

Speaker 1 ([00:01](#)):

Race relations is something that we've never really come to terms with. We've gotten along for awhile. And then, you know, we have incidences that we all can trace in which you see the other side of, but we tend to cover up. And in my world is the OJ Simpson trial. And that's the Rodney King, those moments where you can see how people really feel on protect the issues. And so given everything that was going on with the recent shooting, which the first article that I did was intended to, in some ways represent a point of view. And in particularly with the Michael Brown situation, the narrative started to shift away from, was it right to kill this young man to look what he was doing before this happened? And I didn't want the narrative to shift all of a sudden to the stereotypical response that comes quite frankly, in these incidents as whether they're true or not.

Speaker 1 ([01:02](#)):

There's an always an impression. And so I'm simply in some ways using my voice to say in hopefully a constructive way. Let me tell you how I'm treated in my C-suite. Uh, let me tell you how people treat me, how people cater to me at times how people honor me. And then let me tell you what it's like when I get out of my suit and tie, and just happened to put on a pair of jeans and literally write down from the 27th floor of my suite to the streets. And then let me tell you, the world that I live, the American heart associations mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer healthier lives and our pursuit of that mission. We're having some amazing conversations along the way. Welcome to the special edition series on equity, honoring the life leadership and legacy of Bernard J Tyson. These are the stories of the relentless.

Speaker 2 ([02:04](#)):

Imagine working all of your life to achieve and to fulfill your purpose. Imagine that you accomplish those goals and dreams of becoming a global leader for health inequity. Then imagine that you're walking down the street or better yet maybe you're shopping or driving in a vehicle that you worked for. And that others consider a nice car, but suddenly you're stopped antagonized, possibly harassed, maybe frisked arrested or even worse. This is called racial profiling. Imagine the indignity, someone like Bernard J Tyson, the CEO of a \$22 billion organization must have felt when after doing all of the things that we would say are the right things to live and achieve the American dream in many people's eyes, still to some people you're not enough or your question because you're a black man in America, these weekly, and sometimes daily challenges to your sense of safety and your sense of self.

Speaker 2 ([03:04](#)):

Hi, I'm Tanya Odom. I'm an American heart association volunteer. My day job is to work in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion globally. And I'm again, honored to continue to work on this podcast. And today our fifth episode is called how inequity impacts dignity of life. You'll hear from three friends and colleagues of Bernard Tyson who know this story all too well. Ken McNeely president of at T and T West dr. Ron Coleman, senior vice president and chief equity inclusion and diversity officer for Kaiser Permanente and a person who had a long standing professional and personal relationship with Bernard extending over 25 years. And finally, Lloyd Dean CEO of dignity health Lloyd was also Bernard Tyson's best friend dr. Copeland. Welcome. Can you please tell me a little bit about how you and Bernard Tyson worked together and maybe a special memory of him that you would like to share?

Speaker 3 ([04:10](#)):

I met Bernard, uh, in his professional capacity at Kaiser Permanente, uh, when I was in our Ohio market, uh, as a practicing general surgeon and, uh, eventually, uh, for 15 years as the executive medical director overseeing our clinical care operations. Uh, and so I first met Bernard in that capacity and what we learned through our dialogue and discussion about the mission and business of Kaiser Permanente is that we had a lot of common points. One was the fact that we were both black men working in the corporate environment. Uh, in this case in healthcare at Kaiser Permanente, we both shared a deep passion for equity inclusion and diversity issues kind of lost any commitment to social justice. Um, we both were men of faith and we both, uh, were committed to improving the lives of, of, uh, the communities that we represented and serve. The fun thing is that we also discovered we had lots of other things in common, like our love of music.

Speaker 3 ([05:08](#)):

And, uh, that was always a point of reference. Uh, we both were very, very competitive, uh, with interest in sports and so on. So I think from the standpoint of a fond memory, one thing I would share is that because of our love of music after I became the senior vice president for equity inclusion, diversity and move from Ohio to our Oakland office. And that was seven years ago when I had my one-on-one meetings with Bernard, the norm was usually that some music wouldn't be playing and the first five or 10 minutes of our meeting was talking about the latest music, what he was listening to, what I was listening to. And so our, our shared love of music, all kinds of gospel, hip hop, jazz, and so on was, was always part of the conversations. And, uh, to make that, you know, again from an a personal basis every year at Kaiser Permanente, we have our national equity inclusion and diversity conference.

