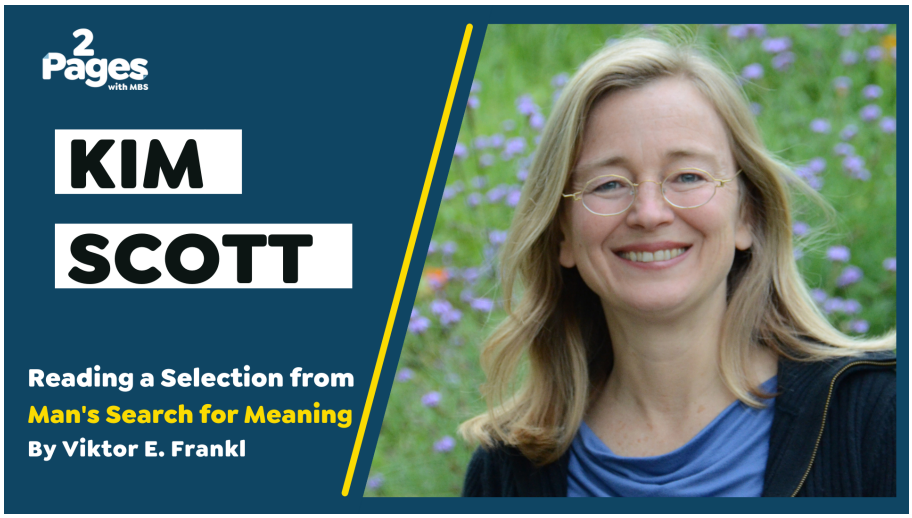

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MBS (00:00):

One of the quotes I come back to time and time again is from Winston Churchill, "We shape our buildings and thereafter, they shape us." It reminds me that we're creatures of the systems in which we exist. This delightful fantasy that we sometimes hold of us being atomic individuals free and clear of everything is, well, it's ridiculous, really. We are defined by our relationships. We're shaped by the visible and mostly invisible hierarchies and biases and rules and prejudices and norms that nudge our lives both inside and outside work. if you think that's true, and my I guess is you probably do, the question I sit with is, well, what's needed to find and carve out and, honestly, fight for freedom and justice and dignity, not just for you, but more provocatively, really for others? What do you do when you uncover and decide to own your own biases and your own prejudices?

MBS (01:09):

Welcome to Two Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. If you've ever worked in an organization, big or small, and thought you could probably do a better job at getting or giving feedback, you may have heard of my guest, Kim Scott. She is the author of Radical Candor and a new wonderful book just out called Just Work. She has a wonderful play on her title, not just only work, but work that has justice woven into it. In fact, my own company, Box of Crayons, has hired Kim's company to come in and help us. Now, Kim started this conversation with a bit of a confession.

Kim (01:52):

So my whole business career was really an elaborate scheme to subsidize my novel writing habit. At heart, I am a writer, but it turns out it's really hard to make your living as a writer and what interests me about writing is really thinking about what are the kinds of situations where people can do their best work and be really happy and love their work and love the people they're working with?

MBS (02:19):

That's a big, hard question and it emerged for Kim early in her career when she was working in Moscow, in Russia.

Kim (02:27):

I took a train ride from Moscow to Paris, and you could just see out the window life was getting better and better and better as you headed west. I thought, "Why is this even a debate? One of these systems is working and the other one just isn't." So I think that's in a lot of my books and is the question that obsesses me, "How can we create environments in which we can all be productive and happy?" It shouldn't be that hard, right?

MBS (02:59):

It shouldn't be that hard, but it is, and the experience stuck with her. Kim had been working at a startup after studying literature at university and she came to a point where something had to change for her.

Kim (03:12):

Yeah. In 1999, I decided that I was miserable in my work. Well, I'd been working at a startup and my goal for 1999 was to figure out how to be happy. I knew that one of the things I had always wanted to do but never dared to do was write. So I started writing a novel and I started taking a writing class with a wonderful woman who wrote a book called So, You Want to Write a Novel, very straightforward.

