
Emmanuel Acho: And I am Emmanuel Acho. Thank you all for tuning in and we're so eager to dialogue with you.

Jimmy Etheredge: Yes. And as you know, Emmanuel, when we say Change Conversations, we're talking unfiltered, getting comfortable being uncomfortable, talking about those awkward things.

Emmanuel Acho: Yeah. That's what it takes for us to grow, collectively. That's what it takes for us to grow individually. And you listening, that is what it will take to promote growth within your own life personally, emotionally, spiritually, occupationally. It's all about those difficult conversations, those uncomfortable conversations that will lead to great things in our society.

Jimmy Etheredge: I'm looking forward to it. Plus, you inevitably name dropping and coming in with some big stories to illustrate this. So, let's get started.

Emmanuel Acho: Let's do it.

1:00

MUSIC

Emmanuel Acho: Jimmy, excited to have this dialogue, my friend.

Jimmy Etheredge: Emmanuel, me too. I mean, you're a football player, sports analyst, now bestselling author. And your book about uncomfortable conversations is something that really resonated with me. Because what I see happening a lot right now is people wanting to hear, wanting to talk and to share, but not always knowing how to get started.

Emmanuel Acho: Yeah. And I think that's really the goal of this dialogue is to have those uncomfortable, those different conversations, those difficult conversations that can and that will lead to change, those conversations that
people are very trepidatious to engage in. But I think that everything great is birthed through discomfort. The goal and the objective is to get a little uneasy, if you will, for the sake and for the goal of greater good, greater change.

I heard you played football at Georgia Tech. So, I'm doing my best to not talk about sports right now because it's in my being. But we got more important stuff to tackle. I guess just really starting with the last 12 months have been particularly difficult for a variety of reasons. For people of color, they've clearly been difficult. For people in the workplace, they've clearly been difficult. As a nation, they've been incredibly difficult. You leading a company, what has been the most difficult part for you these last 12 months?

**Jimmy Etheredge**: Well, I mean, as you said, everyone is going through a combination of a health crisis, an economic crisis, and social crisis. And I think, for me, just the volatility, and the fact that everyone that I spend time with, whether that's family, friends, work colleagues, or clients, they're all struggling with, it feels like sort of a perfect storm of challenges going on. One of the things which, in particular, I think it's been challenging for me to navigate is how to do the best job I can as a leader to really support people.

When I think about the employee experience at Accenture, we talk about people feeling seen, safe, connected and courageous. And one of the things, Emmanuel, that it took me a little bit to understand, particularly for people of color that work at Accenture, is to feel seen and safe means I need to be my authentic self at work. With what's going on around me, I can't just code switch and mask and come in because then I don't feel seen, I don't feel safe... And how I can create an environment where people can have conversations, because at the same time, I've got other people who are afraid of offending or don't want to engage. They want to just put their work blinders on, which is a privilege you have when you're not being affected as much as people who are like, "I'm watching someone that looks just like me being murdered by the police." And having to figure out the way as a leader to help navigate that I think has been my biggest challenge.

**Emmanuel Acho**: You said so much there that I think it's imperative that we unpack. First off, you used the term which a lot of people don't understand: code switching. So, this term of code switching for those of y'all who don't know what that means, code switching is acting one way around a certain group of people and then you switch codes, if you will, when you are around another group of people.

**Emmanuel Acho**: Really the phrase in which it's most commonly used is a black individual who would have to act a certain way around white individuals, white executives because their blackness, if you will, may make white people uncomfortable.
Now, Jimmy, in full transparency, I've gotten in trouble speaking publicly about this concept of code switching because I've realized that what may lead to the greatest success in life may not lead to the greatest success individually. Because if I, a black man, have to code switch when I am around white people at work, then I'm not being true to my most authentic self. So now the real crux of the issue is why do people have to code switch? You have to code switch because, we live - currently at least, we've lived and we live in a society where we are afraid of things we're not familiar with. And oftentimes in society, so many of the decision makers aren't familiar with certain cultures, particularly black culture and black cultures, plural, because black culture is not just one little monolith. And so, you code switch, because you have to find a way to advance in society, and it’s harder to advance when people are afraid of you because they are not necessarily familiar with you. So, you really took me somewhere with that ideology and that concept. Where did you even hear of code switching?

**Jimmy Etheredge**: From my black friends. I have a group that we are able to have very open conversations about, I'm frankly, blessed that way. They would describe to me how they would have to do code switching. It's in the language they use, the way they do their hair, what they wear...

