

Climate and Culture is the Backbone of a Successful School Year. A conversation with our core team and Diversity and Equity Consultant Dr. Jay Marks

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Jay Marks, Dr. Terrance Scott, Vonetta Clark-Tooles, Marvin Franklin

Marvin Franklin 00:27

Hello educators. My name is Marvin Franklin, and welcome to Getting to the Core, a Wayne RESA podcast. In today's episode, Vonetta Clark-Tooles, one of our education improvement consultants, as well as Dr. Terrance Scott, a climate and culture consultant here at Wayne RESA, had the pleasure and honor of speaking with Dr. Jay Marks. Dr. Marks is a world renowned educator, and he's been in the field since '91. He's worked in both Detroit Public Schools, Southfield Public Schools. He worked at Oakland ISD as the diversity and equity consultant. He's currently doing a lot of the same work as the independent contractor. His work focuses on anti-racism, social justice, cultural proficiency, courageous conversations about race, culturally responsive teaching, teaching black boys and student engagement. We have the pleasure and honor of talking with him, and we're also going to speak with him about the wonderful life and work of Dr. Ginni Winters. Ladies and gentlemen, you're in for a treat today. How are you today?

Dr. Jay B. Marks 01:57

Marvin, I'm blessed, brother, thank you, and I'm I'm blessed to have this opportunity to be in community with the three of you all. Um, throughout my career, I've had a I've been blessed and had many great opportunities to be in partnerships with my friends, family and colleagues from Wayne County, and I'm just grateful to have this opportunity to spend little time in community with the three of you all this afternoon. So thank you for inviting me to engage in this conversation with you all this evening. I'm humbled.

Dr. Terrance Scott 02:27

Dr marks, I'm sure you know this. I said this to your face. I don't have no problem sending publicly, but coming into this work, I feel that it's important to give honor and respect to giants who do this work, who have been doing this work for a long, long time. And So I first want to both give you your flowers and thanks for both the work that you continue to do and the legacy that you have across the state of Michigan, really. But also, just to ask about, I want to give an ode to Queen Ginni Winters. She brought me on. I was her child prodigy. She was, she raised up into this work and passed it on to me. And so when we would talk about the work, she would express that she, you know, if there's any shoes to fill, there's anybody in this work we need to emulate this style. After is Dr. Jay Marks. And so it's about the honor to have you here. And just in remembrance of Ginni, I was letting she talk a little about, a little bit about her legacy, what she meant to you, and acknowledgement, and just a conversation about common and culture with with Ginni.

Dr. Jay B. Marks 03:51

Yeah, you know Ginni. And thank you for those kind words. Dr. Scott, I'm humbled again, bro, that that means a lot. I as you were talking and saying such kind and beautiful words. I was like, Well, who, who is he talking about? I want to meet this. I want to meet this brother. Who is that I I'm almost, you know, feel compelled to just go ahead. We we can end, we can end it now. But you know, Ginni, Ginni, that's my sister, Queen elder. You know, those are words that I use to describe Ginni. So richly blessed, like all of us right, to have been touched by her presence, by her life and her legacy. I can't remember when I met Ginni or the official capacity in which we met, but many years ago during my when I was at Oakland schools and she was at Wayne RESA, you know, we started collaborating and talking about the work that we were doing. And I remember she and my other sister, friend, Dr, Rosin Shahid, would come out to some of the things that we were doing in Oakland County and and check us out, and we will have conversations about you. You know the work that we do, and how do we support each other and sharing resources. And you know what you all know, whenever you were in the presence of Ginni Winters, you in the presence of of greatness, of wisdom, of of someone just you know, to me, a Herculean fashion as it relates to just her presence, and not in a way that was intimidating and all, but one that was inviting, inclusive, and just wrapped, wrapped in deep love, right, that everlasting love, that agape love, and that's how Ginni moved through the world. And so, you know, my heart, like the hearts of so many, was broken at the hearing of her passing. But I know that God needed her up there to do some of the work. You know, to continue to do some work that he's doing, and to watch over us and move us and shake us. And we laying in that bed, like, I don't want to get up today. And Ginni, like, Nah, I know you don't want to get up, but I need you up there. I need you out there in these communities. And not only do I need you, but these babies need you, you know. And so you know whenever you know. And she and I, I'll say this last thing. And because I could talk about Ginni this whole podcast, I know we all could. The last time we had an opportunity to work together, there was an issue one of communities there in Wayne County, and I was contacted to provide some support. And I said, Well, you know, I want to do this with my sister. And so I contacted Ginni, and then we came together with the superintendent and the community, and we had an opportunity to facilitate some work in this particular community. And this is interesting, because we sat right across from each other as we were facilitating this huge robust conversation for this particular community, and not thinking, you know, I didn't know at the time I was still, was, you know, I was still with Oakland schools, and she was still with William ..., but that would be the last time that, not only we work together, but I believe that was last

