

LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE RECAP

July 8, 2020



Les Gombik: Good morning, everybody. Thanks to all of you for joining us again today. My name is Les Gombik and I'm a managing partner with Caldwell. This is our 17th weekly leadership call. We hope everyone had a good break last Wednesday. I have to admit, after 16 weeks of continuous, "the sky is falling" webinars, I loved not talking about COVID and organizational transformations, pivots and all the challenges facing us every day. Now, we only took one week off and now all of a sudden, people are extremely nervous again about what's happening in the US with a huge spike in COVID cases. I think they hit sixty thousand cases one day last week. Here we are wondering again how much deeper and how much worse things can get. Although many of our calls have dealt with COVID-induced transformations, the last few weeks we've touched on discrimination and anti-black systemic racism. We just glossed over it and did not give it the attention that it deserved, which is why this week we're trying something different and we're focusing our entire hour on this topic.

First, we have Wes Hall, the founder and the executive chairman of Kingsdale Advisors and also one of the co-chairs of the BlackNorth Initiative. Now, Wes is going to lead us through a discussion about anti-black systemic racism and what we as individuals and leaders can do to address the problem. After Wes, we have Cornell Wright, the chair of the corporate group at Torys, one of Canada's leading law firms. He deals with some of the largest and most respected organizations in the country. Cornell is going to continue the dialog and expand the conversation on diversity broadly. Now, each of them is going to speak for about 10 to 15 minutes and we're going to get into the Q&A, but it'll be more of a conversation over the course of today's call than it might have been in the past. Please send more questions along the way, because we only have two speakers this week and we're going to have a lot extra time to answer your questions. So send them to me either via text, by email or the Zoom at the bottom of your screen.

So as we get started, I have a confession to make. I was a little nervous coming into this conversation. I was scared that I'd probably screw up or say something stupid, embarrass myself or the firm. That said this conversation is really too important to delay or postpone because it might make me or others uncomfortable. So Wes, Cornell, and all of you on the line, I apologize in advance if I say the wrong thing, but it's coming from a place of truly wanting to listen and learn and genuinely wanting to help, like I think a lot of the people on this call want to do.

As mentioned, our first speaker is Wes Hall. Now, some of you may have met Wes before or have heard him speak. Wes is exceptionally passionate about anti-Black systemic racism, so much so that he founded the BlackNorth Initiative. As I mentioned, this is a major initiative with an event happening in a couple of weeks, I think, on the 20th that Wes is going to talk about specifically. Now, Wes you've reached some very

lofty heights. Now you're here as a co-chair of that initiative, but I suspect you wouldn't be here getting the traction on the initiative that you've had so far, if you haven't reached the level of corporate and personal success that you've had. Tell us about yourself personally and your journey and how you got to this point.

Wes Hall: So let me say this, first of all, Les, don't be shy about talking to us about Black issues or anything like that. Also, by the way, everybody in the audience use the term "Black" when you refer to me or any other Black person that you see in your organization. I know that there's a term African, Caribbean, this and that. You just use "Black." We're OK with that expression. The reason why the conversations are uncomfortable is because of the fact that we've never had them before. Though you may have a Black colleague or a Black friend, you know that they have issues, but you really didn't want to go there because you just didn't know what to say. It's kind of like when somebody comes to you and says, their mom just died and you don't know what to say. Your mom is still alive so you can't put yourself in the same position as that person, but all that person wants you to say, is that I'm really sorry to hear that and I'm here for you. That's all they want to hear. That's what Black people want to hear as well.

So let me talk about myself. I am a typical Canadian success story, I guess. I came here September 27, 1985, from Jamaica. I came from the poorest part of Jamaica. I was 16 years old when I came to Canada to live with my dad and I saw the amazing things that I can accomplish in Canada. As a result of working hard and getting some breaks, I was able to get to where I am today.

Let me just start by saying on my way to get to this level, I have never met another Black person that could help me along the way. We weren't in positions that could provide help. All the people that helped me along the way were white. Every single one of them. As I climbed through corporate Canada, I was lucky enough to meet individuals along the way that believed in me and that saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. I remember my first opportunity when this person gave me a job that I personally didn't think I could do. He said to me, you can do this and I knocked the ball out of the park. The reason why I knocked the ball of the park was because I didn't want to let him down. This man was 36 years old. He was going places. He was dynamic and I was just inspired by this man. This man wanted me to come along with him. When I left there and I went to another job, I met somebody else like that. Same thing happened, "Wes, I believe in you, I think you can do this" and it just kept going. There are a lot of smart Black people out there and what they're looking for are sponsors. They're looking for someone to say "I believe in you, I think you can do this" and I can tell you they won't let people down. I was lucky enough that I was able to get those people along the way. Then I started Kingsdale Advisors.