MBS (03:51):

So Kim is deciding to live the life she'd always imagined. It takes real determination, real grit, I guess, to break out of a system that would otherwise contain her. we're going to go deeper into that when we, and she reads her two pages. But first having written some books myself, I know how tricky it is to navigate that creative project, so I asked her how she kept going.

Kim (04:14):

For me, writing it was almost like a compulsion. It was something that if I didn't do it, I will sometimes break out in hives when I am supposed to be writing. there's a great book called the Midnight Disease about writing.

MBS (04:29):

Oh, I love that.

Kim (04:30):

The author of that book says writing is just something she can't not do, and I feel much the same way about it once I got started. I think for me the process to start writing, I had to turn off my critic in my head.

MBS (04:48):

Yes.

Kim (04:48):

Turn off all the self-judgment and just write, and that's my favorite part of writing, actually. It's like an opportunity to explore inside your own mind because we often don't know what we think.

MBS (05:02):

Totally. You write this stuff down and you're like, "Oh, that's really interesting. I didn't realize that was in my head."

Kim (05:07):

Yeah, and "Do I really believe that, and is that true?" Often the things that I realize that I believe that I didn't know I believe I don't really agree with. So it was an opportunity to root around in my own mind and see what's there and see what I would like to throw away. It's like mental house cleaning. What are the ideas that should be thrown away? What are the ideas that should be polished up? So that's the first part, and that's the second hardest part is getting inside my own head. But the hardest part, of course, is getting back out and that's where feedback comes in, actually. So when I wrote both Radical Candor and my next book Just Work, I wrote it in Google docs and I had over a hundred collaborators in each.

MBS (05:52):

Oh, amazing.

Kim (05:52):

So a lot of people had given me thought, not all of them read every word, but people would read parts and they would hate parts. They would love parts. They wouldn't understand parts that I thought were very clear, and clearly they weren't clear if, if people weren't getting it.

MBS (06:09):

For my latest book, I sent out an early draft to a select circle of people. I got one piece of feedback saying, "I read the first 35 pages of this, and I have no idea what this book is actually about." I was like, "Oh, oh," but it's true. I rewrote the book because of Misha's particular feedback.

Kim (06:31):

Yeah. Well, how do you keep going, because it is hard? It is really hard, writing.

MBS (06:39):

I find it really helpful if it's an idea that I keep trying to put down, because I'm quite good at generating ideas of random things to do. Most of them, I will often write them on a sheet of paper and I have a folder called Ideas and Book Ideas, and I'll write it down and try and get it out of my head. Then, I'll come to a moment where I'll go back into that folder and I'll look, and because I've got a terrible memory, I'm like, "I've just had the same idea 38 times." I'm like, "Ah, obviously there's something about this idea."

Kim (07:11):

Yeah. Yeah.

MBS (07:12):

Then Kim, because like you, I write books for a business community and I have companies that I run as well. I'm also going, "Is this book, could it be more than

a book?" Like you, I'm on a train heading west trying to head for better worlds, and I know a book is, at best, one carriage on the train and I'm trying to build a train. So I'm like, "Is there a bigger a thing here that I could get excited about so I'm not building a book and I'm building an experience and I'm building a way that people might shift their behavior and I'm building a way that cultures might change?" If I can see that, then I start getting excited and then I start writing and I get less excited, because-

Kim (07:57):

It's hard.

MBS (07:57):

Then I'm like, "Oh, I thought I had a really good idea here. I don't seem to have any idea at all," but then often, hopefully, I come through the darkness. Let me ask you one more question about writing, and then I want to talk about the book you've chosen for us. Who have been your influences as writers, not just for the content, but for people who you've inspired me to write because of the way you write. Is there anybody like that?

Kim (08:22):

Toni Morrison has been a major in the novels, the great novels have been the great ones. So Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, I think, has been another great influence on me. I was lucky enough when I was in college, I got to take a course with Toni Morrison, which also had a huge-

MBS (08:41):

Oh, I'm going to envy you.

Kim (08:41):

... huge impact on me. George Elliott, Middle March, is another great and Virginia Woolf is also another huge influence on me, so I really-

MBS (08:55):

A Room of Her Own is a classic [crosstalk 00:08:56].