Speaker 3 ([06:03](#)):

Uh, and it's been going on for 43 consecutive years in a highlight of that conference every year is our sitting CEO giving a keynote about our aspirations and our commitment to the work of equity, inclusion, and diversity. And so Bernard became legendary during the seven years that he had the opportunity to keynote that particular conference. Uh, and he would always come on with some particular theme music, Gladys Knight, Lo Wayne, whatever he was in the mood for and make the message of the song or the music relevant to the comments you'd want to make. Uh, but when folks saw that side of him, rather than the traditional business side of a CEO, they were always amused and, and animated by his level of, uh, keeping it real and recognizing that he was down there and saw the world through the same lens that they saw the world. So that was, uh, another element of the music theme that was very popular in gay people, a glimpse at another side of an hour.

Speaker 2 ([06:57](#)):

That's great. What wonderful memories, there's a common theme of music that we've heard through several of these podcasts. I almost wonder if we should have a playlist associated with some of the songs that Bernard Tyson liked or that you all think about when you think of him, dr. Copeland, in your role as chief equity, inclusion and diversity officer in the healthcare industry, it would be interesting to hear from you, what are some of the workforce challenges around diversity, equity and inclusion that might be unique to the healthcare industry? And then the second part of the question is it would be really helpful for you to share some possibly action-driven conversations that you and Bernard Tyson had that really looked to make significant change.

Speaker 3 ([07:44](#)):

Sure. Well, I think first and foremost, we should recognize that, you know, healthcare as a, as an industry and institution mainstream in the United States of America was formed, uh, during the period where issues of racial discrimination and segregation were the norm. And so healthcare, as, as evolved as an industry has had challenges of moving beyond some of the legacy impact of those times and their policies and their practices and so forth. So Kaiser Permanente is part of the healthcare industry, but a unique part of our history has been a 75 year commitment to taking on the issues of racial segregation, developing a workforce that is as diverse in its makeup, as the communities we serve, and then an ongoing journey that continues today to understand how we build more inclusive and psychologically safe work environments and connect with our communities in a way that broadens the notion of what health is.

Speaker 3 ([08:40](#)):

So that as a starting point, but I think, uh, in terms of the challenges that healthcare mainstream has, we still suffer from inadequate, uh, representation of communities that we serve, uh, and traditional groups that are underrepresented, both in leadership, on boards of directors, and then the work stream of physicians, nurses, and other health professionals. I think that characterizes as the industry as a whole today because of the recent, uh, unrest, there has been an increased focus on awareness in this space, but in terms of making a measurable difference in that space, still places to go and Kaiser Permanente because of his longstanding commitment and certainly under Bernard's leadership continued to make big strides and steps in improving our representation on all levels. Our board of directors is, and has been for a long time, one of the most diverse boards, uh, on multiple dimensions, uh, and not only in healthcare, but in corporate America in general.

Speaker 3 ([09:35](#)):

And Bernard was very intentional and focused on how do we make sure it's C-suite leadership and management of leadership increasingly reflects the diverse makeup of the communities we serve. And a lot of progress was made in that space, but we still have progress to go so key initiatives to help us along that way. One that we defined as a workforce equity reviews, we looked at the entire life cycle of an employee in our organization and meet with each senior leader on an annual basis to look at what their workforce from the top to the bottom looks like and help them see opportunities, whether in talent, acquisition, talent, and leadership development, uh, where there opportunities to improve representation, uh, and having a formalized structure strategy for that. Uh, we also under Bernard's leadership got approval for a enterprise wide for our hospitals, for our business managers, for our physicians and clinicians, a program-wide approach to, uh, mitigating bias, uh, at all levels, uh, through a partnership with a, uh, neuro leadership Institute to support that effort.

Speaker 3 ([10:41](#)):

And that's something that is going to be done across the entire enterprise over the next two to three years, I'll be launched before the end of this year. Uh, and then obviously Bernard recognized the importance of supplier diversity and economic development in our community. So partnering with small business, uh, owned by minority, uh, leaders and owners to make sure that they had their fair share of our business contracts, our subcontracts and contracts for supplies of all types, so that they became an economic engines within their respective communities. And as a result of their ability to thrive and grow, they were able to offer jobs and also make investments in their local communities to start a virtuous economic cycle as well. And, uh, because of his pioneering work in that space and our external benchmarking to put our results and our programs out for evaluation by third-party, uh, assessors, and one lots of recognition and awards and the billion dollar round for our benchmarking and diversity inc

becoming a and their hall of fame and so forth. So it was a Testament to his leadership. His engagement is a desire and an ability to drive results in our organization, aligned with our mission and in our values and have a tested

Speaker 4 ([11:54](#)):

Outside the doors to see how others rank it compared to what other folks were doing. But I'd always made a point. I don't want to just lead in healthcare. I want to lead across the country so that I have a voice and can influence and truly the corporate environment, whether it's the healthcare industry or not.