People say to me over the last little while, "Wes, you started this company 19 years ago and your job is to do hostile takeover bids and to do shareholder activism. You work to replace boards and save boards and yet you still have this pretty decent reputation on the street. How do you do it?" I do it because people recognize the fact that you have a job to do and the way you do the job has to have integrity. When you do that, people respect you even though you work against them and you were successful on something. When I started Kingsdale, my clients were all white. My clients were all corporate Canada that we're talking to right now. That's the reason why I'm getting the traction I'm getting right now, because I know these people, they trust me and they want to work with me to make the changes that they need. But none of those people

come to Kingsdale and say, I'm going to hire you because you're Black. My company is in trouble, in hostile takeover bid, or my board is going to be replaced in a proxy fight, but I'm just going to give you a break Wes, because you're Black. Everything is on the line for these companies. They wanted the best. They want the best advisors money can buy and that's why they came to Kingsdale, because Kingsdale is the best. We're not asking for a handout to get to a place where we don't belong because of the color of our skin. We're saying just put us in the same spot as somebody else that doesn't look like us. Give us the same opportunity to prove that we can be successful. I can tell you will be pleasantly surprised. Even saying that "pleasantly surprised" is patronizing. It's almost suggesting that I'm not expected to do better. I'm not expected to do as well as somebody else. But the fact of the matter is that expression alone suggests that there is an inferiority complex. That's to say we expect less from Black people and as a result of that, we can't move them into these positions because they're not going to perform as well as others. So that's my rambling introduction there.

Les Gombik: Well, that's a great intro, Wes. I think you've given us certainly a lot to think about. You've had a fair amount of press lately as you've launched this program and there have been some stories that you've shared around what systemic racism really is in your eyes. You've provided a number of examples of things that you've personally dealt with, maybe you can expand on some of those a little bit.

Wes Hall: OK, so I'm going to ask a series of questions. Les and Cornell, you guys can participate. Just play with me. I want everyone on the phone to participate. Pretend we can see you all. I want you to keep your hand up when I ask the question and if it doesn't apply to you, put your hand down, OK? If it applies, put your hand back up. How many of you have had your civil rights violated by the police before? How many of you live in a neighborhood for years and your neighbor never says hello to you? How many of you, while driving your fancy Ferrari are stopped by a criminal lawyer, soliciting your business? How many of you have been excluded from something because of your race? How many of you live in a neighborhood and because of the size of your house, people think you're pro athlete? How many of you have had a repairman show up to your house and say, get the homeowner, please? How many of you while jogging through your neighborhood, people stop your wife and say, can I use your personal trainer one day? How many of you while going through your neighborhood, have seen your neighbor and they just pretend that they don't see you?

Now, one could say that none of those things are necessarily racism, right? And they're not. They're unconscious bias. I say to people that it's almost as bad as racism because you're doing something against somebody but you don't even know you're doing it. I'll tell you, that neighbor that I had for five years, never said hello. We waved to them, they never wave back. I walked into a boardroom one day and there's my neighbor. My neighbor is the CEO of the company that I'm going to defend in a proxy fight. He came over to me and asked, "What are you doing here?" He didn't know. We became friends after because then he realized, oh, you're not a pro athlete. You actually work on Bay Street and you're really good at what you do. So those are the unconscious biases that we talk about. We as Black people are conditioned to think, when those things happen to us, we think it is just another day and you move on.

I'll give an example - driving to work in that vehicle that I talk about. Let's say you're driving to work in that vehicle and you get pulled over by the police. Generally speaking, what happens is that the police's actions are going to suggest that you're innocent until proven guilty because that's what the law says. He's going to get out of the car. He's going to walk to you and he's going to tell you why you're pulled over. He's going

to say, "I pulled you over because you were speeding or you had a busted tail light and could I get your license and registration, please." He goes back into his car and he writes up a ticket and you go to work and you're fine. But let's say, for example, in my case, when I'm pulled over in that fancy car and I say to the officer, could you tell me why I'm pulled over? License and registration, please. Could I find out why I was pulled over because I don't have a busted tail light. I'm not speeding. I need your license and registration. Ask the question again. I'm going to ask you one more time for your license and registration, sir. Now, I have a choice of allowing my civil rights to be violated or if I don't, I'm going to be out of the car and potentially in handcuffs and then my clients and colleagues are going to be driving by and say, "hey, Wes did something illegal. He's getting arrested." So I allow my civil rights to be violated and then what happens. I go to work and it is business as usual. I got to get on a conference call. I got to operate the same way. But if that happened to you, for example, and you get in your car and get to work, is your day going to be normal? No. Your rights were violated and you're going to do something about it. You're fit to be tied. You're going to call the chief of police. You're going to tell the CEO of the company. You're going to do something about it but your day is not going to be normal. I think that's really what happens with us, is that when it does happen to us, our day is normal.