time I saw Ginni, although we talked on the phone. So I'm just so grateful to have had her in my life. And sometimes she'll call me for stuff, and she start talking, and I'm the one getting so, you know, you keep Ginni on the phone a little longer, you know, and she because she's so humble, you know? She said, Well, what you think about this? And then I said, share my little two cents. And then here she come, put out a whole dollar, you know, just because she's got so much wisdom, I was like, man, so I miss that in her I miss her voice, I miss her wisdom. I miss her passion, her compassion. I miss her love, the way that she cared, the love of our humanity, again, man, it's just that's something worth it, that's that's noteworthy, and something worthy of all of us, you know, just taking a little bit of that and adding that to, you know, the work that we do, and we all could just carry a little bit of Ginni with us, because she had, she poured out enough, you know, she left a legacy that was remarkable, and want to be again, one for all of us to envy, and not just envy, because she she did in such a way that we all can, could, kind of can't step in those shoes, but to kind of look at those shoes and say, Well, how can I continue this walk for, for such a hero in this work? So yeah, that and again, and kudos to you all for, for, for the ways in which you, you are showing love for Ginni in this moment and just honoring her life and her legacy and her work.

Vonetta Clark-Tooles 08:50

Well a little bit, actually, quite a bit of our conversation is going to kind of center around Ginni, and we're going to use the equity thread, right? So, so I've got, I've got 3e as it relates to Ginni. Equity, obviously, number one, excellence would be number two. And then Dr. Marks to your point, right? That we cannot feel those shoes, but we can certainly emulate the work that she did and the way that she carried herself, as we think about Ginni, and all that she contributed to this climate and culture, this equity, work that we find ourselves situated in today, as we advocate for students and families and Teachers and and leaders. I want to ask you, Dr marks, about an aspect of your philosophy around radical love, right? You talked about Ginni's love, but I want to ask you specifically, what suggestions do you have? I'm jumping way in the deep end, right off the RIP. What suggests. Questions do you have, not just for educators, but also for children, for students and families to to live, to live out this radical love, not in a way that is is pompous or out of reach, but that is practical and intentional in our daily lives.

Dr. Jay B. Marks 10:26

Doctor Clark, thank you for that question.

Vonetta Clark-Tooles 10:28

Not yet. I'm working on it, I'm working on it.

Dr. Jay B. Marks 10:31

You working on it. Well, we can still name it, right?,

Vonetta Clark-Tooles 10:36

We call those things that be not as though they already were. Absolutely.

Dr. Jay B. Marks 10:40

Amen, amen. When I was quite, you know, I'm a digress for just for a moment, When I was working on my Ph.D... I finished in 2005, so quite some time ago. But when I was working on my doctorate, and,

you know, trying to finish, and, you know, running up against the obstacles that you do, and getting feeling defeated, and all of the exhausted and tired and ask myself, why am I doing this? I would quietly say to myself, I would quietly call myself Dr. Marks, in my own little space, I would call myself Dr. Marks, you know, and that did something to me and for me, to help me, just, you know, persevere through those obstacles and those challenges and give me that necessary energy to do so, so, so hopefully you do, you know, I say that to you, to give that to you. You know those moments where you just call this, just just call that the call that thing, what it is and what it's about to be.

Vonetta Clark-Tooles 11:29

I receive it.

Dr. Jay B. Marks 11:31

So, you know, another one of my heroes, James Baldwin, you are probably, I know you probably none of you are very familiar with this quote, and certainly I use it often. James Baldwin, one of my heroes, he says, "If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things that you cannot see," right? "If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you cannot see." And that's that love I talked about earlier that Ginni carried with her her, and it's a love that I have for our humanity. And I believe that to your point, and I think your question...Help me out again with your questions, just so I can make sure I'm targeted with my response Vonetta.

Vonetta Clark-Tooles 12:09

Absolutely. So I know that you talk about radical love, When you give talks and speeches, I'm asking you, what are some practical ways that that students, that parents, that families, that educators, can really live into what it looks like to be radically loving in an age where there's so much divisiveness and just sometimes foolishness abounding, but particularly in educational spaces. Thank you for that.

Dr. Jay B. Marks 12:39

So for me, and we know how to do this, right? We have our love. First of all, I think we have to love each other enough to be honest about some things, right, without blame, shame or guilt, but to be honest about some things, but be honest about our history, to be honest about our privileges, to be honest about ways in which some of us are able to move through this world while others are not able to move through this world. That is no fault of any of us, right? These things, these systems, these patterns and routines, were put in place far beyond our far beyond our before our existence. But I think that just in a practical sense, in a practical manner. So I'm gonna give you an analogy. I'm gonna tell a story, and I hope, I hope it sticks here, and not because of you your understanding, but because of the way I'm gonna tell it. In cultural proficiency work, there's a card, and one of the tools of cultural proficiency is called "Managing the Dynamics of Difference," and that really talks about the conflicts that come and arise as a result of diverse groups of human beings coming together, right? And what it argues is that diversity, in and of itself, is not the problem. It is sometimes our dispositions across differences that create problems for us, right? And so when I think about the analogy and example I want to use as a household I would imagine for all of us on this call, I'm going to make an assumption here that maybe the people we love the most are the people who live inside of our households. Now we may not always like them, but we love them the most. But inside those households where we possibly have the greatest amounts of love, there's conflict, right? There's conflict. And these are people either

