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MBS ([00:00](#)):

So, did you have rules growing up? Yeah, me too. Of course. I'm currently staying in my childhood bedroom right now. I'm visiting Australia and spending time with my parents. And honestly, I'm kind of having flashbacks. As the eldest child, I definitely got some of the "good in theory rules" that mum and dad as new parents were trying to test out and to impose. So, I had no white sugar. You can only use honey, no bike before I turned 10, even though all my friends got bikes when they were like three or something ridiculous, half an hour of TV per week. I know you had unlimited screen time, half an hour of TV per week, but , there are rules. And then there are rules. Welcome 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them, a book that is a favorite of theirs.



I'm Michael Bungay Stanier, the eponymous MBS and my guest, Dr. Caroline Heldman, an activist, an academic, and author. Well, she grew up with rules.

Caroline ([01:11](#)):

I was raised in a really gender restricted household. I was raised Pentecostal evangelical by a preacher, and a homemaker who is not allowed to drive until she was 41 years old. And so I grew up understanding that I wasn't treated the same way that my brother was treated, right? I wasn't treated fully human. I was homeschooled, not allowed to wear dress pants. I only wore dresses, wasn't allowed to cut my hair.

MBS ([01:39](#)):

Growing up in a tiny religious town, and not allowed to watch television or consume any other media. Caroline didn't know there was any other way to live. She had no notion of the world outside this contained ward space, but when Caroline went to college, things didn't just change, they... In her words, exploded.

Caroline ([02:02](#)):

I've always been a little obnoxious little fighter as my parents would put it. They prayed for me, every Sunday they were praying for me, their radical daughter, and I think what ended up happening is as I got more educated about systemic social injustice, and started to realize all of the institutions at play, and that it wasn't individual level thing. I just got more and more radical. So, education radicalized me, and then once I saw what I saw, I couldn't unsee it.

MBS ([02:36](#)):

It's one thing to see injustice for what it truly is, but Caroline's radicalization through education spurred her into action. Caroline became an activist, and a very busy activist.



Caroline ([02:50](#)):

I am a professor, I'm a political scientist. And I chair the Department of Critical Theory and Social Justice in Los Angeles, California. I also am the executive director of the Representation Project, which is a non-profit organization started by Jennifer Siebel Newsom, who's the first partner of California. And our mission is to challenge intersectionally challenged gender norms and stereotypes that are harmful. And we do this through films, youth programs, research, and education. I'm also the curator of a civil rights museum in New Orleans, and also the Lower Ninth Ward Living museum, and co-founder of the New Orleans women's and children's shelter there. And I do sexual violence advocacy, or work to support the Cosby survivors, the Weinstein survivors. I was one of the early architects of the campus anti-rape movement. So, a lot of different hats.

MBS ([03:47](#)):

But if you're thinking this activism is in reaction, almost a rejection of the way she was brought up. Well, in many ways, it's actually inspired by it. And one important lesson came from her father.

Caroline ([04:01](#)):

Oddly enough of my political activism comes from my biblical upbringing. So, my father was someone who picked up, over a thousand hitchhikers, and brought them home over the course of my childhood. He was somebody who... We were incredibly poor, dirt poor. He was... Suffered from schizophrenia, he was a really prominent jazz musician that made his living as a janitor. So, we were dirt poor, but this is a man who would give a stranger a shirt off his back if he needed it. And so he, my father, lived by the credo, the biblical saying that "if you've done it unto the least of these, my children, you've done it unto me." In other words, if you would help the most marginalized, and those in the greatest need then it is as though you have helped me.



Caroline ([04:49](#)):

And so when I was seven years old, I was working in soup kitchens, and homeless shelters, and singing in nursing homes. And when I'm 10 years old, I'm protesting outside of, well, outside of abortion clinics. And of course I've done a complete about face on that. I'm pro-choice.

MBS ([05:10](#)):

Right.

Caroline ([05:10](#)):

I work in reproductive rights, but my activism started really early on based upon the biblical teachings of my father, who said, "look, this is actually how you're supposed to live in the world." So, I thought it was totally normal to have hitchhikers coming home every night, and staying with us sometimes for years, but mostly just for the weekend.