If I wasn't at the level I'm at and that happened to me on my way to work, I can't go to my diversity and inclusion person, namely because the diversity and inclusion person, doesn't look like me. They don't really understand what I just went through. I had a very traumatic experience and it's going to affect me for the rest of the day, but I'm expected to perform exactly the same as everybody else that came to work that day. Those are the things that we're trying to look at and say, how can we attack those systemic issues that cause problems? If there is a true diversity and inclusion group that represents the population of the company where I have somebody that I can go to that looks like me, they will understand. That person is going to help me to cope with what I just went through and they're also going to make sure that they escalate it in the organization so that it's dealt with so that I don't have to continue to subject myself to that. My CEO is going to call the chief of police, and say, you better fix your problem, because if you don't fix your problem, I'm going to make sure you're fired. That's what the BlackNorth Initiative is all about. So we work as business leaders to look at social issues and solve them collectively.

Les Gombik: That's great, Wes. Let's talk about that initiative here for a bit. Clearly, you've taken a stand and you're speaking out. First off, congratulations for doing this because there have been countless examples of Black leaders who have taken a stand and they've been ostracized for it. The recent example, and there's been many over the years of course, is Colin Kaepernick. His career was sidelined for years and probably for good. Comment a little bit about why you've decided to take this stand.

Wes Hall: I'm going to put you in my headspace when I decided to do that. I had a very busy week. I have seven companies that are part of my portfolio and we're working through COVID-19 with each of the companies. That week I had the TIFF board meeting. I had the Sick Kids Foundation board meeting, and I had the Pathways for Education board meeting in addition to all the things that we're doing. It was the week that George Floyd was murdered and people were saying to me while I was so busy that I should take a look at this video. I said, no, it's the same old, same old. We saw the video of Ahmaud Arbery jogging through the neighborhood and was killed by regular citizens and heard about Amy Cooper in the park. People said "No, there's a new video. You have to see it." I resisted because I was just too busy because more the same and then I saw the video and my life wasn't the same anymore. Literally, my

life changed. It affected me mentally. All of a sudden all those experiences that I've had and interactions that I've had over the years started coming back. I kind of pictured myself as this man on the ground with somebody's knee in his neck. I told my colleagues at the board meetings, at Sick Kids, Pathways and also the TIFF meetings, that I'm sorry, I can't do these meetings this week. I couldn't do it because I'm expected to perform like nothing happened. In fact, people saw the video, but as we were going to these meetings, nobody said anything to me. Nobody said, "Hey, Wes I'm really sorry what happened to your people." Think about it. We saw what happened in Nazi Germany, for example. You're appalled when you see somebody else do that to another human being. You're appalled by it. But think about if you were part of that race or religion or culture and you see that happen to your own people. It also upsets you and angers you and life is not the same for you anymore. But yet all these things happen to Black people and nobody actually even acknowledges that it's traumatic for us. We go to the meetings, we do our conference calls. Nobody even apologized because as you said Les, people are uncomfortable. It's like a death in the family. You don't know what to say to the person, so you say nothing. The worst thing to say when someone is going through a traumatic experience is nothing. The best thing that you can do is to listen with empathy. Worst thing is nothing. Best is to listen with empathy, because that's all the person wants to hear- you care about me, you care about what's happening. You care about what's happened in my culture, my race. So when you're at a company and your CEO sees Black people being mistreated all over the news and there's not even a memo from the CEO saying, "Hey, we acknowledge this and we're going to do something about it" and you have a thousand Black employees in your company. It's a strong message you're sending that it's not as important to you. So that's why when we started the BlackNorth Initiative, we said let's use our social conscience to look at what's happening around us and solve it.

Now, when we talk about people being ostracized, I want to pull up image number two. We see these guys, John Carlos, Tommie Smith and Peter Norman. These guys were at the 1968 Olympics. What were they protesting? If you look closely at that image, because a lot of people don't look at that image closely, John Carlos and Tommie Smith had their shoes off and they were wearing black socks. The black socks represent Black poverty. The glove and the fist represent the oppression of Black people. They had a bead around their neck and it's protesting the lynching of Black people in the southern United States. That's what they were protesting at the Olympics. They were banned and booed from the Olympics. OK, go to image number three, that's Peter Norman. Peter Norman was the one that actually sacrificed the most. He wasn't being disrespectful. He didn't have his fist up or anything like that. But Peter Norman was a silver medalist. This man was absolutely fast. He was from Australia and guess what happened in that Olympics? He's a staunch Christian who believed that all humans are equal and he's against racism. But at the time in Australia, they were focused on white immigration only and they were treating the Aboriginal people badly. So what he said was "Tommie and John, what can I do to support you guys?" And they said to him, just wear a pin. The pin says Olympian for Human Rights. That's it. Just wear that pin. He wore that pin and when he went back to Australia, he was completely ostracized for wearing a pin that says Olympians for Human Rights. See how respectful he was? He wasn't sitting down. He didn't put his fist up. He was standing respectful to the national anthem and yet he was penalized when he went back to Australia. They completely ostracized him and while he was the fastest man, he wasn't sent to the 1972 Olympic Games. Guess what happened to him in the end? He became an alcoholic. He became addicted to painkillers. Australia did not acknowledge his contribution until 2012, six years after he died. Those two Black men, John Carlos and Tommie Smith, were