Kim (08:56):

Yeah, A Room of One's Own, yes [crosstalk 00:08:58]

MBS (08:59):

... because of justice and Just Work, really. It speaks to a lot of that.

Kim (09:03):

Yeah. Yeah. Virginia Woolf was well ahead of her time. She was incredible.

MBS (09:07):

What book have you chosen to read for us?

Kim (09:09):

So another tremendous influence on me is Viktor Frankl who wrote a book called Man's Search for Meaning. In Just Work, by the way, one of the things that we recommend is a purple flag to flag bias, so we're going to do a purple flag on Viktor Frankl title-

MBS (09:30):

I love that.

Kim (09:30):

... and People's Search for Meaning, but this book I read, it was interesting. My startup was failing and I was at a TED Conference and I felt also that I was getting screwed by my investors, and I was just depressed. I was struggling a bit with a depression and I skipped an afternoon at TED and-

MBS (09:53):

You have to do that at a TED Conference-

Kim (09:54):

Yeah.

MBS (09:54):

... or you'll get crushed by the content.

Kim (09:56):

Yeah. Yeah, and hold up in my hotel room and read Man's Search for Meaning. It was one of the most healing afternoons of my whole life. So I want to read a couple of pages from that, which I think are very relevant to the times that we're living through right now as well.

MBS (10:17):

I think this is the book that every self-help book wants to be when it grows up.

Kim (10:22):

Yeah.

MBS (10:22):

It is the book that sets a standard that everybody aspires to, so I love that you've chosen it. Which two pages did you choose for us?

Kim (10:32):

So should I just jump in? I chose a couple of-

MBS (10:36):

Yeah.

Kim (10:36):

... pages that are about freedom and where-

MBS (10:39):

Oh, perfect.

Kim (10:39):

... we find freedom-

MBS (10:40):

Lovely.

Kim (10:41):

... and I'll tell you after I read them why they resonate so much for me. In attempting this psychological presentation, psychopathological explanation of the typical characteristics of a concentration camp inmate, I may give the impression that the human being is completely and unavoidably influenced by his surroundings. In this case, the surroundings being the unique structure of camp life, which forced the prisoner to conform his conduct to a certain set pattern. But what about human liberty? Is there no spiritual freedom in regard to behavior and reaction to any given surroundings? Is that theory true, which would have us believe that man is no more than a product of many conditional and environmental factors, be they of a biological, psychological sociological nature? Is man but an accident or product of these?

Kim (11:45):

Most important through the prisoners' reaction to the singular world of the concentration camp proved that man cannot escape the influences of his surroundings. Does man have no choice of action in the face of such circumstances? We can answer these questions from experience as well as on

principle. The experiences of camp life show that man does have a choice of action. There were enough examples often of the heroic nature, which proved that apathy could be overcome, irritability, suppressed. Man can preserve a vestige or spiritual freedom of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress. We lived in the concentration camps, can remember the men who walked through huts the comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread.

Kim (12:36):

They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms, to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances to choose one's own way and there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threaten to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom, which determined whether or not you would become the play thing of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity to be come molded into the form of the typical inmate. Seen from this point of view, the mental reactions of the inmates of a concentration camp was seen more to us than the mere expression of certain physical and sociological conditions.

Kim (13:28):

Even though conditions such as lack of sleep and sufficient food and various mental stresses may suggest that the inmates were bound to react in certain ways. In the final analysis, it becomes clear that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, not the result of camp influences alone. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances decide what shall become of him mentally and spiritually. He may retain his human dignity, even in a concentration camp. Faustovsky said once, "There is only one thing that I dread not to be worthy of my sufferings." These words

frequently came to my mind after I became acquainted with those martyrs whose behavior in camp whose suffering and death bore witness to the fact that the last inner freedom cannot be lost. It can be said that they were worthy of their sufferings. The way they bore their sufferings was a genuine inner achievement. It is the spiritual freedom which cannot be taken away that makes life meaningful and purposeful.

MBS (14:37):

Well, that's wonderful. Thank you, Kim. There's a lot there. What is it about that that is so meaningful for you?