MBS ([05:31](#)):

What brought you to the challenge of trying to address some of these deep inequalities at a systemic level? When I think of my... I'm going to call it dabbling in activism, because it maybe even that's overstating it, but I tended to be out kind of walking or protesting about an incident, or an event, or some kind of prescribed topic without fully really understanding, sort of systemic dynamic that might be playing out. What opened up the doorway to understanding the force of systems and structures?

Caroline ([06:12](#)):

I initially got my political training in Congress, where I worked as a legislative correspondent and later an aid. And then when I went to graduate school, I realized that I've been doing it all wrong, right? Because I was seeing these social injustices, like racism, and sexism, and intersectional issues. I was seeing



them as policy moments, as something here's the problem and you address it through policy. And then when I got into graduate school and started looking at the vast number of causes of this social problem, I realized, oh, well, passing that one piece of legislation isn't enough. And then I have this shift in my thinking in terms of effectiveness, where I realized that it's actually policy, we don't need all approaches, but policy is not the answer, right? That a more fundamental, effective way of bringing about social change is by shifting hearts and minds.

Caroline ([07:03](#)):

And that's when I realized, "oh, I need to be doing media work." And I worked for Fox News for years, kind of as the liberal punching bag to interrupt their right wing dribble. I also worked-

MBS ([07:15](#)):

Yeah.

Caroline ([07:15](#)):

I worked for CNN International, and Spectrum News, and have done a lot of media work in order to be in this space where I'm shifting hearts and minds. And I also do research on media because media representations. If we wanted to change the world tomorrow, just shifting your media representations, and you'll see new worlds opening up, you'll see new beliefs, and new behaviors. And so I think graduate school training, as difficult as it was, really opened my eyes to the fact that things are way more complex than a single piece of legislation, or a single event, or action is going to fix.

MBS ([07:51](#)):



What have you learned over the years about winning hearts and minds? Has your understanding and your approach changed at all in terms of how you try and kind of make those connections?

Caroline ([08:05](#)):

That's a great question, Michael. I would say that I am less optimistic about shifting hearts and minds today than I was when I started out as a young academic. I would say that I know that even over the course of four years, right? A college education, it's really difficult to even get the most thoughtful people to just shift their thinking, as in not telling them what to think, but just get them to be a little more thoughtful in how they approach things.

MBS ([08:32](#)):

Yeah.

Caroline ([08:33](#)):

And change is just, it's glacial, right? And it's a little, and slow. So yeah, I think I've come to terms with the fact that once we hard wire beliefs then, once we become conscious of being conscious, it's really hard to undo our soft programming. And so if we really want to address human beings, and their biases and prejudices, and what they have kind of taken in as part of their social DNA, we have to get to them really before they become conscious of being conscious around the age of six or seven.

MBS ([09:08](#)):

When I hear you say that, I just become conscious of my own feelings of optimism and pessimism around kind of social change, which is like, there's sometimes I'm like, it's amazing, and you see a leap forward; like Stacey Abrams in Georgia is one kind of specific and American moment where you're like, "wow, look, that was something that changed. And actually something



happened." But also that just broadly that how hard it is to actually shift hearts and minds at times. How do you stay optimistic? Or maybe how do you stay committed to this work if you're not feeling optimistic?

Caroline ([09:50](#)):

Another great question. So, I am probably the most pessimistic person about social change, but constantly dedicated to it, right? Because what is the alternative? The alternative is to not work for social change. So, whether it's sexual violence, or racial justice, or intersectional gender racial justice. The alternative is to not do anything, and I don't want to live in that world. In some sense, as a professor, my students asked me the same question. They say, "wait a minute, I'm already so cynical, what do I do with this?" Well, what are you going to do with it in terms of being the most effective you can, and I use the metaphor of physicist where, if the best activists, even the most prominent activists, the Stacey Abrams's of the world, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s of the world, the Rachel Carson's of the world are pushing this big ball, right?