pallbearers at his funeral, and they gave the eulogy at his funeral. That man gave away everything, but he kept his silver medal. The reason why he kept it, he said I was a part of something that transcended the Olympics and for that, I'll forever remember what I've done. He didn't die regretting what he did and all he did was stand at attention and wore a pin to show his support. So my point is that, yes, when we're Black, we're going to stand up. But even people who are not Black, who believe in the cause, who stand up could also be ostracized. That's the reason why sometimes people say, I don't know what to say. I don't really know if I want to be with you. How many white folks kneeled with Colin Kaepernick in the Super Bowl? How many? None. They were the most powerful athletes, but none actually kneeled. In fact, Drew Brees came out and said he didn't appreciate what he did because he felt it was all about the flag and disrespecting the flag. No, it wasn't. It was a quiet protest. As a result of quiet protest, he was out of the league.

I thought about all those things. I thought about Muhammad Ali. I thought about Martin Luther King Jr. I thought about Colin Kaepernick. So when I pressed send on that op-ed, I was sitting there on pins and needles wondering "OK, is this it? Is this it for this uppity Black man who is now speaking up against us?" But the opposite happened. That's why I believe in Canada, the opposite happened. I had all these people calling me saying "Wes, what can we do?" They didn't call to say, here's what I'm going to do. They put their pride aside. They didn't say, "Well, I'm a CEO, so I should know what to do." They didn't know what to do. They wanted to work with someone that they respect, someone they trust from the Black community to change the conversation. So we said, let's start a group. We're going to call it the Canadian Council of Business Leaders against Anti-Black Systemic Racism. Because that's a mouthful, we're going to call it BlackNorth for short. I asked Victor Dodig, would you like to co-chair it with me? Victor said, absolutely. Prem Watsa came to my house and said to me, "Wes, I knew Black people had issues, but I didn't know until I read your article." I said, Prem, you want to chair it with me? Prem said, Absolutely, I'm on board. Rola Dagher called us and said the same thing. That's how the four of us kind of came together and we said, OK, let's talk to the business leaders that we know and see whether or not they feel the same way we do. Once we sent a press release out and we said we're going to do a summit. We had 150 CEOs respond to our request to be part of the summit. The CEOs themselves.

It gives me a lot of confidence that we can use this as a test case for the rest of the world to solve this problem. We're not solving the problem of racism. We're not naive. What we're doing is we're looking at the barriers in our own organization first of all. People think it's about boards and about C-suite but it's beyond that. We're going to look at the board and say if we have no Black people on the board, is there a structural impediment that causes that? Are we hiring the wrong firms to search for us? Are we looking in the wrong places? If we have no Blacks in the C-suite, is there a structural impediment for that? Then we take it further down. If we have none in the pipeline, again, is there a structural impediment for that? For example, we're asking: are we only recruiting from a university that has no Black students? That is a structural impediment. So let's look at all those things, let's fix them and then let's go deeper. Let's look at the education system. Let's look at the criminal justice system. Let's look at the healthcare system. Let's look at all those things and then see what the structural impediments are, why Black people are treated differently and then let's fix them. We're not going to just do it for only Black people. We're going to have observers

as a part of BlackNorth from the Indigenous community. We have two very strong leaders from the Indigenous community, and we're going to have others, that are sitting as observers on BlackNorth. They're going to take that playbook and we're going to apply it to the Indigenous community. We will go to the two most underserved communities and we're going to raise them both up. We know it's going to take some time to get there, but we're going to have to start someplace. Eventually, the goal is the Blacks and Indigenous peoples will be treated the same as everybody else, have the same privileges as everybody else. I'm not being naive in saying that it's going to take a lot of work to make that happen, but that's the objective.

Les Gombik: That's great. Thank you, Wes. Clearly a huge initiative and one that I believe a lot of people on the line are going to want to hear a lot more about over the course of this conversation. Let's shift the conversation now and talk about diversity broadly. We've been focused on specifically anti-black, systemic racism and obviously it's a key topic and getting a lot of attention of late, but this has been a broader issue that has been touching so many people around the world for a long time. Let's shift over and have a conversation with Cornell Wright. As I mentioned earlier, Cornell chairs the corporate group at Torys in addition to having a senior leadership role at Torys and a personal practice dealing with literally some of the largest and most well regarded companies in North America. Cornell, you're also heavily involved in the community as a trustee of the University Health Network and you chair the National Ballet of Canada. Cornell, tell us a little bit about your journey to get here and a little bit about your thoughts on the broader topic.

