

YOU CAN CREATE DEI IMPACT

Versiti Podcast: Season 2 - Episode 7 (Part 2)

Host: Edgar Daggett

Guest: Marc Hardy

INTRO CLIP

MARC: Talent is interchangeable. Talent comes in and goes; you can always find more talent. Right? But as far as ownership, that's not as fluid. It's harder to become an owner. There are more lifelong benefits to being an owner. Right? They've benefitted a lot from the talent of minority athletes and, you know it's really disgusting to me that a lot of the owners are still not as progressive as they should be. And I was really inspired by Colin's stance. Like this man, he sacrificed his whole career.

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EDGAR: For those that don't know, Marc Hardy has a book. We'll feature the link, but its called, "Can I Be Real?" How do you find time to write, to get that book out?

MARC: Yeah, man. So, thanks for bringing that up. It's available on my website as well as Amazon, but you know, it's... intentionality was huge for it. Right? A lot of people start books but may not finish.

EDGAR: Okay.

MARC: And so for me, it was all once I figured out. Okay. Because I spent a year trying to figure out how I could have some sort of positive impact on these issues that I feel strongly about. So once I was able to think of that, I wanted to ensure I was intentional about it to see it through. So that included having a designated day and time that, if I didn't write anything throughout the week, Saturday mornings, from nine to 12, those were dedicated writing times. So, if I'm ever busy, I know that Saturday is when I'll have time to write. And obviously I wanted to write more than that, more frequently than that. But that was the first step. And I think another step was having an accountability partner. So, I wasn't working with anyone else that was currently writing a book, but I

did identify my mom to like hold me accountable. Right? We lived three time zones away from each other because she was still in Indianapolis. But during our conversation, she would always bring it up. How's it book going? How's the book going there? And if I said, well I haven't wrote anything in about a week. Then she's like, okay, well, why? And it was coming from a genuine place of interest as opposed to like coming down on me about it. And she was like, well, what's blocking you? What's stopping it? And how can we maneuver past that? So those two things I think really helped me and honestly, I was very passionate at the time and I still am. But very, very passionate about what I was writing about. So that made it a little easier too. Like, I can't wait to talk about this subject, so that was something that really, really kept me going as well. And, I didn't want to just talk about things that frustrated me. I definitely wanted to share that, but it was important for me to also start brainstorming ways that people can come up with some sort of solution. So each chapter is followed up with brainstorming solution or brainstorming a list of how — whatever we were talking about in that topic — how we can kind of reach some sort of solutions from our point of view. So whether it's... there's a chapter on education, there's a chapter on relationships with the police. There's a chapter on the N word there, you know? So I wanted to make sure that I wasn't just venting, which is very important. So people can kind of get an understanding of where I'm coming from or why I may respond to things the way I do, but also okay, now that we know this is an issue, how do we kind of, how can I have a positive impact to you? If I can't solve it nationally, how can I solve it in my state, in my city, in my neighborhood, on my streets? Right?

EDGAR: Mm-hmm.

MARC: Because all of that is helpful. All of that is beneficial. And like we mentioned earlier, you never know who you inspire, who they may then inspire. So it can be like a domino effect. I hope that answers your question. [00:05:30]

EDGAR: No, no, it does! What I like about it, it's like a bunch of different subjects that you can pick and choose and learn and probably see like an opinion of yours; what your thoughts are on. So that, that's super interesting. I don't think I've... there's not that many books that are like that. Chapter one, if you wanna read about X item and be like, okay, I wanna understand a little bit about it and kind of see like a different side or a different viewpoint. So that's awesome. How long did it take you to complete?

MARC: So it's not a long book. It's 108 pages.

EDGAR: Okay.