you gave life to who gave life to you. You've made a commitment before God, to be married or to be a couple together, what have you. There's conflict. Well, what do we do in those spaces of conflict? We seek to understand each other. We forgive each other, we extend grace, we compromise right, we cooperate with one another, right, we say I'm sorry. We forgive each other, right? We. Do and we do other things. Why do we do those things? Because our love for each other in that household is greater than anything, any any issues that could be caused by our differences, right? And it is typically those differences, even inside that household with people who often share your DNA, we still have issues, right? But our love for each other is greater than any issue that can be caused by our differences. I asked that same question about our humanity. Can our love for our humanity be greater than any issues that could be caused by our differences? And that is the most practical thing for me, because that's something that we all have. We all have this love inside of it. We all have love how I'm using my love when I'm doing with that love, right? How I'm using that love to hopefully contribute to our humanity. But can I love my brothers and sisters and non binary identifying folk? Right? Regardless, can I love them, right? And my love for them be greater than any issues that can be caused by differences? The answer to that for me is yes, but that's that very deep agape love. Are you too cute? That was cute. I saw that but, and that's to me, so you ain't gotta go to a workshop to get that. Buy a book to get that. You ain't gotta go to a conference to get that. You ain't gotta get on the webinar or a podcast to get that. That's something that's in each and every one of us. We just have to identify it, activate it, and say, This is what, and then commit to it. And for me, that's one of the things that that that kind of love, that radical love, that's the thing that wakes me up, you know, in the you know, and get me out of bed in the morning, in addition to the spirit of my queen sister, elder Ginni winters tapping me on one shoulder and that agape love for our people tapping me on the other shoulder and our ancestors tapping me on the top of the head. Say, get up, boy. So hopefully, and I know that may sound highly philosophical, but it's practical to me, because it's something we all can access.

Vonetta Clark-Tooles 17:25

That's spot on. And I knew that you would bring that level of articulation to the answer. And all people need to hear that, right? Red states, blue states, all people need to hear that. So thank you for that embodiment and articulation and so, yeah, Dr. Scott, come on, what you got?

Dr. Terrance Scott 17:52

That resonated so hard with me. I'm really thinking about how much self awareness it takes to to get to that space of agape love with like yourself first, and then with those who you love, like familial love, those who you love in relationship, love your children, and then allowing that love to extend out to strangers, the People who you work with, the people who you support, constituents, etc. And so you know that level of self awareness and like personal pride and like dignity, like you like I have to love myself before I can love anybody else in that way. And I think just in my personal experience, speaking for myself, I've seen a lot of people in schools struggle with self awareness, struggle with self doubt, struggle with self determination, and a lot of it comes from not having that confidence, not having anyone pour into them, and so they don't know how to pour for themselves. And you can use the plain analogy you can't put on anybody else actually must be put on your own. You can run oxygen. You out here just about to suffocate, you know. And so you're not good for nobody else, and keep it until you do for yourself. And so I've I'm learning that from myself continuously. So thank you for that reminder, Dr. Marks, and for your continuous wisdom in that area. We've heard many times that this is both hard

work and also heart work. So I'm gonna just say it. We aren't suggesting that we de prioritize academic achievement in any way, right? But we certainly feel that there's some mindset shifts that have to have to happen and the systems that we have in place in our schools. And so I'm wondering, personally and thinking about the level of self awareness it takes to get to a place of love, what suggestions or strategies might you share with educators about how to begin analytzing in their climate and culture, work in their schools and in their districts.