Cornell Wright: Thank you, Les. My parents immigrated to Canada from Jamaica and they met at the very first Caribana in 1967. I was born in Toronto. I grew up in the middle of the city, went to public schools here in Toronto. I graduated from North Toronto Collegiate. I was involved there. I was student council president. I went to McGill and University of Toronto. I tell you that because my experience is really shaped by my own time here in the city of Toronto. It leads me to my first point which is, I'm fundamentally very optimistic about where we are and about where things are going. An enormous amount has changed since I was growing up in the city of Toronto and since I started my career as a lawyer twenty years ago. A couple of years ago, I was asked to speak to the first year class at U of T Law School. Before I went in, they gave me some stats on the first year class. To give you a sense of the first year class at U of T, this is the one that's going to be graduating next spring, fifty eight percent women. Thirty five percent students of color. Nine percent LGBTQ students. Seven percent students with disabilities. Eighty percent first in their family to attend law school. 60 percent with parents born outside of Canada. Twenty nine percent themselves born outside of Canada. So I think what you see across the board really is tremendously positive growth in terms of actual diversity. Growth in terms of people's attitudes and integration in our city. I look at our neighborhood. I look at the schools that my kids go to, and I think you see a very natural progression in terms of diversity and inclusion. I think it's very positive and it makes me feel very confident and optimistic about where things are going.

My second point is, what are we seeing now? I think you have to be careful about equating what's going on in the US with what's happening in Canada. There are very different historical, socio-economic, political factors at play. But clearly, events in the US have struck a chord here in Canada and they have focused people on the issues of diversity and inclusion. I think, in a sense, created a moment of

reckoning. The way I sum up the point is that it has highlighted the gap between intentions on the one hand and perceptions and people's actual experience on the other. I read with interest the story in the paper this week about RBC. The CEO said that they had what they consider to be an excellent diversity program, a global diversity leadership council. But even they were surprised when in the wake of these events in the US, they started having frank and open conversations. They were struck by the gap between how people within the organization were feeling and how they intended people to feel based on the programs that they had set up with good faith intentions. So I think there is a moment here and it's calling on everyone to take stock of where we are and the gap between where we want to be and where we are. Some of that, I think is inevitable because we're in a time of transition and the population is changing. Inevitably, there is a gap between the first year class at U of T Law School as it is today, and the leadership, for example, in the legal profession. I think change is gradual and it's frustrating and so some of it is inevitable. But some of it, I think we have to admit, reflects a deep and genuine sense that there is inequality that is persisting longer. That is deeper than it should be. That change is too slow, and that in some respects, change hasn't really happened in the way the way we intended.

I mentioned my high school experience here in Toronto. In the summer of 1992, some of you might recall there were race riots here in Toronto and they were prompted by events in the US- the Rodney King verdict and the events in L.A. at the time. Premier Bob Rae commissioned Stephen Lewis to do a report looking at racism in Ontario. I think the Stephen Lewis report is essential reading for people who want to understand what is going on and what the issues are. I thought I would read a paragraph from the report because I think it's instructive in many respects about what is going on. Basically Stephen Lewis' key observation is: "what we are dealing with at root and fundamentally is anti-black racism. While it is obviously true that every visible minority community experiences the indignities and wounds of systemic discrimination throughout southern Ontario, it is the Black community which is the focus. It is Blacks who are being shot. It is Black youth that is unemployed in excessive numbers. It is Black students who are being inappropriately streamed in schools. It is Black kids who are disproportionately dropping out. It is housing communities with large concentrations of Black residents where the sense of vulnerability and disadvantage is most acute. It is Black employees, professional and nonprofessional on whom the doors of upward equity slam shut. Just as the soothing balm of multiculturalism cannot mask racism, so racism cannot mask its primary target. It is important, I believe, to acknowledge not only that racism is pervasive, but that at different times in different places, it violates certain minority communities more than others."

I give you that because I think there are certainly echoes of that today. I was pleased this week to see the Government of Ontario announced that they were going to put an end to streaming of students in lower grades of high school because research has shown for many years that it disproportionately impacts certain groups more than others. 50 percent or so of Black high school students opt to take applied courses and basically as a result, are streamed out of the university system. I'm pleased the government of Ontario has taken that step. But as someone who watched events in 1992, who worked in the Toronto school board that summer on anti-racist education, it's disappointing to me and I think to lots of others that some of the things that I think have been fairly obvious issues for a long time have taken so long to address. So I think we all, meaning everybody, have to take an interest in these issues and it can't be left to diverse groups and diversity committees. I think we as a society have to take an interest in all of these things because we don't function optimally unless we have

people fully included and engaged.

What can we do? I think, number one, making sure that we can have honest conversations. I was invited to a dinner that was organized by not for profit a couple of years ago where they were piloting the idea of having dinner parties where people from different backgrounds, diverse and non-diverse would come and talk about their own experiences with diversity. The intention was to allow people in a safe setting to just talk about their experiences. I was struck by the richness of the conversation that ensued over the course of the dinner. I think, Les to the point you raised at the beginning, we have to make sure that we aren't stifling debate and that we aren't forcing everybody to think about the issues in the same way, that we aren't jumping on top of people who have good intentions but choose the wrong word. I think we have to make sure that we can have open, honest conversations.

Number two, I think we have to be intelligent. We need data. There's been some resistance for a long time about collecting data on demographics. I think it's essential that public institutions and companies as well, actually track the experiences of people because seemingly neutral programs can have differential outcomes for different groups. We have to be smarter about how people are experiencing systems and institutions.