Speaker 2 ([12:10](#)):

So mr. Dean, I'm going to ask you for some and ask the rest of, um, all of you to really respond to, to this particular question. So I want us to talk a little bit more specifically about race and racism, and to dig a little bit more deeply, particularly when we're talking about this notion of dignity and inequity. I like many read the posts that Bernard Tyson wrote about being a black man in corporate America. I vividly remember being struck by his courage and knowing that him being so honest would in fact make an impact. I mean, I think when you do this work and you know, that people with power and influence when they share their stories, when they share their positions or their opinions, we know people listen. So it wasn't just his passion, but it was also that we know that oftentimes people do not name, race, and racism. They don't name racial profiling often as a person who is a leader of many different people. But I feel like mr. Tyson's courage came through in that statement. So I'd be curious, all of you as black men in corporate America, if you could share a little bit about some of the conversations you all had with Bernard Tyson about race, about racism, about being a person of color and specifically a black man in corporate America. So mr. Dean, we'll start with you.

Speaker 4 ([13:29](#)):

Yeah, but in art and I had lots of conversations about race, uh, obviously as to, uh, black men and, and to African-American men, we would always talk about that regardless of our positions, regardless of these gifts and the opportunities that we had, uh, that we had a responsibility to reach back and to help others. And as he would say to kick open the doors for equal access, regardless of race, uh, we would have intimate conversations about racial injustices that we personally experienced, uh, that, you know, Bernard and I both had a passion for close. Uh, he, uh, loved, uh, watches. He loved to go shopping and we would talk about people staring at us and looking at us like, you know, who are these people? What, you know, you don't do you really belong? Can you afford to be in this, uh, store? We would laugh because, um, weekends, you know, we would come out of the suits and, uh, we both had a passion for cars, something new would come out and we'd go to dealerships to shop.

Speaker 4 ([14:55](#)):

And just to, to look because we had this fascination and how, you know, we'd be hanging out there for a while before people would even, uh, salespeople would even approach us. And we would, we would talk about how, you know, when we'd be traveling and we'd get to somewhere a hotel or we'd get to the airport, waiting for the valet to bring back our rides as we would call it. And then I, and our cars and people would walk up to us and say, Hey, can you tell me I need to get my car quicker? You know, like we were the ballet. And we would say, you know, even the way we were dressed, you know, the profile and, and the, uh, assumptions, but most importantly, we would talk about the fact that not only do we want to try to be an example, but that we have this responsibility and an accountability to call out

racism when we see it and particularly to call it out, as it relates to health and healthcare, uh, in this country.

Speaker 4 ([16:05](#)):

And, uh, Bernard was proud to be an African-American man. He was proud of, uh, what he had accomplished, but most importantly, he was proud of the platform that he had, uh, to help others. And he took it seriously. And there were times where, uh, even in the positions and the committees that we would serve on and, uh, that we would talk on a weekends and be sad about how that as hard as we tried and as professionally, as we would try to carry ourselves, uh, that we were still confronted with and still thought of, uh, in many experiences, what we, as, uh, African-American men talk to our sons or daughters about and about being stopped, just to check out if, you know, we should be where we, where we were. But I think, uh, one of the takeaways and one of the things that should never be forgotten about Bernard Tyson is that he was of a heart and have a voice that race would never define him or limit him. So when Bernard was talking about the issue of being a black man in America,

Speaker 3 ([17:50](#)):

I think you have to start that conversation that he did with recognizing that corporate America is not segregated from America culture and history in general. In fact, it is a core part of that. So the challenges of, of oppression and discrimination bias that we all experienced in one form or another, in our day-to-day personal living, it is evident in the corporate environments as well, whether you're talking about finance, health, manufacturing, whatever the industry is. And so he also understood that, uh, because of history related to slavery and everything that's occurred since that the image of black men in our country is a damaged image based on fear. And it still resides in the American psyche, uh, today. Uh, and so being aware of that, and then taking on the issues of how do you combat that in the pursuit of your career aspirations and your ability to grow and contribute at the highest levels.

