**The Importance of Speaking Up at Work**

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I was out to dinner with a client and was sitting at dinner talking with one of the CEO's employees, and the CEO was on my left, and she was explaining that she was from Persia. That was where her family was from. And I said, so, is Persia is that modern day Saudi Arabia? She said, no. Of course, it's Iran. And I thought that was interesting, and I ate my food, and everything was just kind of quiet, and it wasn't but maybe a minute or two later that the CEO, my client, popped off with some remark. A very derogatory about people from Iran and from the Middle East. And he didn't realize what he had said, but she certainly did, and it cast a bit of a cloud over the dinner, as you can imagine. And she wasn't able to eat because of what he had said. And the CEO kept going, you know, entertained and everything. And I watched this scene unfold.

But here's the real here's the real tragedy in this story. The tragedy is that I didn't say anything. I had been hired as a leadership consultant, and that was what I was going to be doing the next day, and I sat silent because I didn't want to upset my client, because I didn't want to confront him with what he had just said, because I wasn't exactly sure how to approach that conversation. But I'm going to tell you, I wish I had I wish I had spoken up, and I regret my silence.

The next day in the workshop, the CEO, actually, he kind of opened with an apology, with sort of I didn't realize what I was saying, and then I said some things that were hurtful and that were way out of line, I apologize. And he apologized personally to her for his remarks, so he was able to walk it back. But that didn't didn't change the fact that I sat there tight lipped because I didn't want to upset anybody, because I didn't want to say anything, because I didn't feel like it was my place. I wonder, when is it our place to speak up and to speak out against bigotry and racism?

If leadership is important to you and it's important to me, does leadership mean drawing lines and racial boundaries for your team? Is that the way to foster teamwork, collaboration, to capture the hearts and minds of your employees, the people that you care about, the people upon whom your success depends? Are those kinds of distinctions and separations useful? They're hurtful. They are contrary to leadership. They are contrary to leadership language. They are contrary to the kind of results that you can create via a cohesive organization. And I made up my mind that very day that I would never, never stand silent in the face of that kind of bigotry.

Again, there's always room for a dialog. There's always room for a conversation that says, hey, that's too far. And bringing a fresh perspective to someone's attention isn't about upsetting the apple cart. It's about helping to see things in a new way. And its that new perspective that is the antidote for racism, for the kind of bigotry that we see all too often.

Change the conversation. It's time to stand up. It's time to speak out. It's time for a new kind of dialog, a dialog that connects us, not that separates us. It's time to look beyond the old ideas of racism and bigotry and see people for who they are, see people as individuals, see what's inside, not just on the outside, the way that a person's dressed or the way that they worship, or who they choose to spend their time with. Those things don't define who we are as people on a human level, and that's the level that really matters. My name is Chris Westmore, thanks so much for watching this video.

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