Dr. Jay B. Marks 20:03

Well, yeah, to your point, Dr. Scott, I believe all equity work starts with the person in the mirror. So I can't change systems to your point. And as I'm working on some change of changes that I need to make with my own self, with my in my personal life and in my professional practice. So I tell people all the time, you know, when I wake up and show up to to to facilitate learning, to lead in any capacity that I'm asked to lead in, the first thing I'm thinking about is me. Jay, how are you going to show up today? Who are you going to be? Why? What identities will you utilize in this space, and what perspective and experiences based on those identities would be an asset to you, which might be a detriment to you in your work today? Right? I can't go to start thinking about the audience, and I certainly can't go into thinking about the staff and the students and families whom they support before I think about how I'm showing up. Because I believe you teach who you are regardless of and I believe if you're a leader, you lead by who you are. And if you don't know who you are, how do you know how you teach them? If you don't know who you are, how do you know how you lead and how you showing up, right? And so I think that is incumbent on us to make sure that there's that commitment to lifelong learning and growing and developing. You know, I tell people all the time. I've learned two things in this work. Well, maybe a few more, but two things in particular that's resonating me based on your question. One thing I've learned, Brother Scott, is that I do not know enough. As long as I've been in the game, as much as I've read, seen, heard, listen to other folk on and been been professionally developed, and all those things, I do not know enough. And the second thing I've learned humbly, brothers, I never will, I never would, know enough. And it's a beautiful thing. It's a humbling thing. It's a great thing to know that, that I will continue to be a learner, continue to have this opportunity to to look inward, so you know, to answer your question in terms of steps. Oh, that like that commitment to your own learning, to your own development, to your own evolution, right? I think that that's always the first step. Because if you don't do that, you know, when I first started, this works many years ago, facilitating it for adults. You know, first thing people wanted were answers. And people still do, and they wanted those answers in a form of strategies. I always said, you know, I have a book in me. I haven't written it yet. I'm writing it throughout through my work and my practice, but one day to one day to go into paper format. But it's called, show me the darn strategies. And I may not use darn as the word, I may use the other D word, but because that's what folk want. You know, I show up, and you all probably can relate to this. Jay showed me how to do it. ...It's the strategies. Vonetta, I promise you. Two things I know that teacher love. Well, three things, summer vacation snow days and strategies. Summer Vacation, snow days, and strategies. And not always in that order, right? But they say, show me how to do it. And I work really hard for a long time trying to do that. And then I learn, you know? And then sometime they would try to strategy, they come back and say, Dr. Marks. It ain't work. I did what you told me to do. And I thought to myself, but did you do it with fidelity? Did you believe in the kids that you're doing it with that they would be successful with the thing that you would use with them? And then I learned, I said, Well, you it's not about the strategy, and that's the strategy has a place in this, but it is about also your

disposition and attitude and belief in your in your babies and your practice. I mean in your babies, but also in your practice. Because if you don't believe in your students, that's not a strategy I can give you that can be effective with them, and if you don't believe in yourself and your practice, there's nothing I can give you. So it's it's bigger than that, but so I would say that commitment to yourself lifelong learning, as it relates to those of us who are educators, who are responsible for facilitating the learning for students, another first step, I would say, is partner with your students. We do a disservice to our babies when we continue to plan for them, not planning with them. Why are we not planning for why are we not planning the schooling, the educational experiences for our students, with our students, why don't they have a front row seat at the table, creating the agenda for their schooling experience? We have certainly, and I'm not, there's no discredit to us, because we've gone to school, got the training, got our credentials, got our degree, you know, got our certifications, and all took the classes, took the test, and all of that. But our babies are the experts of their lives, and our and our babies are the experts of how they experience. School from us, the facilitators. So why are they not? Why isn't it? Why it? Why is it not even, not not even? Are they not at the table? Why isn't it their table that we're invited to? Right?

Marvin Franklin 25:16

Because school accountability, I mean, that's a whole different conversation for us to have. I'm not. I don't want to derail too much, but on the head. And the reason, all of it's aligned, right? All of it's connected. All of it make what you just said, makes way too much sense for us not to lead that way. But you know, not for the sake of this conversation that has been it. I want to just kind of piggyback in that and roll down this one piece with my story and my love and affection for Ginni Winters. One thing that I love more than anything about Ginni was, she was going to hold you and everybody accountable. It was a certain level of accountability, and she wasn't going to allow you to shy away from what the question was. So if she asked the question and you answered it in a different way and and the answer wasn't embedded in that side step of the question, she would look at you firmly in your eye and restate, reframe the question, but it'd be the same thing and so and so. I don't know if everybody else's response to her, but I want to say with what you're just mentioning, how do we hold our our our schools, our districts, our school leaders, our children, our parents. How do we hold that, that level of accountability without offending? I mean, because I never was offended with Ginni, I always felt like that was bringing it front and center, and I think that's and that that that dissonance that we felt collectively is how we move from point A to point B. Stand the question, Am I in a good spot with that?

Dr. Jay B. Marks 27:18

Yeah, yeah. I think that, yeah, and to your point, brother, Marvin, I think that we have to have courageous we have to be we have to have courageous leadership, but we have to be courageous ourselves. We have to have the courage of Ginni, right? Ginni was courageous, to your point, she was not afraid. And she's going to do it in, in the loving, the as as as loving way as she can, but she's going to, she's going to ask those questions, she's going to be firm with it, and she's going to anticipate or expect a response, right? And I think that part of that was Ginni's love, that agape love, we talked about, that deep love for her, that commitment, right? James Baldwin, if I love you, I have to make you the conscious of the things you can't see that Ginni winners all day long, right? But I think also we educational, and I have a couple of responses to this in terms of accountability. Part One, creating space, our environments have to be conducive to the kind of courage it makes it takes to do this work,