MARC: It took me 14 months. It would've taken me about 12 but while I was writing it was... So I started in August of 2016. In November of 2016 is when Donald Trump was elected president. That kind of... I didn't know which way I wanted to take the book after that. So I spent a couple months really trying to figure out, okay, how do I continue this? Do I talk anything about this? Do I not? So that was kind of like a moment for me, where I had to step back and like reevaluate what I was doing. And ultimately, I was able to push through in that way, but yeah, it took me 14 months. And yeah, after that... I'm a self-published author. So after that, it was... that was the easy part. Just getting it uploaded to Amazon or what have you. And it was up for sale within a couple days. So. That was kind of my experience with that. It wasn't easy, but we got it done.

EDGAR: Awesome. Congrats. So...

MARC: Thanks, man.

EDGAR: You know, you got the book and then how did this transition to the nonprofit, you know? How does that work?

MARC: Well, when I was writing a book, I knew that I wanted it to be more than a book. I wanted it to be more so of a movement in which I am able to help people creatively think about how they can have an impact on issues. And so I created, along with my nonprofit co-founder Andrew Adeniyi who does this work as well. But, it kind of seamlessly transitioned into that. I wanted to definitely make it official in a way, so I weighed my options and kind of landed on taking the nonprofit route which was a lot of paperwork and a lot of crossing I's and dotting T's. But that's kind of where we went with it just wanting to put a little more power behind it and really, like I said make it more so of a movement; because I just want people to take a look within themselves and think, how can I have, a positive influence on this very important topic. So like for you and all the work you do around helping people give blood and that means a lot to you; and you found a way to kind of have a positive impact on it. It is gonna continue to grow to levels you never even thought, right? So I want to inspire people to kind of have that same approach. And we've got a couple workshops and things that we do. One is specifically called My Plan in which we walk people through building a tangible plan on how they can, like I said, have a positive impact. So, that's what we're all about. As well as, providing ways that people can give back and providing avenues in which people can give back and we can impact someone else. So I'll go ahead and transition into that, I guess. We have our annual fundraiser called NAP Spades Cup. It started in 2019 and ideally, we wanted to create a space in which people can come have a

good time and play cards or whatever, but it's for a good cause. Right? So we had a DJ, we had vendors of minority-owned and women-owned businesses. We had our trophy, we've got personalized playing cards. It was a really good time. We were able— that year, we were raising technology items to donate to students in underserved schools so that they can leverage for whether it's their homework or leveraging any entrepreneurial endeavors that they may wanna pursue. So we were able to raise like computer monitors, printers, computer mics, speakers, headphones, hard drives, those types of things. And we donated them to students in a local community here in Indianapolis. And it was great. This year, I've really tried to find a way to honor my mother through the organization because I like to say she was the very first supporter of "Can I Be Real?" even before I was. She passed away in 2018. But since then, I've tried to figure out ways to honor her. So we're gonna do it through NAP Spades Cup, and this year we're having it on Black Friday. So the day after Thanksgiving, but we're raising money for the Deborah Jean Film and TV Scholarship. So that's named after my mom who really, really just loved movies and enjoyed rewatching the same movies over and over. So that's our way of kind of giving back and honoring her. So we'll be awarding it to a Black or Brown high school graduating senior or college freshman or sophomore who is studying film, TV, media, anything within that. We've got a lofty goal of we wanna award \$10,000. So we've got a little ways to go, but we're gonna get there. And I'm excited for that and it's gonna be bigger and better this year. So I can't wait to be able to present a scholarship to a student. I'm really looking forward to that day, so we need all the help we can get and people can donate to the scholarship. They can purchase tickets to the event; they can register as a team, register as a vendor. All of that money goes towards the scholarship. Every bit, every little bit helps and it'll be a good time. And we'll see who can walk away with bragging rights as the NAP Spades champion. [00:13:26]

EDGAR: Definitely. No, and if you're in the Indianapolis region register as a vendor, register as your team. Get that championship going and it's for a good cause. So it's super awesome. It's awesome opportunity as well. You can also register to donate as well. So we'll have that link down below for all of you guys to take part of. So you're building this nonprofit, how long has this nonprofit been around?