Kim (14:45):

So I think there are two things that are especially meaningful for me. As I was writing Just Work, I was struggling with two things. So Just Work is about how biased prejudice and bullying destroy our ability to collaborate, to make good decisions and to perform at our best and what we can do to eliminate those things from the workplace and, hopefully, more broadly from life. I wrote the book from the point of view of the person harmed, the victim, and also the person who causes harm, the perpetrator. When I started the book, I had a struggle with the fact that I was in denial about having been a victim of workplace [crosstalk 00:15:33] [inaudible 00:15:33] and didn't want to think of myself as a victim.

Kim (15:36):

That was hard to admit as the author Radical Candor that I was in denial about something, but even harder was coming to grips with my role as a perpetrator, as someone who created conditions for workplace injustice. Then, of course, sometimes we're the observer and, hopefully, we become an upstander, not a silent bystander. Sometimes, we're the leader and it's our job to prevent these things from happening and more often than not, we fail. So as I read that, and in the last year, trying to come to grips with the Black Lives Matter Movement

and the horrible things that we in this country as White people have done, and the systems that we have created that have perpetuated injustice. Also, coming to grips with Me Too, there's a lot of talk now of systemic injustice or creating systemic justice.

Kim (16:34):

I think it's so important to understand that, that the ways that the system creates almost impossible situations for people and also, the ways in which the system corrupts people who do not see themselves as perpetrators, as people who cause harm. I think realizing, understanding that system, and I think there's a lot of resistance to the idea of systemic injustice because it robs us of our idea of freedom. So I think being able to hold in my mind at the same time, yes, there's these systems, but no, we are not inevitably corrupted by the system as perpetrators and we're not, inevitably, victimized by them, even though we are victims of them. So I think we have to understand the systems, understand how we can change the system while still holding ourselves accountable. There's a lot-

MBS (17:37):

There's a lot there.

Kim (17:39):

It's so easy to interpret what I just said, as "Oh, you're letting the system off the hook, or you're letting the ... " and it's both. We can't let the system off the hook, but we also can't let ourselves as individuals off the hook.

MBS (17:52):

I want to talk about both of these things, and I want to start off with actually where you started, which was what it took to step fully into those two different roles, a perpetrator, and also a victim. What was it like to fully feel the weight of both of those settle on you?

Kim (18:14):

It was exhausting, frankly, and stressful, and it was also liberating at the same time because when we're in denial about something, it takes on bigger proportions than it actually is. So when we take a look at it, when we find the ability to actually let go of the denial and take a look at it, then we can begin to solve the problem. Then, so by the end of the book, I felt like I had found the light, but it was hard for me to admit. There were moments in writing the book, I describe it in the book a relationship I had with a former boss that was abusive. Now, it's easy for me to say, "Oh yes, I was in an abuse ... " but I had never said that to myself. I wrote the sentence, "It was an abusive relate ... " and then I had to take the rest of the week off.

MBS (19:08):

Right. Was it was through writing that you came to these realizations or was there somebody in your life who helped walk you to this new insight?

Kim (19:19):

Both. It was mostly the writing. I have a great therapist who helps and a wonderful and very supportive husband who doesn't question when I'm like, "Oh my God, I'm going to go lie in bed the rest of the day," and also I finished this book during quarantine-

MBS (19:40):

Yes.

Kim (19:41):

... and the kids were home and he really leaned in and I couldn't have finished the book without Andy stepping up and taking care of the kids, so-

MBS (19:50):
I remember you writing that and I think in your acknowledgements as well-

Kim (19:53):
Yeah.

MBS (19:54):
... about the role he played to create the space for you to do the writing, kind of a shout back to the Virginia Woolf and A Room of One's Own-

Kim (20:01):
Yeah.

MBS (20:01):
... Or A Room of Her Own?

Kim (20:02):
Yeah. I had this shed, the she shed in the backyard, it was like this-

MBS (20:07):
I love that.

Kim (20:07):
... glass box.