Third, I think we have to make sure that we're building our pipeline of diverse talent. I mentioned I'm struck in my neighborhood in the city of Toronto by how much it has changed in the time since I've grown up. But I think we have to make sure that we are building a pipeline of diverse people who can assume leadership roles in public and private institutions. I think all of us should take an active interest in our public education system, because it is the place where diverse groups are integrated. Ninety five percent of the kids in Ontario go to public schools. We should all be committed to making sure those schools are properly funded, properly resourced, and that there are enrichment opportunities available.

Lastly, I think we have to make sure that we are creating opportunities. Giving people a helping hand and creating mentorship opportunities. I get an awful lot of calls from students at Rotman, at U of T Law School and other places. The emails come and they don't identify who the sender is and they're really people looking to have a coffee to understand what their ability to access different careers is. To me it indicates that not everybody has the same level of access, the same networks, the same support structures. All of us have to figure out how to involve ourselves more actively in the work of others. When the events transpired in the US a couple of months ago, I got a call from a friend of mine who he himself is a very successful, white man and he watched these events and he said, "Look, I want to do something to make a difference." He's had a fabulous career as a senior executive and now a corporate director. I connected him with a group at Rotman of Black students there who basically would benefit from having a broader network. I've watched him over the past few weeks completely engage and create opportunities for students who have all of the right qualifications. They've got MBAs, they've had excellent academic experiences, but what they've lacked is an introduction, an entree to the Canadian workforce at the right level. I have watched how he has made a difference and I think we should all be looking for opportunities to do that.

Les Gombik: Well Cornell, thank you very much. A lot to think about and I'm getting a whole bunch of questions. As we get into this, let's talk a little bit about some of the things that you just mentioned, Cornell. We'll go back and forth to you as well, Wes, around tracking. They say whatever gets measured, gets done. If we don't even know, how are we going to be able to do something about it? For example, there was an article in Bloomberg the other day that talked about Canadian listed companies back in 2015, only had twenty one percent of their boards occupied by women with the focused effort to try to get it to that 30 percent. Last year, it has gone up to 27 percent. So there is movement, but there's still a long way to go. Wes, you had shared some thoughts and some of your recent articles here around Blacks in particular on boards or in leadership teams. Tell us a little bit about the stats there and a little bit about what it is that you're trying to accomplish, because I think you're trying to get to a relatively small number, but it's still a gargantuan leap, isn't it?

Wes Hall: We're learning things from the diversity movement. What can we take from that and hopefully bring it to this initiative. The whole purpose of the diversity movement was to look at diversity in general and try to make sure that we have a diverse boardroom and a diverse C-suite. Then the conversation at some point switched to gender diversity and unfortunately, that left Black people, including Black women, behind. We were hoping what would happen is that we would all try to work together to move all of us, the underserved groups up. So when we look at these companies, for example, I mentioned that last year every single company on the TSX, had at least one woman on their board. Some have 40 percent. Some have 20 or 30 percent. But none of those have Blacks on their board. We're talking about Black women as well. I think they mentioned in the article that CIBC is the only one that had a Black woman that came as a result of an acquisition that they did in Chicago. So what do we learn from that? We say, OK, let's just try to make sure that when we're doing this part for Blacks that we don't neglect another underserved community in the process. When we're talking to folks right now, yes, we're focusing on Blacks because to solve a problem, you've got to be focused on that problem. We've seen the conversation years ago where minority was used to include Blacks, but it didn't. Diversity was used to include Blacks, but it didn't. So now let's just solve for what we're trying to solve, which is Black people and change. The report that Cornell read, that was 1992. Back in 1992, that a study was commissioned and they found that Black people were treated badly, at least in this province and we represent 10 percent of the population in Toronto. Nothing was done over that period of time. So what I'm hearing from folks right now is that, well, Wes we have to focus on all other groups. Well, Blacks and Indigenous peoples are the only two groups that are at the very bottom of our society. Everyone else has moved up and are represented.

The interesting thing about that is that Blacks have been a part of the fabric of Canada for a very long time. If somebody could put up image number one, please. Image number one is going to show that we had slavery in Canada and it was abolished in 1834. The reason why we had the Underground Railroad was because it was abolished earlier in Canada; people were leaving the US to come to Canada. The house I live in in Rosedale was built by the Jarvis family- Jarvis Street in Toronto. This is an ad. This ad was in the Nova Scotia Gazette and if you can read it, it says: "To Be Sold, a well-made Negro boy about 16 years old." This is in Canada. This is in Nova Scotia. So we've had a history here of Blacks being a

part of the fabric of the nation for a long time. In World War One, there was a group called the No. 2 Construction Battalion, made up of Black soldiers. They were told that this is a white man's war and you're not allowed to fight in it. They fought hard and finally, the army and government caved and said, OK, fine, you can, but you will not carry a gun and you won't see action. You're going to be a construction crew. You're going to cut trees down. You're going to build roads. My house, as I said, Sheriff Jarvis, the patriarch of the family, had six slaves. They lived in this house. So we've had a history of Black people contributing to this society in Canada for a very, very long time. And yes, slavery was abolished earlier. But at the end of the day, we're still in 2020, fighting for equality in Canada and there's something that's not fair about that. The same with the Indigenous community. They've been here before everybody else and in 2020, still fighting for equality. So if we have a social conscience, we're going to look at the least among us. Look at the least among us and say, how can we raise them up? How can we take care of them? How can we make sure that they're looked after?