MARC: So we started in 2018. And we received our 501-C3 status in 2020. So a few years, but you know. It was birthed out of me doing presentations and workshops and things like that, which I've been doing since 2017.

EDGAR: Okay.

MARC: So yeah, we're still young, but we've got a lot of impact we can still still have. So we're looking forward to that.

EDGAR: All right. And I was going through the website. So what are some key initiatives? You guys, you talk about bringing awareness.

MARC: Mm-hmm.

EDGAR: Some of the major key initiatives that you guys do that could be different than other nonprofits.

MARC: That's a good question. That's a good question. I think... well, one of our, like our main thing is we're different from other organizations who do DEI training and workshops and things like that because we spend more time around really developing a plan. Right? So we want people that we interact with to leave feeling like, okay, this is something I can actually implement right now as I leave their workshop. So I think that that's like the key initiative or goal that we approach anything with. And when I say we, I mean my co-founder and myself and board members — but that's probably the main thing that we wanna pursue in everything that we do. But as well as we wanna make sure that we are also giving the youth the tools that they need to create the society that they want to see. Right? So whether that is raising money for technology items or introducing them to diversity, equity and inclusion and what those terms mean and why they're... those terms are important to them and their peers and really get them thinking about ideas of inclusion and valuing everyone's voices and ensuring that different perspectives have a seat at the table to make decisions. Right? Even if it's the class president in their school, we just want to kind of ingrain some of these ideas into their heads. So that, the goal is when they are older, they are living in a much more welcoming and inclusive society than we are today. Because diversity, equity, and inclusion is more of a marathon and not a sprint. Right? If we had all of the answers, we wouldn't have any of these problems in our society. Right? [00:17:13]

EDGAR: Correct.

MARC: So nothing's gonna change overnight. So if we invest in our youth and giving them the tools to be more inclusive and accepting of other people I think that's where we really get the most bang for our buck for lack of a better term. Because you know, as adults, at times, we are settled in our views and our opinions. And it'll be a little harder to change in a fully developed mind. So, we still try that and we still work on that, but also investing in our youth. So anytime we're able to volunteer or get in front of youth or welcome volunteers

for our events, we do like to look to the youth first so that any interaction we're able to have with them, we're taking full advantage of.

EDGAR: No, that's awesome. And I also believe; I'm a big believer on youth. They're the future, they're the ones that are gonna be leading us in 10... 5, 10, 20 years. How do we impact them directly?

MARC: Exactly. I mean, cuz they get enough of the opposite already.

EDGAR: Yep. Yeah, exactly. And maybe it's a change of mindset. Maybe it's being like, listen, no matter where you were born; no matter how you're growing up, you can do whatever you like. You can be an athlete, you can be a scientist, some type of astronaut; you can join the business world and be comfortable being who you are, you know? And you've touched on that before. No matter what particular group you're in when you're older, are we gonna say you are comfortable? Are you comfortable in that space?

MARC: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

EDGAR: And are you free to be like... we're gonna get rid of the mindset being like, okay, maybe I can't be in business because I'll feel different or I won't feel included exactly. Or will it be I can just do whatever I want and I can do whatever I put my mind to and I can just— and I will be able to succeed in it?
[00:19:12]

MARC: Yeah, man, yeah. Representation is very key, and I'm seeing that firsthand now being in the banking industry. I can speak for myself growing up. I don't think I knew anyone in banking, not even on any level. Right?

EDGAR: Mm-hmm.

MARC: So I had no idea that there were avenues to pursue within it; whether it's accounting, whether it's HR, IT. And those are some areas that — or departments that — are transferable between industries. But, I never thought about banking having those same opportunities and sometimes that happens, and we may have all of the tools necessary to succeed in the position. But our youth just don't know about it. So when they're going through high school or college, may not be considering it. Right?

EDGAR: Correct.