**Emmanuel Acho**: Let me chime in, let me chime in. Right now, if you're listening to this, but you can't see me, my hair is probably three to four inches above my head and my beard is relatively full, at least for me. When I was first on TV, Jimmy, true story, I rocked my hair incredibly close. I don't know what white people call it when y'all go to barber shops, maybe like a one or a half. Black people don't say ones or twos, we just say like, even all around. We're getting very uncomfortable during this podcast. (Jimmy laughs)

True story. I used to rock my hair super close because I had to and I was told, "Hey Emmanuel, you need to present yourself in the most polished manner." Then after I proved on television that I was educated and articulate, that's when I let my true self come out. Then the hair got longer, the stripes got in the hair, the beard got fuller. Because I was like, "Now that you know who I really am, you're not going to judge me by what I look like."

So, I just had to cut you off there to interject with that story. Because it is so real, but you're talking about your black friends and, and how you learned about code switching.

**Jimmy Etheredge**: One of the things that I didn't appreciate, Emmanuel, until I had those conversations with them is the privilege I have of never thinking about that. I mean, again, thank God, we're on a podcast right now so no one can see how long my hair is, but it's not corporate. So, I don't worry about those things. And I see the thousand little cuts, the little things that, as a black man, that you have to constantly think about, constantly worry about, that wear you down. Then when you couple that with things that are...
happening in the world around us that you need to share your emotions with, how do you balance this desire to try to fit in and not make anyone have some of their unconscious biases kick in with the need to be authentic to yourself and your emotions.

**Emmanuel Acho:** Um, you said, "Realizing the privileges that you had," but you said it actually rather than access, you said it in regards to immunity. I just thought of this as you were speaking, privilege can be passive. I think so many people assume that privilege is active. Privilege grants me access to something. Privilege grants me access to a certain space, a certain room, a certain college, a certain institution, a certain company. But privilege can also be passive in the manner that privilege means I'm not facing certain punishment that I otherwise would have faced. I'm not being subject to certain things that I otherwise would have been subjected to.

| 10:00 | **Emmanuel Acho:** And I think that we would be remiss to blow by that because the concept of privilege is I think in the last 12 months, one of the most volatile words, privilege. Oh my gosh. It's like reparations. Somebody hears reparations, they freak out. Somebody hears slavery, it's like wait, wait, wait. No, you can't say that. I know it's not a four-letter word, but it might as well be a curse word. So, I think privilege is something that we have to do a better job of explaining. And I said it like this: privilege is immunity or access granted to something. So, what is the adjective that precedes the word "privilege"?

Jimmy, when I was playing in the NFL, I was given a celebrity card to a certain restaurant, true story. This celebrity card allowed me to go to this restaurant whenever I wanted, and I could order whatever I want and it was free every time. I had this restaurant for lunch, they shall remain nameless.

But so, I go to this restaurant, Jimmy, true story. As long as I have this card, I can eat for free. It was a celebrity card because I have celebrity privilege. So, in America, when we talk about white privilege, white is that adjective that perceives that word "privilege". So, what special access are you being granted to? I always say privilege doesn't mean that your life hasn't been hard. It just means that your skin color hasn't contributed to the difficulty of your life. I think that is just a concept that so many people have had to wrestle with. Did you have to wrestle with that?

**Jimmy Etheredge:** Uh, I think the first time I heard the word "privilege" in that context of white privilege, I don't know, maybe two or three years ago, my reaction was the way I've seen other white people react, which is, "Well hang on. I've worked my ass off for 35 years at Accenture. And I've tried to live a good life and help people," etc. What I didn't realize, which to me is a little bit different than the example that you provided, is you knew you had the celebrity card, you knew that that was something that was provided.
Emmanuel Acho: One, I think kudos just to all those thoughts. I love this
dialogue because I'm learning as hopefully the listeners are learning. I think we
have to remind people don't feel guilty because of your privilege. I'll say it
again. Don't feel guilty because of your privilege. I never felt guilty I had a
celebrity card. I felt full. Right? That was a blessing. Now on the back of the
celebrity card, it reads, "Because of this card, you can throw a party for 100
people annually." So, what I did, Jimmy, I would throw that party for the
homeless every year I had the card. I don't say that to toot my own horn. I say
that to submit to everyone, use your privilege to the benefit of those that don't
have it.