The interesting thing about COVID-19 was that it just highlighted all those things right in front of us. We couldn't hide from them anymore because we're glued to the television and we're seeing all the injustices. We saw the disproportionate amount of Black people that died from COVID-19. We saw a disproportionate amount of Black people that actually got laid off and lost their jobs from COVID-19, even though they represent more of the first responders and health care workers than anybody else. We saw the way our elders were treated as a result of COVID-19. There was a lot of social ill that was actually displayed. And then we saw Blacks getting killed, in private, in public, in all these different areas. So people say, OK, it's now clear and obvious to us we have to do something about it and that's why we're here. But again, if we were collectively to look at these systemic issues, just like that report that was done in 1992, to say, let's focus on the group that is the least among us, and let's try to do our best to raise them up. If we raise them up, then everybody's raised up. That's really what the conversation is about. Again, we can't say in Canada, we do not have a problem. We do. We have to acknowledge it. If you don't acknowledge you have a problem, then you can't solve the problem. The fact that Black people in these organizations are speaking up in Canada suggests that you have a problem. I've been hearing a lot of folks say over the last little while we don't have systemic racism in Canada. I've never heard a Black person say that. I've never heard it said by a Black person that we do not have anti-Black systemic racism in Canada. I say to people, if you're not sure what your employees think, stop one of your Black employees in the hallway and say, hey, tell me what you think and listen with empathy and then you're going to see that you need to make some changes.

Les Gombik: Thanks, Wes. So clearly, there is a problem. I think the 300 plus people on the call today all certainly feel that there is. There are two primary themes around the questions people are asking. One is: what can we do? Let's make sure to save a few minutes specifically on real formal takeaways that each of us can go away and do to broadly to be able to impact our communities? Then also the other question is about the unintended consequences of focusing right now on, let's say, anti-Black systemic racism, what does that mean for Indigenous people? What does that mean for the traction that we've had in gender discrimination or people with disabilities or other peoples of color or LGBTQ? Cornell, you faced this or dealt with this with a number of your clients and you've probably got some thoughts broadly. Are you able to weigh in on your thoughts on this? How do we make sure that by focusing on one, we're not actually disadvantaging the traction or even the lack of traction that we've had in others?

Cornell Wright: I don't think there's any need to choose. I think it's clear that the goal is to eliminate barriers so that we can have full and equal participation by women, LGBTQ people, by people from other diverse backgrounds. We want to make sure that the Indigenous peoples of Canada, who have been excluded in many ways and just horribly treated over many years, that there's honor and justice for them. I don't think we have to choose. I think we have to make sure that we're educating ourselves about the issues. I think this moment, which happens to be focused on events that shone a light on inequality and anti-Black racism. I think that's just an opportunity, in effect, for everybody to reflect on inequality more generally. We have to make sure that we are honest enough with ourselves and that we're educated enough that we can have informed conversations about inequality in different forms. I think as Canadians, we tend to be very polite. We're very well intentioned, I think, very progressive, enlightened group of people. But our tradition, I think, has been not to talk about things. We do things. We intend things, but we don't like to talk about them. I think some of that has resulted in people not being fully aware of the experiences of others. I think our assumption has been not talking about something means we just do the right thing and that people will receive it in the right way and that will deal with the issues. I think at this moment has indicated that, no, not talking about it is actually contributing to the problem. We need to talk about it. We need to educate ourselves. We need to make sure that we're collecting data so that we are aware of how different groups are doing. There was an article in The Star about a month ago that talked about inequality and how different demographic groups were doing in terms of education, how they were doing about expectations on the part of kids to pursue higher education versus their actual lived experience in pursuing higher education. So a whole cross section of metrics. It was basically analyzing how different groups were faring. I think when you look at that data where you see people doing disproportionately less well relative to others, I think it behooves us to focus on those groups. I think the data has for some time shown that Black people, for a whole variety of reasons, do disproportionately less well across a number of metrics, whether it's education or unemployment or income or other areas. I think it's logical that you would apply focus to that group. But I think there are lots of other groups who experience inequality in other ways and we ought to be focusing on inequality in general of course.

Les Gombik: Right. I can't believe we're almost out of time. We've only got three minutes left. This has been a great conversation and talking about the issue obviously is a great first step for many of us. But we need your guidance. We need to know what it is that we can take away and do back in our offices, in our communities coming out of this conversation. So I'll stay with you, Cornell. You've got one minute. Please give us some guidance and then Wes you'll have one minute and then we've got to close. Cornell, what do we do?