MARC: Unfortunately that may lead to not pursuing careers that may be more beneficial financially for the person which directly leads to wealth and being able to pass wealth down. And so exposure is really, really key, man. So that's why whenever I can get in front of some youth and tell them my story and the things that I've seen and experienced; I'm taking full advantage of that.

EDGAR: No. And like how everybody should be. It's super important. You said it: you can't stop and it's not something you're gonna see success today, tomorrow. You're not gonna see that immediate success. You'll see it five years, 10 years down the line and be like...

MARC: Exactly.

EDGAR: Did I make an impact on that?

MARC: Yeah.

EDGAR: Now, so I was going through the website; well, to catch on the website the link's down below; a bunch of things that you guys tackle, but one that stood out for me was you attacked four big, like massively big organizations and it's through a newsletter. And for those that catch up on the podcast, are subscribed, they know I talk a little bit about this probably every single podcast: you wrote an article, "American professional sports teams suck at diversity and inclusion." [00:21:45]

MARC: Yeah.

EDGAR: That's big. That's a big title. That's it is headline title. Yeah. Four big—the professional sports, the big ones, MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL, which are probably the higher grossing ones.

MARC: Mm-hmm.

EDGAR: You put a big title on them. Can you tell us about that?

MARC: Yeah man. Yeah, I'm a big sports fan, for better and for worse. Yeah, especially being from Indi, with my Pacers and Colts. It's tough, but anyway, it probably stemmed from... not probably, it did stem from what Colin Kaepernick went through with the 49ers. And I was in the Bay area during that time where it was pretty big. You always thought about how pretty much all of the athletes are Black or minority individuals; but when it comes to the owners and the front office, a lot of times those are filled with white people and white men and

specifically. It just has a lot of correlations to being an owner versus being talent. Right? Talent is interchangeable. Talent comes in and goes; you can always find more talent. Right? But as far as ownership, that that's not as fluid. It's harder to become an owner. There are more lifelong benefits to being an owner. Right? More opportunities that come with being an owner and being in leadership, and our sports leagues have benefited... I can't even put a number on it, but... [00:23:53]

EDGAR: Mm-hmm.

MARC: You know, they've benefited a lot from the talent of minority athletes and for them to—

EDGAR: It's safe to say it's in the billions.

MARC: Safely, easily. And that may just be per year honestly. You know, it's really disgusting to me that a lot of the owners are still not as progressive as they should be — are still not as inclusive as they should be. I mean, every year or two, you're hearing about an owner who made remarks that are distasteful. It was just really ridiculous to me. So, I really work off inspiration, man. So anything I'm inspired by I'm going to pursue, or I'm gonna move on that. And I was really inspired by Collin's stance. Like this man, he sacrificed his whole career, and there are thoughts on different people have different thoughts on how he went about it and what would've been beneficial; or how he could have done better this way or that way. And everybody's entitled to their opinion, but for me, I'm all about how can you have an impact? Right? How can you yourself have an impact? So I applaud him for just even trying. Right? Just even doing something that wasn't common. And doing something that threatened his livelihood all because he saw it was an issue and he realized he had a platform. Was change made in a day? No, but there were positive things that came out of it. And I think positive things that will last for years to come. So yeah man, they gotta do better. They gotta do better. If I was in front of the commissioners right now, I'd tell 'em that. That's kind of where I stood with it. And there are so many different issues that need to be tackled, so many systems that need to be dismantled and rebuilt. Right? So it's... I can have an opinion on everything, but I tend to try to focus my energy and narrow it down as best I can so that I'm able to execute and actually make things happen as opposed to just venting about them and things like that. So yeah, so my focus is ensuring that people are able to formulate a tangible plan that they can implement tomorrow on whatever the topic. [00:27:00]

EDGAR: Definitely. What I will say a little defense on the sports team that there has been some change and some impact.

MARC: I'd agree.