and oftentimes they're not right, they're not conducive. I think that, you know, and we use this word safety in spaces, and I think safe spaces are important, but they can't be safe for the purpose of being safe, because that becomes dangerous as well, right? Because now we all too safe. We don't want to step on each other's toes, and we won't do what Ginni did, right? We won't hold each other accountable, because it's not safe to do that. We have to be safe so that we could be bold and courageous. And for me, safety, if I'm in a space and not know that this is a safe space for me to be courageous, I'm going to do it. Think about all of us in our work, there's certain places you will go, you may not feel as safe, you may not temper your words, but you may alter them, or change or think differently. There are other places you go, you feel safe to show up and be as bold as you need to be. And I think that inside of our institutions, right, we need to create those kind of spaces within our institutions where folks can be brave, they could be emboldened, right? And it can know, it can be received in such a way that's going to advance their organization. Another thing to your point, I believe, in terms of accountability. I always tell groups, I'm working with organizations, clients, districts. I'm working with schools. I believe you need a four pronged approach to your work. You need to have work that you're going to do with your educators, work that you're going to do with the educational leaders, work you're going to do with your students, and work that you're going to do with your family. Community, and your community includes your school board, and when you have all four of those stakeholders engaged in the same type of work, in terms of, if we're doing equity work, that we're all doing equity work, maybe at different levels, but everybody's there and everybody know who's doing what? Right? That's an easier way to hold folk accountable. But what I find, and have found, is folk don't always know what other folk are doing. If they're doing anything and they're not asking questions, right? Educational leaders may not always know what teachers are being trained, they may not always know what those outcomes are that training, what expecting learning outcomes should be. Students certainly don't know what teachers are being trained on. Communities, families, and parents don't know. School boards often don't know, right? And so why don't we know what we working towards together, right? We have something called strategic plans, but often time, and I want to over generalize here, but oftentimes those plans are something that we develop around in June, and when they were in, when they were in binders, they sat on somebody's shelf into the next June, or until somebody asked a question about something. And so we have to, we have so we have tools that we have access to, but we need to put those two we need to implement those tools. You know, we have to make those tools operational. I would say this one last thing as it relates to accountability, we need to institutionalize accountability, meaning it becomes a part of what we do, and everybody does it. Right. Accountability can't just belong to the leaders. It can't just be a top down type of a thing, right? Because Ginni Winters certainly knew it wasn't right. She knew that she felt she had a responsibility to hold herself accountable and to hold everybody else, like the organization, accountable and the institutions in which she was working with. And so I think, and I think that once, when we and when we institutionalize thing, we just make them a part of what it is, what that thing is. We make it a part of the culture, climate of the institution itself, the school, the district, the community, and it becomes just how we do things, right? But again, in order to do that, we gotta create a space and environment that's going to be conducive to that. And some of that starts with the vision of your leader. It starts with the modeling of the leader, but it starts with all of us, you know, taking ownership and holding ourselves, agreeing to hold ourselves accountable as well, right? But you can't. You can't hold yourself accountable in a silo, If only, if only a few of us are doing some things, or if a few of us know that we doing some things and Marvin doing

some things. I don't know what Marvin do. Well, I can't hold Marvin accountable, and he don't know what I'm doing. He can't hold me accountable. So we look for transparency in that regard.

Vonetta Clark-Toolles 33:14

...So before we get too far away, I want to go back to one of our questions around, right? You've laid it beautifully, what the approach can be in in terms of this institutional accountability. So we want to ask you, where have you seen districts that are intentional in improving their climate and culture, and have they used some of that accountability, institutionalized accountability that you name. What can you share with us? You don't have to name names of districts, but we definitely, you know, want to hear that if there are districts or spaces that are doing this work and doing it, well, where is it happening, or how, how is it happening, not where, how is it happening, and, and what can you share with us about that?

Dr. Jay B. Marks 34:08

So I've been fortunate enough to have a lot of experience, and experiences working in communities and having communities to work with, with school districts to develop partnerships, and they've worked better in some places than others. But I would tell I would tell you all, it's beautiful work, and some of the most important work, I think, that we need to be doing, but in my opinion, some of the most challenging work to bring communities. Because I believe philosophically, and it's not, it's factual, but I believe this, the schools belong to the community in which it resides. Wherever it's located, it belongs to that community, but schools don't function like that school. Schools function like a private business, right? And our constituents, which because there's no school without those babies. Right? Without those families and they know that it operates like that, right? The families know that, and then so schools operate like this. And I believe wanting what's best for children, parents and families and students want what's best for them, right? We don't always know how to work together to get what's best. So I'm thinking of a community that I worked with I had a right after the 2016 election. You know, you know all all heck broke loose in our country. All heck broke loose in Oakland County. All heck broke loose in Southeast Michigan, and there are racial incidences. You know that. You know that that that the ugly face of racism, you know, which has always been with us, right? We know that our country and our society, and which is institutions, have all been rooted in white supremacy and racism. But you know, sometimes it looks differently, so we don't always see it or recognize or notice it, but this particular time, they put the mask off and say, I'm here. This is me, right? The ugly face of racism was there. It was running rampant. And there's one particular community in Southeast Michigan, we came together. They had they invited me to come in and partner with them, and we brought the community together, and we created a part a community partnership, you know, and that's tough, because it takes a lot of humility from the leadership to do this, for the superintendent, if you will, and the school board to do this, but they brought in a community, including students, and they work collaboratively. And I'm not saying it was perfect, because it wasn't perfect, because I have, I have stories of different districts that have done things well, but this one particular district, they did this well, I believe, where they had, they created a partnership, and then from that partnership, it was like a a, I don't remember the name they called it, but kind of like a diversity council that included parents, community members, some members from the board, students and staff members, you know, some school leaders, some of the teachers, and they will come together and really grapple with and work with advancing, not just dealing with problems. But how can they advance diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, justice and liberation in