Cornell Wright: I think our number one priority should be helping to build a vibrant pipeline of diverse people to pursue full leadership across a range of institutions. I think we ought to be engaging with our public school system. Our firm has partnered with a school in North York in a priority neighborhood. I can tell you it has made a huge difference, I think, for that school. It's also made a huge difference for our people who actually see an opportunity to contribute to the community. What I really love about some of the discussions that are happening, when I see, for example, that RBC announcement, is it's thinking about the other end. The people who are in the workforce today and making sure that we are consciously thinking about how to diversify the upper echelons of leadership roles, whether it's in the C-suite or on boards. I think that's a key priority and everything we can do to just shine a light on issues there and to help implement change I think is a good thing.

Les Gombik: Thank you, Cornell. Wes, you've got a minute.

Wes Hall: Yeah, I agree with it with all those points. Back in the late 60s and early 70s, you have all these people protesting the Vietnam War. They had flowers in their hair and they were smoking marijuana. They were saying let's be equal, let's love each other, the war is bad and all that type of stuff. Fast forward to 2020. Those are the people in leadership positions. We're still having the conversations. Why is that? Because of the way the system works. All those people were elevated and they didn't see a whole group of people that they were fighting for before, got left behind. They just didn't see it. When they're at the boardroom table or in the C-suite and look around them, they didn't see that those people are absent. They didn't see that those people are absent from their neighborhoods and from the restaurants that they go to or places they go on vacation. They didn't see it because we're conditioned to be blinded by the plight of others. We come up with excuses as to why we shouldn't pay attention to it. So what I'm saying is to just look around you and be observant. Again there's unconscious bias there. There are some people who are racist, but for the most part, the overwhelming amount of people are not. But they have this unconscious bias because the system has kind of conditioned them in that way. Be aware, look around you. Look at people that are underserved, that are the least among you, that are least in your community, that are the least in your workforce and see what you can do about change in your life. If you take that position, I'm telling you, like in the workforce, in your community, it's going to be diverse naturally. It's going to happen because you're looking at what's the right thing to do and that's the only yardstick that you're going to use to make a decision. Finally, just want to say, there are statistics that McKinsey put out this year that says that if you have a culturally and racially diverse workforce, you're going to have a 36 percent chance of outperforming your peer group. On the other end of that, if you're not, you have less than 19 percent chance of underperforming your peer group if you're not gender and culturally diverse. So you're actually penalized for not being diverse in your organization. So people look at it to say we're doing people a favor if we bring them up. No, you're not doing them a favor. You're actually doing yourself a favor because your company is going to perform better when you do that.

Les Gombik: You've given us so much to think about. When we talk about unconscious bias, we don't know because it's unconscious, we're not thinking about it. So I think these conversations are helping us try to unpack and figure out where to go. At Caldwell, we do executive recruiting for a living; we don't just run webinars like this, although these are a lot of fun. But a lot of times when we're conducting executive searches for board directors or for senior leaders, organizations are saying go and find us somebody with great experience and capability. But as we talked about today, a lot of these underserved communities haven't been given the opportunity to get the experience. So they oftentimes don't get the opportunity to get those more senior level roles because they don't have the experience, but they have that capability. So I think one of the things that I would ask as well for everybody on this call who are in senior leadership positions making senior leadership hires is, also consider capability and not solely experience and I think that will also really help the cause. So here we are at the end of the hour. We've gone over and you know how we try every week to keep this on time. So let's stop here. Now, depending on where you are in North America, it's summertime and it's getting warm and we need to take a little bit of a break. So we're going to take the next few weeks off. But when we do come back, we'll probably have a session in August and then we'll get back at it hard and fast in September. We're going to get back to some of the main topics that we've had but we're going to definitely keep a keen focus and eye on broader anti-Black systemic

racism and diversity, because I think from the feedback we're getting so far, this has been a tremendous learning experience and really important to have talked about this like we have today. Wes and Cornell, you were just outstanding this morning. We really, genuinely appreciate your time and thank you for everything that you're both doing on this. We wouldn't be able to have these forums if you didn't have the courage to doing the things that you're doing. So thank you both very, very much for being with us today.

Wes Hall: Thanks, Les.

Cornell Wright: Thank you, Les.

Les Gombik: So for everybody that's still on the call, we're going to have this webinar posted on our website by the end of the day. So you'll be able to access it, to share it with any of your peers or colleagues. We're also going to take some of the questions that we just didn't get a chance to answer. Wes and Cornell, hopefully you've got a few minutes today that we can answer some of those questions and we'll also post the answers to those questions online as well on our site so that we can try to get all of that feedback back to you. We can make this more than just a conversation and we can make this call to action, something that we're starting to execute on so that we're not reading another report 30 years later like you referred to, Cornell. So thank you to everybody for participating in all of our calls to date, especially to this one. Everybody be safe. Have a great day and keep working at it. Thank you.



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