MBS (20:09):
That's fantastic. When you read from Man's Search for Meaning, and we're talking about individual and we're talking about systems, the focus seems to be on the individual. It is like, remember you have choice. You always have choice. Remember you have this final freedom, and don't let that go. It's resigned to, the system is the system. For Frankl, it's like the concentration camp, it is what it

is. Your job is to do the best you can and not to your essential humanity within that system. Is there a danger in this, if we move it forward into our current situation, that it puts too much weight on the individual responsibility to sort this out, rather than the more systemic changes?

Kim (21:00):

Yes and no.

MBS (21:03):

Okay.

Kim (21:04):

So I think that when we understand our freedom as individuals, it becomes easier, I think, to see the system to notice. I'm going to wave a purple flag [crosstalk 00:21:18] on my ableist language to notice the system that we're in and to notice the role that we may be playing in contributing to reinforcing an unjust system and to changing the role that we're playing. I am not in a concentration camp, right?

MBS (21:36):

Right.

Kim (21:37):

I have many more degrees of freedom to try to change the system, to understand the system, to understand my role in the system, and that's why I think for the people who were in camps, they did not have the opportunity to change the system.

MBS (21:51):

Right.

Kim (21:52):

They were cast much more in the role of victim, but giving people the freedom to notice that they do have choices, I think, is incredibly important, choices nobody and nothing can rob you of your inner freedom.

MBS (22:08):

I love that insight, Kim. It's a powerful one, which I haven't really heard before, which is it is in more fully owning and embracing and understanding your own freedoms that you are better able to start noticing injustices within the systems around you.

Kim (22:24):

Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting, this is some heavy reading I'm recommending, but if you pair this book with Eichmann in Jerusalem, it's a really powerful critique of when do we get to say, "I was a victim of the circumstances that I was in and where do I have an obligation not to be a victim of the circumstances that I'm in?"

MBS (22:49):

I haven't read the Eichmann in Jerusalem book.

Kim (22:52):

It'll make you think.

MBS (22:54):

How does one both own and move beyond a sense of victimhood?

Kim (23:03):

Kate Manne wrote a great book called Down Girl, and she writes about this a lot. There's something really, I think, strong and agency- restoring about saying, "You did this to me and I am, on the one hand, a victim, but you did this to me."

MBS (23:27):

Right.

Kim (23:28):

When you have the freedom to say that, and I think that's a big part of the strength of Me Too and the strength of Black Lives Matter, like "You did this to me," that is really important part, and that's not playing the victim; it's like in describing what happened in great detail. I think that the stories that we have heard from people and the videos that we have seen about what happens are so illuminating and can really change the world and make us notice what we had refused to notice for decades and centuries.

MBS (24:10):

I know lots of people have embraced the new book, Just Work, but I'm curious to know what resistance you've noticed to the book and the messages in the book.

Kim (24:20):

Yeah. Speaking of denial, it was very interesting. I talking to a person who I like and respect a lot, who's very insightful about marketing. When Radical Candor came out, it just took off and Just Work has not taken off in the same way, and so I was asking him, trying to understand why. He said to me, "Well, we all knew we had a feedback problem, that people aren't aware. They don't think they have an injustice problem." This, I felt like my head was going to explode because I'm like, "We're in the middle of Black Lives Matter. Who could be

unaware that we have ... ?" But I think that the tendency to think that that terrible problem is elsewhere is profound, profound.

Kim (25:12):
So I think that people really don't want to come to grips with the role they play as victim, and they even less want to come to grips with the role they play as perpetrator. I think also, there is fatigue around the topic because it's not clear what we can do to make it better. So one of the things I did in Just Work was try to break the problem down into its component parts and say, "If you're a leader, here's what you can do about bias. Here's what you can do about prejudice. Here's what you can do about bullying, and by the way, it's important not to conflate bias prejudice and bullying. These are three different problems." I think very often people are resistant to the idea of unconscious bias because people can use unconscious bias [crosstalk 00:26:01].

MBS (26:01):
"How do I deal with anything that's unconscious? It's too hard."

Kim (26:03):
Yeah. Yeah.

MBS (26:03):
Yeah.

Kim (26:04):
But sometimes it's not unconscious, it's a very conscious prejudice.