EDGAR: And that, and that's something that we love, you know, to see like, so recently, excuse me, we were at the Tigers game here in Detroit. And as you mentioned before during Hispanic heritage month, they were highlighting Hispanic people in the community that have been involved, but also Hispanic players and saying like we're being... it's showing inclusiveness, how we're all working together and how we're making the world a little bit better.

MARC: Mm-hmm.

EDGAR: And that's all through the sports world and how baseball itself is combining with community leaders, and changing and impacting the youth and being created through the business side. NBA, I know I've seen do different celebrations for all of the cultural months, cultural celebrations, and it's something that we are seeing some type of change, which is huge progress. Maybe for three years ago, five, four years ago, where...

MARC: Exactly!

EDGAR: Yeah, none of these celebrations even to myself, I knew a couple of them, but I didn't know that all these existed that are now being put in the light and being celebrated and it's fun to see the response of people. It's one for the organization to put in front, but how are people gonna react? And specifically for certain sports and the reaction is phenomenal. People are celebrating, people are enjoying, especially when they play music. I think it's so— it's very funny when you play the music; you know the song, you have no idea what they're saying, but it's a great song and they're celebrating, they're enjoying it. It's fun. But you know, we're seeing that change. And if these massive organizations that are all around the US. I see the NFL is now spreading into having games in London. This year Serena Williams, one of the golds are retired. So people were out there watching her tournaments and it was more views, different types of people from different communities, different cultures were there. So we are seeing that change and that's going through all different types of organizations, other than sports as well. [00:29:14]

MARC: Yeah. Yeah. And I definitely agree with that. And who's to say what inspired some of those changes, right? Because it could have been Colin Kaepernick doing what he did; I'm sure inspired something. Maybe if it wasn't

necessarily tangible in the moment or it was... Who knows where we would be, if he hadn't have done what he'd done or people in other leagues hadn't stood up or used their voice. So I'm always in support of that. Like I know the NFL, there's much more — not much more — but there are women coaches within organizations. I know there's at least a few, so yeah. Any progress is good progress.

EDGAR: Not only that, I believe here at the University of Michigan, we have our very first coach that's a woman on the field: a diverse woman who's on the field.

MARC: Nice.

EDGAR: Very first one. And it's something inspiring that people are looking at in the WNBA; they have their own campaign going on showing that there's actually proof that women who are involved in sports — or any type of direction lead — meaning like a group at school are actually more... actually lead to higher roles in business or any type of organization in the future. So we're seeing that response and we're seeing that outcomes already today. We're seeing a lot of women heads, be head of organizations. I believe the big one here in Detroit is GM, who's... the CEO is a woman who's been leading and is changing the way vehicles are being made. You know, we're going all electric. So she's leading the change and making all this, doing all this great work. So, yeah.

MARC: Yeah man, it's amazing. And honestly, let's be real here: a lot of times women are smarter than us, so... especially Black women, they are far more educated. Oftentimes. So it's like, why wouldn't we want to learn from them and follow under their leadership? That's just how I feel about it. Like...

EDGAR: Yeah. Some of the great leaders around me, all women, they are intelligent and I learn and pick their brains out and I try to get all the ideas that they have cuz they have not only the talent, but they're just like naturally just gifted there. They think on command and are very creative in a way. [00:32:00]

MARC: Exactly. Exactly. We need that as a society, so

EDGAR: Ah right. We feed off each other. Exactly.

MARC: Exactly.

EDGAR: So, to start wrapping up, Marc, so where do you see yourself in a couple years? Five years, years, 10 years. What do you wanna see different whether it's in your life or in the community around you?