Caroline ([10:47](#)):

Or this large stone, they will make a minor amount of change. And the moment at which they stop pushing that rock up the hill, will be the moment of backlash. So, for example, Stacey Abrams, yes; shifted everything in Georgia. So, how has Georgia responded? How has the backlash come into play? Immediately restricting voter rights in the state to the point where you can't even give water to somebody waiting in line. So, yeah but that's the best we can hope for. And that's okay because there's dignity, and there's meaning in the fight itself. And I also tell my students nine times out of 10, you're going to lose. So, it's those that, that one win for that one moment before there's a backlash that you really need to celebrate that. And that buoys me, I think from one project to another.

MBS ([11:36](#)):



How do you look after... How do you practice self care? And how do you build resilience and grit in a time like this? I'm asking for a friend. I, me. How do you keep going in this work, Caroline?

Caroline ([11:52](#)):

I practice daily self care, and I don't mean like some neo-liberal, oh, I'm grinding really hard for capitalism, and then I'm going to go and take a fancy vacation. It's a daily practice. So, I actually have an acronym that for all of the things I do on a daily basis. I do... I work out for an hour, I journal every single day, I have a gratitude every single day, I start the day with a meditation. And then I do some one fun thing, whether it's singing or dancing, I do this every single day, and I cross it off, and I put a heart around it. I'm done with it. Because if I didn't have that to anchor me, I wouldn't be able to do it, because I'm working somewhere between 80 and 105 hours a week. And I love work because all of my work is meaningful.

Caroline ([12:40](#)):

All of it, even if it's I'm throwing one little starfish back, and there are tons on the beach I won't be able to throw in. Or it's systemic change, and I'm creating a machine that helps the starfish all go back into the ocean if they're stranded. Whether systemic or direct, it's the constant grind requires meditation and journaling and working out, I think. And if you practice that, it's like Franklin Covey calls it, this time management system, calls it sharpening the saw. And I love that metaphor because it just allowed you to just cut through your work.

MBS ([13:15](#)):

Caroline, how do you decide where to put your time and your focus? When you introduced yourself, you're like, "I'm a woman who wears several hats, and then you're listed 43 hats, so it's something ridiculous." There's a lot going on, and



having read some of your bios I'm like, I don't think you even mentioned some of the stuff that you're involved in. How do you pick your battles?

Caroline ([13:42](#)):

Another great question. So, all of your questions are great, Michael.

MBS ([13:48](#)):

Thank you.

Caroline ([13:49](#)):

This one, so I pick my battles using my personal mission statement. So, I did a lot of work when I was actually a teenager, and I do it every year where I identify my core values. I identify my roles, and then I fine tune my personal mission statement, which has been the same for decades, which is that I want to reduce the pain and suffering of marginalized people. And so under that umbrella, under that as my life's mission, which comes from my values, I try to make sure that my time actually reflects my mission. And so, when I have something in front of me, or a crossroads, it is really clear to me which one's going to fit my mission better. And most of the time it's a matter of does it fit my mission better or worse? Most of the time it's not mission or off mission, but it really does allow... It's a beacon for moving forward.

MBS ([14:46](#)):

Caroline, what book have... Or what have you chosen to read for us today? Because I know it's actually not a book.

Caroline ([14:52](#)):

It is not a book. It is an essay from Essence Magazine from 1984 by James Baldwin, and it's an essay called On Being White...and Other Lies.

MBS ([15:05](#)):



And when did you first come across this essay? When did it come into your life?

Caroline ([15:10](#)):

This essay came into my life as an early graduate student. And it was the first moment at which I started to think of race as a social construct because it referenced a lot of things about race that I just didn't know. So, it started me on this long journey of, oh, well let me read a lot of other literature. So, I understand what James Baldwin is talking about, and I did, right? I read... Ian Haney-Lopez has this great book called *Race by Law*, meaning that the law decides who is white and who is not. And then a more recent book, Nell Painter, a historian from Princeton, has put out a book called *The History of White People*. And it documents how we created race as a category in order to organize our world. And it just didn't exist 400 years ago.