their district, and they really begin to do some things in partnership with one another. And I thought that, and I had been trying and working with so many districts to try to do this, some would make more progress than others, but I would tell you some of the competencies that it takes from leaders to do this. It takes a humble it takes a courageous leader to be able to stand in front of community say, we're going to do this, but it also takes a leader who's humble, who knows that they don't know everything, and that they can benefit and will benefit from this partnership, from the voice, the voices of the students and the families and the communities. So community I've seen where community partnerships can work can be a huge benefit to bringing all these stakeholders together, because, let's be honest, schools on their own are just not equipped to deal with the type of oppression that our society is rooted in right? They're not equipped to and they need to develop their competencies in order to do much better. I want to be clear about that, right? We can't let districts off the hook, right? So those two things can be true at the same time that they don't know how to do this, they need access to resources, but they need to learn how to do this. But I think the greatest way to learn how to do this is in partnership, because otherwise we run the era of making mistakes, right? If I don't have you lived experience again. And that goes back to what I was talking about, planning with our students instead of planning for them, planning with our families still planning for them, you know? So I believe that to be true. There's another district in Oakland County. This was many, many years ago. So I don't know if you all know we have, I'm not sure if it's still activated, but we have a resolution around diversity education in the state of Michigan. Were you all aware of that? It was so it John Austin used to be the president of of, I believe he's the president of Michigan School Board for the state of Michigan. And there were some students from this particular school district, and, and, and, and I'm gonna name it, Farmington public schools in Oakland County, there were some students they had. They went to the University of Michigan for the summer intergroup dialog program, where they learned as students how to talk amongst themselves and to resolve conflict that arise as a. Results of diversity, and then they learned, they developed that capacity. Had a great experience. They came back to the district, but unfortunately, what they found, you all is that the district, the educators, did not have those same experiences. The educators did not know how to do it, nor did they know how to support the babies who learned how to do it. So they brought in. So as a result of that, we started what was called the Social Justice Project in Oakland County. This was around 2011 alright, but these babies before that, they saw how important it was, not only for them to get this kind of training, but for educators to get it. They wrote a resolution in collaboration with their superintendent in Farmington at the time, took that resolution to Lansing and proposed it to the school board, and they accepted it and adopted it in 2011 I believe it was that's the power of our children when we get out of the way not get out of when we first we can ask them what they want, partner with them in getting in, and then get out of the way, where we need to get out of the way right, and let them show up and show out. But that is what is possible, and that's a real thing that happened. This is not a plan or what if, or a dream, that's a real thing that happened based on these young people. So as a result of these young people, the experience that they had in this intergroup dialog program at the University of Michigan, they came back, they said, Well, we know how to do this, but the adult Toronto's don't know how to do this, and we think that all adults in the state of Michigan need to know how to do this. So they came back. We started at Oakland, at Oakland schools, we started the social justice project, and these babies wrote a resolution in collaboration with their superintendent, and took it to Lansing and got it passed. I know that took me a long time to give y'all that answer. You asked for examples, and those are two examples. Oh, you know, oh, I got one more example, too. One more example. There was a community that I worked with in Oakland County that

was struggling with educating African American males. Now you can say that's every community in the country, which is true for the most part. Anyway, this one particular community decided they had start—they had gone through the Social Justice Project. They had really built the capacity of their educators to start facilitating and owning their own equity work. And so when they struggled around educating. We had a we had a community forum, and our parents showed up and and parents from all racial ethnic backgrounds, diverse backgrounds, showed up right in this community, but it became apparent that over and over again, parents of African American male children were speaking out about the schooling experiences of their sons. So as a result, the superintendent says, Hey, we have some capacity here. So they created on their own. Well, not on their own. I helped them, but they facilitated it. They created some professional learning modules around, how do we respond? This is an issue. It's a systemic issue, so it requires a systemic approach. And so within that system, they built their own systems of support for educating African American males. And again, that came from the voices of parents, but it also was the courage of that particular and the willingness of that particular superintendent to acknowledge that that was real, to believe the voices of those parents the first time he had his they had their own data to look at the performance of African American males, the placement of African American males, the achievement of African American males, but then they took it upon themselves. Now I can't tell you what happened as a result. This was some years ago, what successes or failures they had, but they did take action that I know. Now I don't know the outcome of those actions, so I'll be honest, I don't know that so, and they do. They do. Brother is educational malpractice.