MBS (26:08):
Right, exactly.

Kim (26:09):
Right? Sometimes, there's no belief at all. The person is just being mean. So bias, I say, is not meaning it, prejudice is meaning it, and bullying is being mean.

MBS (26:21):
I love that. It's clever work. As a fellow writer and reader, I appreciate the clever language you use there, and mean meaning mean.

Kim (26:30):
Yeah. Yeah, and just be simple about it.

MBS (26:32):
Right.

Kim (26:32):
There's a lot more to be said about each of these topics, obviously. But I think it's really important to parse a problem if we're going to solve it, and so that's a very simple thing that I have been working with teams to do is to teach people to wave a purple flag when they notice bias in a meeting. It doesn't have to be a purple flag. Some teams have said, "Come again," or you just choose your language, and then you commit to using the language at least once in every meeting. Then, you also with people about what to do as the person who has caused harm, like when your bias has been pointed out, how to respond. Another one of the drivers of the denial of this problem is the feeling of shame that we have when we are the person who caused harm.

MBS (27:22):
You know what? A fast solution to shame is aggression. [crosstalk 00:27:25]

Kim (27:25):
Yeah. Yeah.

MBS (27:27):
... or fight or flight, I guess.

Kim (27:28):
Yeah.

MBS (27:30):
What is the strategy or can you share some insights around you've been called on something or maybe you haven't been called on it, you just notice it and you go, "Ah?"

Kim (27:40):
Yeah.

MBS (27:41):
How do you sit with the shame and how do you make reparations if that's the right word?

Kim (27:47):
Yeah. I think it is the right word. I think the first thing that I recommend teams do is just come up with, what are you going to say when your bias has been interrupted? It should always start with, "Thank you for pointing it out," and then you get two choices: either, "I get it. I'll work on the not doing it again," and also be patient with yourself because you're probably going to do it again. Another thing that you can say is, "I don't get it. Can you explain to me after the meeting?" It's really difficult when someone points out that you've said

something biased and you have no idea what you did wrong because now, not only have you harmed someone, you're ignorant, right?

MBS (28:27):
Right.

Kim (28:29):
Those are both shame-inducing experiences for most people. So the question is, if you create a norm of how to respond, then you're telling everyone in your organization, "We all make these mistakes, and sometimes we don't even know what we've done wrong," and that's okay. That doesn't mean you're a horrible human being. It means, as my son's baseball coach said to him, "You can't do right, if you don't know what you're doing wrong." So I think that is essential to being able to address this, to move through the shame, to adopt a growth mindset like, "I want to be a good and inclusive person. That's my goal, and sometimes I do the opposite."

MBS (29:15):
Right. This feels well and good. If there's an assumption of positive intent on both sides, like the person calling them has good intent towards the other person, the person who's made the mistake has good intent and they're like, "Oh yeah, I screwed up. I'll try and do better. I'll move through my shame and my ignorance to try and expand that." One of the arguments you'd hear is that when there's not positive intent, there's cancel culture, which is like, "You screwed up once you're dead to me, and I'm going to shame you broadly and as widely as possible." I'm wondering how you see cancel culture, and even if that's the right conversation to be having?

Kim (29:57):
So a couple of things to unpack here, one is the assumption of good intent. I think it is very helpful when you are the person who has been harmed to

assume good intent. That is useful advice. If you were the person who has caused harm, yelling at the other person to assume good intent of you is not always such a good idea.

MBS (30:25):

Right.

Kim (30:26):

It's like if you were stepping on someone's toe and you didn't mean to, and they said, "You're stepping on my toe," you wouldn't say, "Well, I didn't mean to," you would get off their damn toe. So I think very often when we flag someone's bias, it's a bad way to deal with the shame, "Well, I didn't mean to," that doesn't mean it didn't hurt. Like, it doesn't matter what your intentions are. So I think it can be, in the right context, assuming good intent can be great advice [crosstalk 00:30:57]

MBS (30:56):

Assuming positive intent of the other person isn't the same as claiming positive intent in yourself.