MBS ([16:04](#)):

Well, look, this sounds fascinating. I actually... I don't get a chance to read all the books that my guests are reading, because they're like, here's a huge book, and I'm reading two pages. But I got a chance to read this essay beforehand. So, I know it's coming and I'm excited to hear it, and hear you read it. So, over to you.

Caroline ([16:22](#)):

But this cowardice, this necessity of justifying a totally false identity and of justifying what must be called a genocidal history, has placed everyone now living in the hands of the most ignorant and powerful people the world has ever seen: And how did they get that way? By deciding that they were white. By opting for safety instead of life. By persuading themselves that a black child's life meant nothing compared to a white child's life. By abandoning their children to the things white men could buy. By informing their children, that Black women, Black men and Black children had no human integrity. That those who call themselves white were bound to respect. And in this debasement and



definition of black people, they debased and defamed themselves. And having brought humanity to the edge of oblivion because they think they are white. Because they think they are white, they do not dare confront the ravage and the line of their history.

Caroline ([17:20](#)):

Because they think they are white, they cannot allow themselves to be tormented by the suspicion that all men are brothers. Because they think they are white, they are looking for or bombing into existence, stable populations, cheerful natives, and cheap labor. Because they think they are white, they believe, as even no child believes, in the dream of safety. Because they think they are white, however vociferous they may be and however multitudinous, they're speechless as Lot's wife, looking backward changed into a pillar of salt. However, White being absolutely a moral choice, and there are no white people, the crisis of leadership for those of us whose identity has been forged, or branded, as Black is nothing new.

Caroline ([18:09](#)):

We, who are not black before we got here either, who were defined as black by the slave trade, have paid for the crisis of leadership in the white community for a very long time, and have resoundingly, even when we face the worst about ourselves, survived, and triumphed over it. If we had not survived and triumphed, there would not be a Black American alive. And the fact that we are still here, even in suffering, darkness, danger, endlessly defined by those who do not dare define, or even confront, themselves is the key to the crisis in white leadership. The past informs us of various kinds of people, criminals, adventurers and saints, to say nothing, of course, of popes, but it is the Black condition, and only that, which informs us concerning white people. It is a terrible paradox, but those who believed that they could control and define



Black people divested themselves of the power to control and define themselves.

MBS ([19:14](#)):

Wow. James Baldwin is so eloquent and brilliant. What's at the heart of this for you, Caroline?

Caroline ([19:26](#)):

I think there are two things that strike me about this essay. The first is that when you're reading it, even if you've never been introduced to the concept of race as a social construct, and one that's relatively recent meaning yes, there are skin tone differences. But the idea that we would organize this into race, and then use that to create hierarchies in society, that's a choice. That's a social construct.

Caroline ([19:53](#)):

We could organize races based upon finger length, and would there actually be differences in finger length? Yes. Would there be a meaningful way to construct our society, and have hierarchy? No. So, the first thing that strikes me is you read this, and you start to see even without all of the historical evidence, and the legal analysis, you start to see how whiteness is constructed by rejecting and debasing blackness, right? So, both are social constructs. The second thing that strikes me about this is the high price that white people pay for believing that they're white, right? And Baldwin is saying, look, this comes at a really high price to believe you're whites, and to debase blackness in order to create your core identity as a racial group. It comes at a really high personal price and a dehumanizing price .

MBS ([20:57](#)):

That repeated phrase from the section that you read, "because they think they are white." It's a really provocative phrase because if I'm listening to that, I'm like,



"I don't think I'm white. I am white. What are you talking about, James Baldwin?" But can you say more about what it means to have your race constructed? I get what you're saying around, it's an arbitrary distinction around look, we just got some skin colors, we're going to sort them in a certain way. And then we're going to set up a hierarchy based on that. But if I'm a white person, meaning I'm basically on the top of that hierarchy, I'm not really aware of how my race is created. Can you say more around that... on my race is constructed?

Caroline ([21:43](#)):

Yeah. So, I think you've hit the nail on the head. The norm, meaning whiteness in this case, or the norm for gender is maleness.