Dr. Terrance Scott 44:34

You said something earlier about accountability needing to be institutionalized. When you connect that with radical love for me, and I said this in the chat, what I meant was I know of people who take feedback like to heart, like they think there's something wrong with them, and that's not what. Feedback is for feedback is to help you improve, to become better. But if you don't want feedback, if you're not seeking feedback, because you have a negative context behind that, you're going to never grow, ultimately. And so I think there's something to be said about building that muscle, building a muscle of accountability through feedback as a way to elicit both positive classroom environment and produce academic results. And so structurally, I wonder if you had a little bit to say about like the benefits of and ... the benefits of institutionalizing accountability with radical love. Well, how do you combine the two?

Dr. Jay B. Marks 46:01

Well, again, it goes back to James Baldwin's quote. "If I love you, I'm gonna make you conscious of the things you can't see." Yeah. So love you enough to give you that feedback, right? But you have to love me enough right to receive that feedback. Honor that feedback. I want to take that feedback and give it into put into action. But it also goes back into, again, the culture, and it's, I hope, hopefully, this is not way off here, but it goes back to that culture and climate of the institutions. So we look at our evaluation system in too far too many instances, is punitive, or at least it appears to be punitive. Is viewed as punitive. It's not based off growth and development. So it does not and Carol Dweck taught us this, right? She talked about her research is all about this, right, about promoting the growth mindset. But I think we've lost some opportunities with that, because I believe our evaluation systems should to be developed based on those concepts and those philosophies, right? But they appear to be very punitive and jobs, professional reputations, jobs, access to opportunities, promotions, are all tied to those evaluation systems, right? And so I don't believe educators feel safe to get that feedback. They don't,

they don't feel and I hear it all the time. Um brother Scotty, all the time. That sounds good, Jay, but I don't feel safe that Imma have my job, right? And so, and that starts with, again, that starts with the leadership of of creating spaces that are safe enough for people to be vulnerable, to accept feedback so that they can grow. I have not met a teacher or an educator in any capacity when we sit down one on one to have some conversation that can't acknowledge that they have growth areas, but they never acknowledge it amongst their peers. Why not that it doesn't exist. They don't feel safe. And so the leadership has to create that help create that space, and it starts with them, right? But yeah, you know, and connecting radical love with with feedback, right? That's what it is. Yeah, you know, that's what. And we as individual, we talked about doing our own work earlier, right, being lifelong learners. And if we are lifelong learners, right, we can't get so caught up in who we think we are as educators and professionals that there's no room for the biggest gift I gave myself, and and I gave myself because it was a level of understanding that I was ready to receive. I didn't do it myself, because this work will humble you, right. Y'all know that this work will humble you, right, but it was when the awareness to accept the fact that two things I named earlier, I do not know enough, and I never would know enough that is so humbling, but it opens me up and it allows me to receive feedback. I want your feedback, right? Because I can't. I know I'm not good enough on my own. I'm not good enough on my I'm not smart enough on my own, I'm not competent enough on my own. I ain't skilled enough on my own right. I need, I need the resources of those whom I'm called to serve to be able to say, Jay, this is what's working now. We all want and need and deserve affirmation, and I think that's a part of it too, because you can't have feedback that that is constructive and productive, that does not include affirmation validation, right? So we gotta do that too, right? We can't. It can't. Every conversation can't be about folks growth areas, right? It gotta be about, man, you do this well, and then giving people. Opportunity, right to to to put that on display, whatever that means, right? What you do? Well, I'm going to affirm you. I'm going to validate you. I'm proud you access. But then we also going to work on this thing. And I think when people see that happening, they you know, they see that getting feedback is not a detriment to their career. It's not an indictment.

Dr. Terrance Scott 50:23

yeah it definitely becomes, it becomes fear and anxiety inducing. Otherwise...

Dr. Jay B. Marks 50:29

Yeah they ain't gonna tell you, man, they ain't gonna tell you. All know this. They ain't gonna tell you what that growth areas are. Very few, in my opinion, there you have some people with bold and courageous and it's like, yeah, I know I need to work on this. But oftentimes folk ain't, and these are folk they work with every day. They ain't sharing that because the stakes are too high. They don't know what you want to do with that information. And like, like all of us, right? They got bills to life to keep on, they got camps to put their kids through, and tuition to pay, and, you know, food to put in the refrigerator. Expensive golf clubs, if your name is Marvin Franklin or Jake Parks to get right. You got stuff.