Don't feel guilty for being white. Don't feel guilty for being wealthy. Don't feel
guilty for being able bodied. You can have able bodied privilege. When I was
healthy and not hurt with MCL tears or ACL tears while playing football, I didn't
have to calculate if there was an elevator or a ramp versus stairs, if there was
certain parking at the front of an entrance because I able bodied privilege. Like
you said, I could disengage mentally from those calculations. We all have
privilege.

The crux, I think of solving so many of our issues in today is dialogue. The fact
that you use the term code switching, I was like, "What the heck, how the heck
does he know? I thought that was a black term." I'm over here whispering in my
inner thoughts. But you know that because you've dialogued with people that
don't look like you.

Emmanuel Acho: You've engaged, you've listened to people that don't look or
sound like you. And now you have a better understanding, which has led to
more empathy, which people do not realize is truly the most simple yet difficult
thing in our society to do. If we would just listen and talk to people that don't
look like us, we could better understand where everyone is coming from.
Jimmy Etheredge: Well, it's something I know you mentioned in your book, it's when you have someone that you know, it's easier to have empathy for them, and it's hard to be racist towards them. I benefited from a leadership development program I did in Atlanta. Over the course of 10 months, we tackled hard topics, criminal justice, did a ride along in one of the worst neighborhoods of Atlanta overnight with a cop, looked at how bad healthcare was in some of the poor sections of Atlanta. Education went to one of the schools. In our case, what we did is we would have a dinner together once a month, and we would talk about these issues.

And I'm a big fan of breaking bread and just talking about stuff. It really helped a lot to have people that you could get to know and really understand other people's lived experiences. It's sometimes easy, I think, for people today to be a little bit cynical of what they see on the media. But when you talk to somebody face to face about their lived experiences, I think they come across as authentic and people believe they're authentic. Then they're much more empathetic. So, we need to have more of these conversations.

Emmanuel Acho: It's hard to hate someone you know. I said this before, and the first sentence will make everybody's jaw hit the ground. But after I explained myself, it's like, "Ah." I said, "The biggest mistake I think America made, one of the biggest recent mistakes was in outlawing segregation. Instead, they should have mandated integration." Because, Jimmy, when we outlawed segregation, all we did was take a word down and put it in parentheses. You and I are both well read, both read books, and we all know a word in parentheses, it still exists. You just don't say it out loud.

So, when we outlawed segregation, all we did was take down the “whites only” signs. We still read 'em in our hearts, and we read 'em in our head. We just didn't say them out loud. Whereas if we would have mandated integration, then we now would have been forced to coexist with people that don't look like us and people that don't sound like us. And that would have more quickly and much more expeditiously changed the society in which we lived because it would have broken down these mental ideologies. So many white people can't decipher the difference between the black person that's cold or the black person that has their hood up to conceal their identity because we just don't grow up exposed to different cultures and different people. And as a result, we live life, just assuming that all people are what one section of the media portrayed them to be. What are you doing at Accenture to try to promote this integration within the company, to try to promote equality, to try to promote understanding?

Jimmy Etheredge: Well, a couple things. First, which I think a lot of other companies are doing, is being focused on the diversity that you have in the organization. Because if you don't have the diversity in the organization, then you can't really create that connection that you're talking about. So of course, we set goals, how we want to increase the diversity in our employee base, how we want
to increase diversity in our leadership. Candidly, like a lot of companies right now, I'm trying to help us move from optics to outcomes with that, because everybody likes to put targets up there, but let's make sure we're making progress.

**Emmanuel Acho:** How are you doing that? I'm going to steal that, and I'll cite my sources, the first time. After that I'm claiming it as my own, I'm telling you right now. Optics to outcomes. How in the world is that? How are you doing it?

**Jimmy Etheredge:** Well, one of the things that we do are what we call building bridges sessions where we get a group together, we take a tough topic, and we talk about it. We have some ground rules, no judgment zone. People can ask whatever they want to ask. That's really helped, I think it's helped a lot for people to hear other people's lived experiences, that influences people as much as anything I've seen us do with these building bridges sessions.