MBS ([21:53](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Caroline ([21:54](#)):

The norm gets erased even as a category, right? So, we tend to think when we think gender, we think women. When we think race, we think people of color. And so, the norm and the fact that it gets raised as even a racial category, speaks to the dominance that it holds in the hierarchy. I think a great response to you saying, Michael, "well, I am white." Baldwin is really... He's not very interested in skin color, right? He's interested in the categories themselves. So, what does it mean to be white?

MBS ([22:27](#)):

Right.

Caroline ([22:27](#)):

And one of the things that he called upon when he was living in Castaway in 1987, was this rejection of whiteness as a category. At the same time, we have



to acknowledge that race functions and operates in immaterial ways, right? It creates material inequalities across... Every culture, you've got white people who end up having economic, social, and political privilege. And so, it's a fine line to walk, to say, look, I'm going to reject race as a social construct, even though it operates and functions in very real ways. So, it's a matter of addressing the ways in which it materially affects people with the longer term goal in mind of getting abolishing race as a way in which we organize our worlds.

MBS ([23:20](#)):

How do I make my whiteness... And you can have this exact same question around my maleness, how do I become aware of that rather than just going, "this is just normal." How do I become more kind of mindful and present to it and the implications of that?

Caroline ([23:42](#)):

That's a great question. And I want to take a quick step back and say that people in positions of privilege like white people, right? Know that they have privilege. They might not know it explicitly, but white people walk through the world, and are constantly in situations where they enact their whiteness, right? And men do the same thing. It reminds me of an exercise I do in my class where I say to all the men, I know how you think. You're sitting in a classroom with women, and you're learning about politics, and politics is a male domain. And so, you hear your female colleague say something really smart, and you think to yourself, wow, that's really smart, but you're not threatened by it because you know that the world in which you're entering, it doesn't matter. She's still a woman, right?

Caroline ([24:33](#)):

You're going to have that privilege. And we know that at our core, because when you ask white people, for example, how much money it would take for them to



become a person of color, a black person, a Latinx person, an Asian person. They will give you a dollar sign, which means that we inherently know that we have this privilege., And so, I think there are a number of things we can do, right? The first thing we can do is with any system of power is recognize it, because if you don't recognize it, then you are hopelessly enacting it in ways that you don't intend, and sometimes ways you might be conscious of, but recognizing it as a system of power, one that privileges you in non-meritorious ways. And then the second big thing to do would be to constantly push against that.

Caroline ([25:17](#)):

So, when the thoughts, the racist thoughts, the sexist thoughts, the privileged thoughts come into your brain, that you are not acting upon them. And then I would say find that thing that you're most passionate about, and that social justice issue. If you want a meaning... If you want a happy life and happiness really isn't... Maybe, do you want a joyful life? Because happiness is not the human default, but if you want life punctuated by lots of moments of joy, the research is really clear on this. You have close friends, not a lot, but you have friends with whom you're intimate, romantic, platonic, otherwise. Just close personal relations, and the second big predictor of the higher levels of wellbeing, and in what we call happiness is serving others. So, find your service, and if that service happens to be around race, so that you put them all together, you are constantly interrogating your privilege.

Caroline ([26:08](#)):

You are acting upon it, trying to eradicate it in yourself at the individual level, and then you go and do something about it, right? You engage in and hopefully deep solidarity work where you learn about a group, and then you elevate the voices of folks within that group, and you work side by side. This idea of Lilla Watson, who is an Australian Aboriginal activist, who said, and I'm paraphrasing



here. She said, "if you've come here to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you've come here because your liberation is bound up with my liberation, then let's work together."

MBS ([26:42](#)):

I love that quote. Caroline, do you think of yourself as an activist?

Caroline ([26:48](#)):

Definitely, yeah. Every day of my life.

MBS ([26:53](#)):

I'm curious to know what that term means to you, because I am not sure if I'm an activist. Like I have a degree of passion around a number of social justice issues, and the label can feel a little frightening for me, and a little fraudulent. Like I'm wondering if I'm taking a label that is more rightfully owned and worn, and claimed by other people doing other work. So, I'm just curious to know how... What being an activist means to you.

