.

Cornell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sherron: You know?

Cornell: That's interesting, yeah.

Sherron: Making their discomfort a little less discomfort.

Cornell: Or, and see my favorite is getting people comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Sherron: Yes.

Cornell: Right? And you know that that uncomfortableness for me at least is a part of the process of how do I, I was listening to Brene Brown on Super Soul Sunday on Oprah's podcast and I was just talking about sort of, she does a lot about vulnerability, right?

Sherron: Oh, Brene's great.

Cornell: I love Brene Brown, If I could get her here it'd be amazing.

Sherron: Well, good luck.

Cornell: I know, right? Because I don't know if we have that kind of budget, but you know, just be being comfortable with like, okay I don't know everything or I made that mistake and that we create a space where people educate and challenge but don't attack.

Sherron: Absolutely.

Cornell: Right, right? And then we can kind of get people on both sides of that conversation to see where each other is coming from, even when I come at you with frustration.

Sherron: Right.

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Cornell: So that's like the picture perfect situation. We'll see how we do.

Sherron: Okay.

Cornell: At creating it.

Sherron: We have definitely carved out a mission for ourselves.

Cornell: For sure, for sure. And I'm sure many people are trying to carve out the same mission. So we are just one part of that whole process. So what can you expect from this podcast? I think one, my hope and why I am really excited about doing this with Sherron is that I think you and I have really good energy with each other.

Sherron: I believe so.

Cornell: I think we make each other laugh, we're funny, we bounce off each other. And so my hope is that you can expect fun.

Sherron: Yes, and lightness.

Cornell: Right?

Sherron: This is a heavy topic.

Cornell: It is, it is.

Sherron: So the more we can do to alleviate some of the weight of these topics and subject matters and processes that we're all going to be sharing and learning, the easier it is for everyone to engage. We want to encourage engagement through light conversation. It doesn't minimize the importance of it, but it definitely makes it easier to bear if we do it with a little humor, a little of our personalities, and for me just being able to be honest to say, you know what Cornell, I don't understand this. Help me, bring me to a place of understanding please. You know, just showing a little vulnerability on our parts so that people can understand, oh, I don't have to know all the answers, I just have to know what I don't know.

Cornell: And I would add to that by saying even discourse that you and I can disagree or our guests and we can all sit around the table and disagree with one another and still have a conversation.

Sherron: Yes.

Cornell: Right? That's another thing I really want to model for folks who are listening. So you can expect every podcast for us to open up with an introduction of the topic, what are we going to talk about, I've added in the question of the day. So next time Sherron you have to have the question of the day. So it'll always be a question related to the workplace. So maybe you can use that question to ask your colleagues and sort of start a conversation that way. And then hopefully

we'll always have a Cornell colleague that we'll be interviewing that's doing some really great things around the topic.

Sherron: That would be a Cornell University colleague.

Cornell: Right. And so technically my colleague, right?

Sherron: And mine too.

Cornell: We're going to have to make sure we make that clear every podcast. We're talking about the university, not me. Right? But that we have a colleague that we have as a guest on the show talk about what they're doing in this realm. And what I'm hoping that we can find people will say, here's where I made the mistake.

Sherron: Oh yes.

Cornell: And here's what I did to fix it.

Sherron: Right, sharing that vulnerability.

Cornell: Exactly.

Sherron: I am not perfect, I don't have all the answers and part of growing is going through that process.

Cornell: Exactly.

Sherron: Of making mistake and exactly being less than perfect.

Cornell: I think one of the big pieces about this is also offering some action-oriented best practices, right?

Sherron: Yes, something that you can take away by the end of this conversation and you can just incorporate that into your day any which way you see fit. I think that is super important because that goes to that whole sense of working out every day to build up strength. It's like something that you can do on a regular basis until you get to the place where you are much more comfortable having discourse and having hard conversation or being more comfortable in the discomfort or something like that. So definitely.

Cornell: And being very action-oriented. Like what can I do today to get started? We want to share some resources, some films, some documentary, some books, some articles that you can use to dig a little bit deeper on your own if you really want to that talk about that particular topic and allow you some opportunity to also see a different side of the story than the one that we present, right?

Sherron: Yes.

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Cornell: Because again, I think that different varying views on a topic is really important and allowing people to sort of take everything in and come to a decision on their own.

Sherron: Right, right. Getting information, information is everything. Information and communication is everything, that's my life mantra right there.