MARC: Yeah. Great question, first off. I'll say for me specifically, I'm really focused on growing in my current role professionally, but also growing Can I Be Real Inc. to even bigger platforms? So I think one thing for me is I want to continue to learn as much as I can within the DEI space. Even though I have been in it for a number of years now, there's always more that I can learn. So just my own professional development. So I can be the best person I can in my professional role and for my nonprofit. I'd say here, I do want to grow our diversity, equity, and inclusion department here with my current company to the point where... They're— we're very early on in our DEI journey here. So, I wanna ensure that as we grow, we can bring on more people who can be even more focused in different areas of DE+I, because it's very vast. And it's a lot for one person. So I want to be able to be in a position to mentor people professionally and within the DEI space. So really, I wanna be seen as a thought leader in this space. So that will only come with me building up my knowledge. I'm looking to join some diverse board of directors to just have a look inside different industries and having an impact in that way. So that's for me. I think within our society, both locally and nationally, I just want to see more... it feels like we've been taking steps back at times. Which is unfortunate. So I wanna make sure that we, as a society, are more inclusive and open to new ideas. So locally, that means partnering with other organizations within the city; partnering with different companies within the city to — whether it's deliver workshops or presentations — but also just strategize around how we can have the biggest impact possible. It includes meeting and having conversations like this with people just like you, man, so that one) I can learn, but also potentially be an inspiration for other people. So, and I think last, but not least I've got some ideas around another book. [00:35:33]

EDGAR: Okay.

MARC: So I've been holding off on that process for some years now. People will always ask, when's the next one? When's the next one? So I've got some ideas, so I'd like to get started on one within the next couple years.

EDGAR: That's super awesome. And that's super exciting to hear and to see, and we can't wait to see what you do. So...

MARC: I appreciate that, man.

EDGAR: Marc, it's been a pleasure and we can't thank you enough for being on the show. You have an awesome, inspiring creative... We're, again, we're super excited to see what you do now in the future and possibly a new book. So we'll stay tuned and when it comes out. But once again, thank you so much.

MARC: I appreciate you too, Edgar. And if anyone again is interested in donating to the Deborah Jean Film and TV scholarship, please, please do so. We are very thankful for every, every cent. So I hope that I was able to inspire somebody today. Edgar, you definitely inspired me, man. I definitely have a newfound urgency around ensuring people are more open to donating blood. I think that's an area that I can kind of pursue. Right? And thinking what can I do? And it could be as simple as working to change the stigma around things like that. So now that I'm a little more knowledgeable I can hopefully impact somebody or inspire somebody to give some blood, cuz we need it.

EDGAR: All right, Marc. Final question. How are you standing out from the inside?

MARC: I love that question first off. But I'd say for me, it's harnessing my emotions for a greater cause, a productive cause. Right? So the next time there's... anytime there's a tragedy in our society whether it be the Dylann Roof killing, whether it's George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, anything that really gets me angry or brings out any sort of emotion. I'm now able to harness that energy into putting it into something productive that can lead to a potential solution. I think that's what helps me stand out, and that's not an easy thing. For many people who may see someone who looks like them be murdered on camera. But that's my way of having an impact is harnessing that those emotions and that energy into, okay what can I do? So I want everyone out there to think about when that happens, what can I do? What can I do? Cause you can do something. We all can do something. [00:38:54]

EDGAR: Definitely agree. Find new ways to voice your opinion, be vocal. But once again, Marc, it's been a pleasure. Thank you guys all. Check out the links below about his book. Check it out, read it, enjoy it. Also the NAP Spades Cup tournament. Find ways to get involved. Thank you all the viewers and listeners, it has been a pleasure.

MARC: Thank you, Edgar. Keep doing great work.

EDGAR: As well. Thank you guys all. Check out the links below about his book. Check it out, read it, enjoy it. Also the NAP Spades Cup tournament. Find ways to get involved. Thank you all the viewers and listeners, it has been a

pleasure. It's been a great opportunity to have Marc involved on the Stand Out from the Inside podcast. I wanna remind you all to like, follow, subscribe. Once again I'm your host, Edgar Daggett. And I want to ask you all one thing before you go: how do you stand out from the inside? See you all in the next episode.