Caroline ([27:36](#)):

Well, the first thing I would say is I really disliked the kind of activist Olympics, where I'm woker than thou or I'm more activist than thou. I think there are lots of different ways to engage in activism, right? Media activism, electoral activism, taking to the streets, taking to social media, liking something, reposting something. And I don't... It takes everything. I don't actually think that online activism is slacktivism. My own research finds that it plays a profound role in amplifying things that are happening on the ground, and in spreading messages and shifting hearts and minds. So, really any sort of action you're taking, I would say at some level makes you an activist. For me, an activist is defined as somebody who acts to bring about social or political change.

MBS ([28:25](#)):



Right.

Caroline ([28:25](#)):

And I embrace the label mostly because I spend most of my waking hours, try to figure out ways to engage in activism in order to shift the culture, or shift a particular policy.

Caroline ([28:38](#)):

Whether it's organizing a campaign to pass the equal rights amendment in the US, which I'm the national co-chair of that campaign, or trying to... We effectively abolished the time limit for prosecuting rape in the state of California. And now that's happened in six other states. So, whether it's electoral activism, or I get arrested protesting, on occasion. I try to not get arrested, but it happens because the Police have been pretty brutal in the past four years in terms of BLM protests. It's Ferguson, Missouri, horrible violence against protestors, they are the same violence I saw this last summer in Beverly Hills. And I embrace the label, I wouldn't go around saying I'm an activist. And I'm not interested in power or ego, but certainly taking action for social change is kind of why I'm here on this planet, I think.

MBS ([29:34](#)):

What has shifted in what tactics and strategies you use as an activist? Are there things that you used to do that you don't do anymore? Are there things that you do now that are relatively new to your tool kit of how to be an effective activist?

Caroline ([29:53](#)):

Yes. So, I started off wanting to be president of the United States, and if not president of the United States, to be a Senator. So, electoral politics was my passion. And then I wrote- [crosstalk 00:30:08]

MBS ([30:08](#)):



Considering you wrote a book about a woman being president of the United States, didn't she? Yeah.

Caroline ([30:11](#)):

Couple books about women presidents.

MBS ([30:16](#)):

One of Caroline's first book was about Madam President. So yeah. But sorry, I stepped over your there, Caroline. Sorry.

Caroline ([30:22](#)):

No, not at all. In fact, you bring this up, and it's funny to me because it's like a different person who wanted to be that. I have no desire for power, and I will say that over time. And I keep getting elevated to leadership positions in various organizations, which is a common thing, right? When you're spending a lot of time and energy on something that just happens, but I have no interest in power.

Caroline ([30:44](#)):

And so, that's been the big shift. I used to think electoral politics, and power were going to be my life. And then realized, oh, wait a minute, it's hearts and minds that need to shift. And that's a much harder pull, and it's not going to be through policy. And while I love my people who are running for office and winning elected office, it's not my path. And I would say that more recently, I've realized when we launched... Especially in back in 2013, when we launched the new campus anti-rape movement, that social media is an indispensable tool for social change now. So, that's new in my repertoire, but most of my work, I'm best as a grassroots outside agitator, even if I'm passing laws, or we're protesting, or doing whatever it is; I'm really far more effective on the outside.

MBS ([31:36](#)):



I'm really struck by your statement, "I don't want power." And I just want to get nosy about that because personally, I want people like you to have power. If you think of the Martin Luther King Jr.'s definition of power, which I'm going to get wrong, but I think you'll probably know it better than me, but it's about being able to force and make social change happen. And maybe I'm collapsing too many things into your statement, "I don't want power." Maybe you're saying I don't want formal authority, but I do... But I'm just curious to react to that kind of that statement, "I don't want power."

Caroline ([32:19](#)):

Yeah. So, I don't want to be in charge of people, although I am.

MBS ([32:25](#)):

Right.

Caroline ([32:27](#)):

But I don't want to have a big budget, and a big title, and get people to do things, right? I actually don't think that's where social change lies, but also it's just not... It's not an interest to me, I think that power becomes an end unto itself. And it becomes something that ends up shaping people, and changing them, and I'm not interested in that. What I am interested in is being one very effective person in a group of effective people.