Cornell: Information and communication is everything. I'm going to tweet that, I'm going to tweet that, I like that.

Sherron: We're going to also have some listener questions. We're going to have the listeners post questions ahead of time and we will share them on the air and see if we can come up with answers. Whether it's something that sparks conversation between us, maybe a little bit of a debate, who knows?

Cornell: Right, right, you never know.

Sherron: Or it might be something that has a very firm answer that we can share.

Cornell: Absolutely.

Sherron: We're looking forward to hearing what our listeners have to say. Hearing what is on people's minds.

Cornell: Yeah.

Sherron: Hearing maybe suggestions and things like that for future podcasts options. So yeah, our ears are open, not just our running mouths.

Cornell: Right, exactly.

Sherron: Our ears are open as well.

Cornell: Exactly. And I think logistically the questions will probably come, for that topic, will come afterwards because we'll post the podcast and we'll hope that people will have questions and write to us with questions and then the next episode we'll choose a couple to unpack with people to get some people some answers. Because I think that's one of the biggest barriers, that people have a lot of questions but don't always feel like they have an opportunity or an outlet to actually ask those questions and get answers. And so we're hoping that this also satisfies that as well. And then we end with what's coming up next.

Sherron: What's going on.

Cornell: Yeah, so what's going to be the next episode. So that might also be another way for you to send in some questions ahead of time as well that we can sort of use within that next episode. And so speaking of what's coming up next, I'm actually, so I was doing some brainstorming on this today because I got inspired. So we are about to roll out a new version of our Inclusive Excellence Academy or we're

expanding our programming and so we are calling it the Inclusive Action Network. And so we're going to unpack that on episode two about what is the Inclusive Action Network and what programs are under this umbrella program and sort of providing more ways for people to get involved in conversation and dialogue. And one thing that I forgot to mention is how often can you expect this podcast to come out? We're shooting for twice a month. So biweekly I think that is, right?

Sherron: Yes, that would be right.

Cornell: Right, exactly. I get paid biweekly or semi biweekly according to HR. So we will do this twice a month because I think that's pretty realistic for us to be able to have time for that. And our hope is to get the podcast between 30 and 40 minutes.

Sherron: Yes.

Cornell: Give you enough good content for you to sort of run and do something with it, but not so long that it takes up an entire chunk of your day as well. Yeah, and that's kind of it. Sherron, can you think of anything else that we should share?

Sherron: That is a mission, let's see. How can they hear us? Will we send a link? Will we put it on our website?

Cornell: Yes, good question. So you will find each episode on the diversity.cornell.edu website.

Sherron: Diversity.cornell.edu.

Cornell: Yes, there will be a page for the podcast and each episode will be posted there. We also will be creating a SoundCloud account for those who have Android phones and things of that sort, you can also listen to it there. If you have an Apple phone or Apple iPhone you'll also be able to like and subscribe on iTunes as well. So we're going to put it in multiple places so that people can engage with it and access it. So yeah.

Sherron: So eventually, I will be able to say hello, New York. All of New York will be hearing me.

Cornell: Potentially, even if it's just a small section of New York. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. If it gets any bigger than that, we're going to have to ask for some more money.

Sherron: Right, right, we're going to need [crosstalk 00:23:47] and advertisers and all that.

Cornell: Becoming stars and stuff, we can't be having it. So yeah, so that is our first episode of the Inclusive Excellence Podcast. We really hope that you will join us twice a month to listen, that you also write in, you can email us at ieacademy@cornell.edu.

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Sherron: Yes.

Cornell: And send in your questions.

Sherron: Did you say IE dash academy?

Cornell: Did I say that? No, I said IE Academy. So ie-academy@cornell.edu. Let us know what topics you want us to cover, let us know what questions you have because we would love for this to be guided by the people who we're hoping to reach because that for us, I think feels so much more fruitful and so much more beneficial to the people that we're trying to reach.

Sherron: Absolutely. And make sure you tell two friends to tell two friends.

Cornell: Hello, yes, please do that.

Sherron: Please do that.

Cornell: Bring a friend, tap a neighbor and say, neighbor, I want you to listen to this podcast.

Sherron: Neighbor? This is some good podcasting.

Cornell: Sherron and Cornell are just so funny, and just so likable. But yeah, let us know. And so with that said, I'm Cornell your cohost, and this is-

Sherron: And I am Sherron, your cohost.

Cornell: Yes. And we will see you next time.

Sherron: We'll see you next time on the Inclusive Excellence Podcast.