20:00 **Jimmy Etheredge:** The other thing that we do is, like a lot of corporations, we have an employee resource group. This is a group that enables me to kind of connect directly with all of my black and African American employees or Hispanic American employees. It's been a hard year, Emmanuel, because you name it. From the sort of hate and bigotry, which has affected black and African Americans, has affected Asian Americans, affects LGBTQ. So with these groups, I'm able to really listen to how people are feeling, what's going on, and help me decide how to communicate and what to communicate on. Because one of the things when I talk to other CEOs, this is a big topic of conversation is when do you talk about things. When do you not? How do you do it in a way that's helpful and constructive? I think people having these ERG groups is a way for our people to feel seen and safe. That's where it's really important to have these town halls and these building bridges sessions for people to talk about how they're feeling about what's going on.

**Emmanuel Acho:** Yeah. The meaningful word, sentence there is really building bridges. When people ask me, "Emmanuel, Uncomfortable Conversations, why'd you start it? Why'd you write it?" I just simply say, "I want to be a bridge for reconciliation." If you think about a bridge, it connects one side, one body of land to another body of land, typically over an obstacle, like a body of water. So how can we connect one side, black people, one side, white people over a barrier: racism? And I love that concept of building bridge bridges. I mean, that's what this podcast is. You and I, on surface ... we wouldn't dialogue. Just on the surface.

I'm a young athlete, you're a white businessman. You know what I mean? It's just on the surface, it's like, we have a lot of things that separate us. But let's look at the things that unite us. Empathy, caring, leading, changing, having conversations that are changing. And I think we spend so much time focused,
on our differences, that we don't realize we're actually all much more similar than we think. Jimmy, so many people ask me, "Well, Emanuel, what's your advice for my company? What should I do? What can we do to make our company, x company better?" I literally say, why don't you just talk to one another? Once, twice a month, let the minority group speak, let the women speak and just listen.

Let the black individual speak, the Hispanic Americans, the Asian Americans speak, and just listen. Minority doesn't necessarily mean black. It just means the lesser group. I love this concept of building bridges. Because we could all get better by listening. I was told one time by a therapist, Jimmy, and also submit this to those listening. Spend the first five minutes assuming what somebody is saying is right. We're so quick to respond and quick to try to fight back. "Wait, but you're wrong." But I was told just if you spend the first five minutes assuming they're right, now they may be wrong. After those five minutes, you can go back and check. But I think we'd all be better off acting in that manner, making that assumption. How have you seen the company grow or thrive or change as you've put these things into place?

**Jimmy Etheredge**: Well, I think it's a long journey. There's steps forward and step back. Listen, we have 65,000 employees in North America. And so, I figure that amount of people, you're going to have all these points of views, right? People come to Accenture because they want to do well, and they know this is a great place to build a professional career, but they also want to do good. I also think they want to be part of something bigger than themselves. It's amazing how inspired I get seeing them get inspired about making change happen, making change happen in the communities around us. Our company worked with a lot of clients around change and really leveraging technology for change. Technology, I've always seen as being a great divider and a unifier. There's many examples if we just look at social media and how it impacts that. So, I think there's a recognition for us, we really want to stay true to those values.

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<td><strong>Jimmy Etheredge</strong>: In our core values, we talk about respect for the individual, which really means enable people to be their authentic selves. To your point, about not judging but validating how people feel. I've had challenges around mental health in my life and my family's lives. So, I've gotten better at not being Jimmy the problem solver when you and I start talking, but let's just start with me listening and validating what you're sharing. Then rather than me immediately translate, &quot;Oh, yeah, I can relate because of this, or oh, yeah, let me go. I know how to solve that problem. I got a great idea for it.&quot; I think that's been really helpful. The dialogue that we have at Accenture has improved. And at the end of the day, I think the most important responsibility I have as a CEO is around our culture and leaving my fingerprints on it. And that's what I have a lot of passion about, using my privilege and platform to be able to do that.</td>
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**Emmanuel Acho:** Yeah, let's go there then. You mentioned mental health. I think the last 12 months has really taught me to focus even more so on my mental health. I recently posted that an empty well is of no good to the community. Because if we're empty, how can we pour back out? I found myself often just being kind of depleted in the last 12 months mentally because I'm so often trying to have conversations like this to enrich the lives of so many that my life is impoverished mentally. What challenges have you faced as a CEO of a major company? What kind of challenges have you faced just trying to steer that company... mentally?

