

Confident Women Lead Podcast

EP 60: What is Representation?

Hey Hey!

Welcome to June! In honor of Juneteenth this week I will kick off a 3-part series on Representation.

On this episode I want to dive into What is Representation, part 2 will be “Why Representation Matters” and in the final episode we will discuss “How to Re-Present all of You at Work”.

Representation in the context of this podcast is someone or something that represents a culture, community or a group that is seen as a reflection of excellence to or for that group.

While I’m not going to get into Why Representation Matters here, I do want to discuss what is underneath it or meant when we say it.

What if I told you Representation didn’t matter in the context, we use it in mainstream media? What if I told you that it was just more of the same brainwashing rhetoric that keeps our minds beholden to the unconscious beliefs of white supremacy. I know, I know I’m always making you think but I want you to come along on this journey with me. As A Coach, thought leader and strong advocate for the unlimited success of women and Black Women in particular it’s my work. The work I’m here to do in this world because I am you and I love you.

So let me explain. To do so I’m going to use the nominating and selection of the honorable Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court to demonstrate how we talk about representation. What I see happening is that we have placed not just or really even the expectation for making monumental or career decision and promotion on White Society and thus the subsequent credit for making this happen is given to them

instead of us. I'm not saying that appreciation isn't warranted or thanks. What I'm saying is the credit for making this happen goes to the Supreme Court Justice herself.

We are not thanking Biden or white America for picking a highly qualified candidate and the thanks being limited to his decision-making abilities being in alignment with the common good for the people. Instead, the recognition is a gratefulness for recognizing one of our own. It may not seem like a difference but the nuance when not reflected on in that way 1.) minimizes representation to tokenism 2.) it minimizes the impact we can make in those roles because if we believe this and many of us do because there's a belief that they have all the power then that's how we also end up in Loyalty Debt. If you haven't listened to the episode on Loyalty Debt, I encourage you to in order to get more context.

If you take a moment to think about the process of getting to a level in your career to even be considered as a nominee by the president of the United States for the highest court in the land. Then you can see that to get to this moment she decided a long time ago she wanted to go after or represent shall we say and so she went about the business of managing her career, making the relationships, learning the lessons and taking on the roles that would put her in the position to even be considered when opportunity presented herself. The credit for creating a new path of representation for little Black Girls to now aspire goes to Ketanji Brown Jackson not Biden or anyone else.

When culturally we respond by being proud it diminishes the magnitude of who she is, what she's done and her inherent power to create success because what we are saying is that we are proud of her for doing the work to get there but prouder of the Biden Administration for seeing her. But why? She and others that look like her were always there.

I want you to know that the real magic that Black Women hold extend beyond our physical bodies and the work we can perform.

Representation is not the act of White Society acknowledging, selecting, confirming or validating Black Greatness but that's what we believe culturally because we consciously or otherwise believe they hold all the power. To be fair it also happens in other communities of color, for women in general, and for those who fall into various minority communities.

If you, me, we believe that we need someone else to see us before we step into our greatness and move forward down the path to be great in the work, we do in this would then we have given away our power and succumb to the mind Bleep if I'm honest.

Another example is ABC doesn't get credit for being a proponent of "Representation Matters" for supporting Black Women creators such as Shondra and Quinta. Their brilliance is their intellectual capital and it would be great on any platform under the right circumstances.

Right now, when we say Representation Matters, we say it with the belief that we need someone else to recognize us and that in order for women and Minority groups to rise to the top that someone who looks like us has to or need to exist there already.

I'm going to tell you that is not true. If it were there would be no firsts. No Barak's, no Ketanji's, no Madame CJ Walkers and the list goes on.

Representation is a choice to be Seen!! It's making a choice to see yourself at the designated place in your career and go all in on your desire.

You do not need to see it to be it first. You need to believe it's possible and you can do it first.

That's how firsts are created.

Representation starts with each of us choosing to see and believe in ourselves first.

It requires unwavering faith in you. Not in other people.

Ketanji being selected isn't by chance. The president didn't pull her name out of a magic hat.

It's not the result or manifestation of her belief, her faith in herself, and her willingness to take action despite what it may look like. Despite the opposition she faced. Despite people question her credentials.

As women we have to stop sitting around waiting for other women or men to recognize us before we are willing to mobilize our faith in ourselves. If you are sitting around waiting essentially for someone else to create representation then patriarchy and white supremacy is winning.

I've gotten promoted 2 different times at 2 different companies because I observed what was happening and pitched my own career growth. Not waiting for someone to acknowledge my genius.

I create Representation and I can teach you how as well.

When you can see yourself and all of the magic within you then you can create the career results you desire.

That means you have the power to change your career results are within your power and your control up until the point you give that power to someone else.

Yes, it's important that we see women that look like us in the workplace and at various levels but it's not a pre-requisite for you to go after what you know is possible right here and right now for you.

In fact, representation based on race is surface level value and discussion. It alone ends up being tokenism. We know this because if it was enough, we wouldn't have to discuss "Inclusion & belonging" in the workplace.

Representation is not just about race.

Let's say for example you are a white woman. That doesn't mean that every other white woman who makes it into a leadership position is a representation of you.

A shared race may be a qualifier to represent a group of people but it's not THE ONLY criteria when I look to see or identify with people who represent a future or possibility that excites me. It's also not the only criteria when it comes to feeling like you belong or are included.

As a takeaway from part one of this series I want you to answer the following:

1. How are you taking action to be seen?
2. What would the next level of action look like?
3. What's the biggest obstacle standing in the way of you representing and what's your strategy to overcome it?

As you think about the answers to these questions, I want you to dig deep to not just think on it but to write it out and take action. Listen, when I say how are you taking action to be seen please no that this does not mean seeing approval or trying to be seen by your leadership team from lack. I'm saying how are you doing your part to step into the woman you want to see and represent in the work place. How do you become the woman that believes in herself even when other people may not like your confidence? That's what I'm offering.

Now go represent Confident Women Who Lead.