Caroline ([32:56](#)):

So, I love coalitional politics, I lead a nonprofit; I have a staff of eight, and they do their work and I make sure they have the resources to do it; but I'm not interested in telling them what to do. It's much more about what a collective group of brains can come up with in order to shift the culture. And I think that's... If you were to look at how real change happens, it would be that even though we tend to elevate individuals, it actually tends to be a small dedicated group of



people who work together, and don't want credit. I'm all about the cause. I don't want the title, I don't want credit, I don't care as long as the culture shifts.

MBS ([33:38](#)):

Caroline, this has been wonderful conversation, Thank you. Final question for you is simply this, what needs to be said in this conversation between you and me that hasn't yet been said?

Caroline ([33:49](#)):

That's a good question. I would just implore anyone who's listening who thinks that they should also be an outside agitator because I am an outside agitator that that's not at all the message that I am trying to convey. I think it takes outsiders and insiders. I think it takes... On the inside, whether you're in a corporation or you're in politics, you could get in there, and then elevate yourself to a position of leadership, and then become radical and make the radical change that is needed. Or you could be radical on the outside, or you could be kind of a mainstream nonprofit, or a mainstream social movement.

Caroline ([34:35](#)):

It takes all of us. And I know Hillary Clinton really got beaten up by saying this about the civil rights movement, where she said, look, it took Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Pushing on the outside with a massive social movement, and it took President Johnson to actually sign the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to effectuate change. And so, while I prefer taking the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. route, and not that I'm comparing myself to him in any way, but that's my preferred method is the outside agitation. It really does take both. And so, I hope that anyone who is inclined to go into formal politics or corporate institutions does that.

MBS ([35:23](#)):



As an Australian, who's lived in Australia and England, a tiny bit of time in the States, and mostly in Canada, it's really taken me a while to discover the words of Baldwin. I admire them deeply, this combination of intellect, and eloquence, and provocation. I'm grateful Caroline read that to me and to you. I'm also struck by Caroline's final words, which are about finding your place to be a force for change. In her word, she is an outside agitator, an agitator who is pessimistic, but completely dedicated. That phrase of hers has really got me thinking, I'm honestly not... I don't really know what to do with that. It's something that I'm really pondering. But her core isn't, "this is my path, join me, this is how to do change."

MBS ([36:15](#)):

Actually what she's saying, I want you to make sure that you heard it is, this is a path and what's your path? Are you an insider or an outsider? Are you an agitator? Or... I don't know what the opposite of an agitator is, maybe a manipulator. Are these even either or choices, but I do hope that you feel there is a choice for you to make. I take from Baldwin's writing that we all live in structures that are constructed and diminishing. That most of us pay a price. There's a constructed system I know just a little more about, I certainly believe that patriarchy is a cause of harm for men and women. So, really what I'm taking away from this is it's confirmation bias because I care about this so much. How do we, how do you, how do I, be a force for change? What choices will you make now that you see being a force for change really is necessary for a more just, for a better world. You can learn more about Caroline's work at drcarolineheldman.com. So, Dr. D-R Caroline C-A-R-O-L-I-N-E Heldman H-E-L-D-M-A-N.com.

MBS ([37:36](#)):

And thank you for listening to the podcast, listening all the way to the end. I really appreciate it. You're probably a keener. And if you are keen, you might



want to join the free membership we have, Duke Humfrey, named after a cool library in Oxford, where they kept all the good stuff. And look, there's all the good stuff, not out in the world for this podcast, but in The Duke Humfrey's, this free membership site, you'll sign up and you get access to some unreleased episodes, some transcripts, some bonuses of all my keener top 10 books.

MBS ([38:05](#)):

So, if you're interested in any of that, check it out at mbs.works/podcast that's the website. And this podcast grows by recommendation. So,, if you're so moved to think of somebody who could, who would, I guess, enjoy Caroline's conversation with me, who believes in activism, who's looking to make a difference, and be a force for change, either as an insider or as an outsider, please do forward the episode to her, or to him, or to them, whoever they might be. And if you're so moved to give me a rating on the podcast app you're listening to, well that's a bonus for me as well. Thank you in advance. You're awesome, and you're doing great.