**Jimmy Etheredge:** I think we were facing a mental health crisis before we hit the magic year of 2020. Then you throw in everything that happened in 2020 and that has simply accelerated it. One of the challenges I've had with this is our culture at Accenture is around being low maintenance. So, everyone prides themselves on an incredible work ethic. And... to ask for help is not always the first thing that people think of. So, I've started with making sure people understand it's okay not to be okay and to talk about mental things. When I came up in the firm, we prided ourselves on, "I only need four hours of sleep. I can work all day, and then go out and do client entertainment in the evening and get right back up and do it all over again, and work weekends and don't think twice about dropping notes on the weekend or responding to notes on the weekend."

And, what I've tried to do is to make sure people understand you have to start by taking care of yourself and be kind to yourself. You have to do that if you're going to take care of other people, if you're going to take care of your team and your family members. At an earlier point in my career, I was a guy who would go in where we had large projects that we're in trouble, they're in the ditch. If you remember the movie, Pulp Fiction, my nickname was Mr. Wolf. So, when they called Mr. Wolf, Mr. Wolf would come in. I'm going to sort some things out.

One of the things I would do is I would bring in a psychologist to help me meet with the team and assess, "Okay, I've got a dysfunctional team here. Let me figure out what I need to do to fix things." So, I come into one of these projects for the client. I have the psychologist interview everyone, and then she sets up some time with me. So, she comes in. I'm like, "All right, I know it's bad. What do I need to do here? Tell me what's going on." She's like, "Well, no, I'm here to interview you." I'm like, "No, no, no, I'm not part of the problem here. I just got here. I'm gonna fix them. They're the problem."

But I did this discussion with her. And she gave me some of the most enlightening advice that I ever got in my business career. Basically, it's like, Jimmy, you got two voices in your head. One of them is very kind to you. You never listen to it, you ignore it. The other one is never satisfied. I could have gotten up a little earlier this morning, I could have done a little better job on
Jimmy Etheredge: That's so good. I'm going to butcher the quote, but I think it was something along the lines of, “Two beings beat within my breast. One is foul, one is blessed. One, I love. One, I hate. The one I feed will dominate.”

Emmanuel Acho: It's something along those lines. It's essentially what you were saying of two ideologies are constantly going on in our head and in our voices. So, if you're always telling yourself like, "I'm no good, I'm lazy. I'm worthless, I'm not smart," then you'll be those things. But if you tell yourself, "I'm intelligent, I'm a conqueror, I'm able. I'm capable," then that's what you will start to bring into fruition in your life. I think yeah, this year has been hard. You're right, though. We were really starting to come to terms with our mental struggles prior to this past year 2020, and now into 2021. But then when you threw COVID, plus the social and racial tension and unrest, it was at a different level.

When I was writing my book, Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man, in research, I found that 20% of black people struggle from PTSD due to racism. I was mind blown by that stat, the same PTSD that people who go to war and come back from. You struggle with that because of racism. But then you think about it: how many deaths, shootings have we witnessed on Twitter alone, on Instagram?

Back in the day, if you saw someone getting murdered, it was like, how, where, when, what? But now you can scroll on social media and see a shooting, see a murder, see anything that's just detrimental to your own health. So, I do think we all have to do a job of protecting yourself, people have recently reminded me, they tell you to put your oxygen mask on first for a reason. Because you can't save someone else if you yourself are suffering or going down. How have you personally been? Not necessarily from the company perspective? But like you, Jimmy, how have you personally navigated your own mental health this last heartbeat of a year?

Jimmy Etheredge: Well, the first thing I'd say, is I've debunked a myth that I
believed my whole career, which is if I ever went a year and didn't have to get on an airplane, I'd be in the best health of my life. I'd be eating healthy, exercising regularly, getting good sleep. It turns out none of that is true.

**Emmanuel Acho:** Not one? (laughter)

**Jimmy Etheredge:** None of that, none of that. Instead I learned that if your kitchen is 20 steps from your desk, that's not going to be a good thing. If video calls now just go back-to-back all day, 12-14 hours a day, I'm not getting up and moving. So, I got off to a pretty rough start. And I saw I was really struggling mentally because of that. And you know, I started thinking about it a little bit, Emmanuel, in terms of do I feel like I'm bringing the best version of myself to work today or am I bringing in the not-so-good version of myself? There were too many days that I felt like it's the latter. It's not so good version. So, I did start to take back some control of some things where I started doing meditation each morning, not a big deal.