Kim (31:00):

Yes, very different, two very different things. I think it's really important to remember that. So in Just Work, I talk about the problem of self-righteous shaming, and we all do it from time to time. Self- righteous shaming, the real problem with it is that it doesn't work. It's not effective, and yet when I am in a powerless situation, it is often the only weapon at my disposal. So I think it's really important not to do it, but it's also, again, really important to recognize that sometimes people do it because they are powerless. I don't want to rob the powerless of their only weapon.

MBS (31:43):

Right.

Kim (31:43):

So I think that it is really important, especially when it comes to bias to creating an organization that has a growth mindset. We all have our biases. We're going to learn from them. We're going to get better. They're not inevitable. We are pattern makers and we can change their pattern, and so let's change the pattern. So I think that is really important, and if somebody says the wrong thing, even the third time, like I work with people all the time who say, "You guys," and I'm like, "I'm not a guy," but I was raised in the South. So you all falls trippingly off my tongue and you guys does not.

MBS (32:28):

Yeah. I heard Brené Brown going, "Y'all should just become the pronoun of choice because it is inclusive in a wonderful way." I was like, "Oh yeah. I used to do it as pretending to be Texan or something," but actually, there's a way y'all embraces.

Kim (32:46):

Yeah. Yeah.

MBS (32:47):

Yeah.

Kim (32:48):

It's very interesting, I think I'm not going to tell people, you have to say you all, because that trips on another bias that we have about the South.

MBS (32:57):

Ah, yes. Right.

Kim (32:58):

So it's like there's bias, upon bias, upon bias, upon bias. So you can say, "Folks," if you want.

MBS (33:08):

Interesting. Kim I love this conversation. Thank you. What needs to be said that hasn't yet been said between us in this chat?

Kim (33:16):

That is an excellent question. I think the thing that needs to be said, you started with a really good point about what we want to do is we want to change behavior. We don't want to just read the book, we want to make the world a better place. I would love to keep having a conversation with you. I was talking to Angela Duckworth and she was like, "I thought my book was the last mile," and no, it's not. How can we work with people and how can we do it in a way that really scales to help them change behavior, to help them put the ideas in the books, into practice? Because even Radical Candor is so important to me, Just Work is so important to me, yet, I keep making the same mistakes over. How do I change my behavior? Nobody really knows how to change behavior, but-

MBS (34:09):

Well, but there are clues.

Kim (34:10):

... how can we change behavior? Yes.

MBS (34:12):

There are interesting clues, but there's a truth you spoke to, which is we are pattern-making machines, and when we find a pattern that doesn't suck, we carry on with it. To make and unmake patterns is hard. I've been using this language around the difference between easy change and hard change, which is a repurposing and a simplifying language that comes from Ron Highfield, who does technical change and adaptive change and Bob Kegan and Lisa Lahey in Immunity to Change. I think easy change is additive. It's like downloading an app. You're like, "I need a bit more content, and when I've got that and I start using it, integrate it." We do that all the time. We are forever integrating small bits of new things and tweaking and adjusting, but hard change is more like rewiring an operating system. It's like this is you 2.0 rather than you plus.

MBS (35:15):

Then, the insight that I've had, Kim, is it's very hard to move away from current behavior to new behavior if this behavior for you is hard change, because the truth is for some people learning this stuff is easy change. So they'll read, Just Work, and they're like, "Okay, I get it between bias and prejudice and bullying. I can now do things differently having read the book, easy change." But for many of us, it's hard change, and what I've discovered is there needs to be a conversation around, "What are the prizes and punishments of your current behavior?" You have to understand what you get from your current behavior, and how there's a benefit to you around that, because there is. You also have to understand the consequences of your current behavior to you and to those around you. Until you actually more clearly see that equation, it's actually quite hard to move away from the way you're currently behaving, but it takes a little work to actually figure that stuff out. That's peeling back some layers.

Kim (36:18):

Yeah. It's so difficult to admit the benefit that accrues to you from bad behavior.

MBS (36:24):

Yeah, because it's all short-term ego stuff, which is like, "I look smarter. I feel better. I feel more in control. I feel like I have the spotlight. I feel like I am right. I feel like I am ... " all of that stuff. You're like, "Well, that feels good, it's just there are consequences to it."