Speaker 3 ([18:50](#)):

And so these stereotypes really prey on people's fears, uh, and that leads to some of the behaviors that we witness, both things that are said, and more importantly, things that are done in terms of denying people, opportunity to be hired for a job or to advance into leadership roles and so forth. So Bernard was always very clear and in that article and in his day-to-day leadership style, never hesitated to demonstrate a boldness and calling those things out. So there's orientation to how you navigate corporate America is one you have to make sure as it relates to your dignity, that you are a believer and practitioner of self-love. And it reminds me of something that Frederick Douglass talked about, that the soul that is within me, no man can degrade that, that self-love and an understanding of who you are from a root and cultural standpoint has to be front and center because that's, that's where you start the journey. And then you have to be bold and courageous enough to call out injustice, whether it's micro or macro in the way you experienced it, or seeing others, uh, and demonstrate that you're a champion, uh, committed to take those issues on. So that's what he practiced and led. And more importantly, role modeled on a daily basis, refusing to allow his dignity to be destroyed or insulted or diminished based on other people's ignorance, bias, or misunderstanding

Speaker 5 ([20:16](#)):

Ken McNeely. Yeah. We certainly had conversations about being a black male in corporate America. You know, we, we were both raising funds as well and had discussions about the talk. The talk is the, unfortunately the conversation that many black parents have with, particularly with their black sons,

about how to engage law enforcement and how law enforcement will likely treat them and how they have to be careful about, about what they need to do and comport themselves when they're stopped by law enforcement, you know, simple things like, uh, ensuring that your hands are seeing all the time when, you know, if you're in your car and, uh, you ask you say yes, sir. And, uh, you make sure that, uh, there's no sudden Mo movements as the police stop you, uh, or even walking in your, in your neighborhood. I mean, you know, we talked about this often, uh, that we talked about the hoodie privilege, that some in our community have the privilege of being able to wear a hoodie whenever they want, and actually put the hood up on their heads and our conversations with our boys about having to look a certain way to ensure that people don't fear you.

Speaker 5 ([21:33](#)):

And the reality that even as a corporate executive, in some of the largest corporations in America, we still have that stigma. We still have that obligation. We still have that fear. It doesn't leave you, it doesn't dissipate just because you move up. The corporate ranks that when you're not within the trappings of corporate America, when you leave your office, when you leave the comforts that these organizations sometimes put on us, we are no different than any person of color African-American in our community, walking the streets. And I think that gives you a profound understanding and connectedness with your community. You may physically leave your community, but your community never leaves you. You're always part of that. And I think that that weighs on black executives, but in a positive way. And I think that it keeps us grounded and Bernard, and I would talk about that experience of grounded-ness and help and use that energy to help inform the decisions that we made and could make to change our communities. Um, so turning it really into a positive

Speaker 2 ([22:54](#)):

Before we end this podcast. Is there anything, any of you would like to add that maybe we haven't yet spoken about in terms of your memories of Bernard Tyson,

Speaker 5 ([23:03](#)):

Um, from the experiences that I've shared with Bernard it's given me not only the motivation, but the enthusiasm and the passion to move forward and champion diversity and inclusion, uh, not only within our company, but also utilizing the vast resources of our company to impact policy changes in America that can change larger communities.

Speaker 2 ([23:28](#)):

So as you all know, the title of this podcast is stories of the relentless. Can you share your thoughts about this sort of concept of being relentless and Bernard Tyson being relentless, specifically as it relates to fighting for dignity? Of course, he was a black man

Speaker 4 ([23:46](#)):

And a proud black brand, and that, you know, he experienced and dealt with and could see and feel, uh, the racism that, uh, many of us continue to deal with, but he would always say, they're never going to defeat me. And they're never going to define who I am and I will never, ever surrender. And in his life up to the last breath in his body, he never ever surrender. I want to thank all of you for your perspective, for sharing your personal thoughts about your obligations and really what necessitates change and how you've taken that responsibility. Very seriously.

Speaker 1 ([24:39](#)):

I used to argue early on that it was about equality that everybody has to be treated equally. And I later discovered that's not the right framework. That's not the right narrative is about equity. Everybody gets what they need to get the same outcome. Thanks for being a part of the American heart associations, relentless stories. Learn more about the Bernard J Tyson impact fund@heart.org Ford slash BJT impact fund. And if you enjoyed what you just heard, please press share, tell a friend and leave us a review. Your next episode is on the way stay tuned. As we discuss Bernard's impact on how equity impacts heart health.