Vonetta Clark-Tooles 51:14

I love the way in which you have continued to, um, maintain our thread right around Ginni and equity and this idea of radical love and accountability as we bring our conversation to a close one, we want to thank you for your time, for your brilliance, for your energy. You always bring the fire. We appreciate

that. But you, you invoked the life and legacy of Uncle Jimmy right. James Baldwin, we talked about you've mentioned him a few times with some different quote and quotations. And so as I think about him, 100 years into his legacy and existence. What might his mind, brilliant as it was, say about, this idea that bringing community to the fore, faith based organizations, Greek fraternities and sororities, nonprofit partners, neighbors, senior citizens, parents, preachers, teachers, community, right? Um, what would he want for us in terms of coming together and having courageous conversations about what is prevalent and pressing for today's children. What would he want us to do to support and encourage and uplift our children?

Dr. Jay B. Marks 52:58

That's a heck of a question Vonetta that you know. First of all, just thinking about what he would want, you know, because he was a bad man, you know. Yeah, was a bad man, you know, they say he said things to America that America wasn't ready for. And I always say Mexico ain't ready for that fighter, James Baldwin. You read some of his stuff, you're like, Oh, you look at some of these videos, like he was saying that in the 50s and the 60s, folks will still be cringing, you know, you know, you know some of the things that he would say, but I goes back to what he said and again. You know, Ginni modeled this for us, right, the humility, you know, that it takes to lead and do this work, but also the courage and the boldness to do this work. So with that said, I think that what he would want for us, with our with our children, for us to be courageous enough, courageous enough to love each other, enough to be honest with each other about the things that we need to be doing, right? Because we have to ask ourselves, you know, and I asked this question in my work, when I'm really talking deeply about love and our and radical love, what does love look like in your practice? What does love look like in your advocacy? What does love look like in your allyship? What does love look like in your conspiratorship? What does love look like in your leadership? What does love look like in your teaching? Right? And I think that for each of us to be able to have those So to your question. And I don't know you know how right I am with this, but a lot of his work, in my opinion, a lot of his quotes, really are around evoking courage and just being courageous and being bold and being fearless. You know, James Baldwin. Was a small man in stature, but he was a giant. And I often wonder and say, man, he was not afraid. Ginni was not afraid. We can't be afraid. And now that I'm talking, I'm thinking, that's what he's that's probably what he would want and what he was we can't be afraid. We can't be afraid to love each other. Y'all know, remember, he left the country because of what was happening here, but then he came back. So this country is mine. This country's mine too, and I'm going to love us enough to fight for us. But that takes courage and and I haven't figured this out yet. Y'all, I don't know how to teach courage. You know? I don't, I don't know how to and I, and when people talk to me about being afraid of something, I always say, You know what? Fear is real, and we need to acknowledge that. But I can't. PD you out of your fear, that's something that you have to I can't facilitate you. I don't have those skills. Now, you know, I'm sure there are people who are trained I don't have that training. That's something that you have to combat. And I think it starts with asking ourselves too, and this is for all of us, because I have to ask myself this too. When I'm afraid, I asked myself, Jay, what are you afraid of? What is it about this thing that causes fear and creates fear in you? Right? Because I think that, going back to what we talked about earlier, that inside out work, you know that doing our own work first, and committing to being lifelong learners and asking ourselves those questions, am I? What's What am I afraid of? Right? Why am I not more courageous in this space versus in that space over there? What's getting, what's getting in the way? What are the impediments of my courage and me utilizing that courage in any space? But yeah, I think

what James Baldwin would say, for all of us, and the babies are courageous. They ain't scared. We can learn a lot, and that's why partnering with them is so important. Because you put them in a room, you put them in the space, and say, what we doing, and they come up with something, and we looking like, well, we can't do that. And they looking like, Y'all can't do that. We doing that. Yeah, we doing that. So I think, I think, and really thinking about that, I appreciate that question, and I know imma think about it some more tonight, when we when we done, but I think that's what he would say, because I think that's something that he emulated for us, but it's also something that you know, my sister, my queen, my elder, Ginni winners emulated for us too. We have to be courageous. We have to love enough, love each other, enough, love our humanity enough to be courageous. That's what I saw. Imma leave it right there.

Marvin Franklin 58:07

I love the way you put that. I think that Ginni absolutely asked us to be courageous, just like James Baldwin wants us to be that courageous and not afraid, not afraid at all. And that was the way that she lived her life, that was the way he lived his life, and the work that we're doing, I think that all of those things need to be the front loaders to get us to the next level of Doctor marks. Again, we would like to say thank you again for spending a little time with us, Getting to the Core. Wayne RESA, this is the first time on this podcast, but I definitely would like to bring you back and talk some more about some other things, if, your schedule will allow you. Talked about my expensive golf clubs, but I see what your golf where I know you all can't see because we're in Atlanta podcast, but I will share for those who can't see, he is wearing this crispy white East Side golf shirt, and they only have that in in the high Rent district areas. They don't sell those anywhere else.

Dr. Jay B. Marks 59:23

You know? Hey, we talk about safe spaces. The golf course is my happy place. That ain't always my safe space, because, boy, so listen, Mom, I figured, well, if I can't play the part, I can at least look the part half the time, you know, but I look like a better golfer than I tell ya that.