Kim (36:41):

Yeah. Yeah.

MBS (36:43):

Yeah. It's a big conversation. I tell you what, when you write the book that explains long-term easy sustainable behavior change, you'll have another hit on your head-

Kim (36:51):

Another hit, yeah.

MBS (36:51):

I promise you, because everybody's trying to chase that.

Kim (36:55):

... and figure that out. Yeah. Well, I think it's also being patient and forgiving with ourselves, because we are in these ruts that it's difficult to change. Even the simple thing like, "You guys," it's really hard actually to change that habit. So I think having a little-

MBS (37:15):

Well, at least it is for some.

Kim (37:17):

Yeah.

MBS (37:17):

I remember that language myself some years ago and going, "You know what? I'm just going to stop using 'you guys,' because most of the people I work with in my companies are women, and so it's weird," and that was an easy change for me.

Kim (37:32):

Wow.

MBS (37:33):

I have a bunch of other prejudices and patterns that are hard change and I keep stumbling over them. So it's just, sometimes it falls on one side of the change fence and sometimes on the other side of the change fence, it's depending.

Kim (37:44):

I wonder why that was easy? That's a whole other conversation. Why was that easy for you, because it's really hard for most people? It's not hard, but it takes time.

MBS (37:54):

Yeah.

Kim (37:54):

If you drive the wrong way to the grocery once you're more likely to do it again, and then it's very hard to break that pattern, even though you know there's a better, more efficient route.

MBS (38:07):

I'm not sure, Kim. It is a really interesting question. There's a whole bunch of hypotheses around it. It just might be me. It might be the fact that I've been

immersed in feminism for 30 years, so I've been thinking about it and practicing and writing about it for a long time, so it was less of a leap how I think about the world to a new behavior. There's a bunch of possibilities around that, but I'm not really sure why.

Kim (38:34):

Yeah. Even my daughter goes to an all-girls school, they all say, "You guys," and I can't get them to stop it and it's very strange.

MBS (38:42):

My company, Box of Crayons, is 80% women. The three senior leaders are women and they use this phrase, 'you guys' as well and I'm like, "That's odd."

Kim (38:53):

Yeah. Yeah.

MBS (39:03):

This is such a helpful rule of thumb, bias not meaning it, prejudice, meaning it, and bullying being mean. I do love clever word plays and this is one of those. When I think of my working relationships that aren't as good as I hope they could be, it's instructive to hold me up to these standards. What if, I ask myself, all three of these are present in this relationship from my end? It's a bit of a bitter pill to swallow, but it does overcome my natural self-preserving delusion, I guess to say that, "Oh, I've transcended all of these and I'm now in a state of purity. I am not affected by these common human traits," but what if I own it?" I am biased. I am prejudiced. I am a bully." I don't like saying that at all, but I can feel the power of me owning the darkness.

MBS (39:58):

As Jung said, "I'd rather be whole than be good." If you enjoyed the conversation with Kim, perhaps you'd like to check out two other interviews as part of the

Two Pages with MBS podcast, I'd suggest one of the early conversations. Riaz Meghji has a interview called Killing Your Ego, which is a very interesting conversation about, actually, the power of communication and Ian Leslie who's written two books that I really admire, one on curiosity and one on conflict. Well, our podcast conversation is called Conflicting Curiosity. So you can make your own assumptions from that, really interesting. He reads a book about the Beatles, which was a wonderful read or a wonderful listen for me anyway.

MBS (40:39):

For more about Kim, two websites you might want to check out. One is justworktogether.com. That's about the Just Work book, of course. The other is radicalcandor.com. You'll find Kim on Twitter. Her handle is @kimballscott, K-I-M-B-A-L-L S-C-O-T-T. Thank you for listening to the podcast. Three things I always like to mention, one, how grateful I am if you've given the podcast a ranking or a review. Secondly, make sure that you check out the free membership site. It's going to grow. It's going to develop, but at the moment, you can find it under the Duke Humphrey tab at mbs.org/podcast, and then just a reminder that you're awesome and you're doing great.