I'm using an app, calm app, or headspace, whatever you want to use, but just sort of setting a little bit of an intention for the day. I began to take some of these calls I would do on video and say, "Look, I'm going to do it off video. I'm going to go for a walk while I'm talking, walking and talking and moving around." Now again, when I think about some of these things, it kind of comes back to what we were talking about earlier in terms of privilege. Crises always are so much harder on vulnerable populations. You hear a lot of reference now to the K-shaped recovery. Yep, I'm definitely on the high side of that K. There's plenty of things I control.

**Emmanuel Acho:** What's the K-shaped recovery?

**Jimmy Etheredge:** That if you think about everything kind of drops down and there's usually like a V where everything's then going to ... Eventually we get better. But really what's happening instead of the V, everything getting better is for some people, there's a V, and you're moving up. But for others, in fact, it's not and it's worse.

**Emmanuel Acho:** Got it. In the letter K, if you look at the shape of it, it's really two Vs,

**Jimmy Etheredge:** Yep.

**Emmanuel Acho:** And for some people, it moves up. For other people ...

**Jimmy Etheredge:** Yep.

**Emmanuel Acho:** Got it.

**Jimmy Etheredge:** So, if you happen to have a profession where you can work
from home, and therefore, you're employed. Therefore, you don't have to worry about where the next paycheck is coming from... if you got money in the stock market, stock market's been doing well. It's very different if instead I'm in a job where I need transportation to get to where the work is, and I'm in a job where I'm a bartender or I'm a waiter, or I'm in services for office space or office buildings, you're in a very different situation.

So, I think when you look at the crisis has happened, you can clearly see where some populations are doing much worse. Others, in fact, have now already are in a better place than they were when things really hit the skids in 2020. And it's all the more reason I think we have to be there and give voice to those that don't have voice or the tables that I get to sit at represent those that aren't at those tables.

**Emmanuel Acho**: Yeah, I think it comes back full circle to we all have to look out for one another. I think as we have these dialogues around change, and as we have this conversation around encouragement, and just these difficult conversations, if you will, we all need each other to survive. Different race, religions, orientations, we all have to do just a better job of trying to make someone else's life easier. And I've realized, man, when you are a blessing, you in turn are blessed. I go to Nigeria every summer on a medical missions trip. We go to the villages of Nigeria. My dad has his doctorate in psychology. But my mom, her doctorate in nursing and...

Jimmy, we go with 40 doctors and nurses. We go like to a village, village, not like those, "We're going on a missions trip," but you're staying in a five-star hotel. No, no, no. We did like $3 million of free medical work the last time I calculated. We finally built the hospital after nine years of fundraising. All of this to say the most impactful thing I've ever really done in my life are these missions trips.

Because when you live blessed and privileged, like I do in America and like you do in America, you can forget the life around you. And the most impactful moments and weeks of my life is when I'm pouring out my life so that other people can have a better life. I think that there's a difference in being significant and being successful. We have to understand that significance can be greater than success because significance allows others to be successful as well. I think that's really been my goal, even in the last year, even in this conversation is, it's about being significant. It's about what kind of imprint are you leaving on other people's lives?

**MUSIC TRANSITION**

**Emmanuel Acho**: Well, as you all listening know, Jimmy and I have just
recently become acquainted with one another. So, we're going to do something fun as we start to close things out here. We got a rapid-fire Q&A session that our producers have thrown together, a couple questions that we're going to pick and we are going to ask one another, just some get to know you, some fun, some a little bit deep. Jimmy, I'll kick it off. What's something about you that would completely surprise me?

Jimmy Etheredge: Okay, well, first of all, I would say, regardless of the color of your skin, when someone says, "We're about to do something fun," you really know what that means is this is not going to be fun. (laughter) What's something about me that would surprise you?

Emmanuel Acho: I already know you played football, Georgia Tech.

Jimmy Etheredge: Yep.

Emmanuel Acho: Out the window.

Jimmy Etheredge: Yeah, so that one's out the window. I lived in London for six and a half years. Obviously, I didn't pick up an accent there. Although I swear if I go back to Georgia, sometimes they say I sound different. But it does mean, Emmanuel, that I refer to my diary instead of the calendar and I refer to the loo and the lift, and some of those words that really stuck with me when I was over in London.

Emmanuel Acho: Do you mind yourself as you get off the train? I think that's the verbiage.


40:00

Emmanuel Acho: Yeah. Please mind the gap. I was always like, "What the hell does that mean?" I've been to London twice. I stayed in Piccadilly Circus and Oxford Circus. My London accent is terrible. But yes. Okay, it's on you, Jimmy. What you got for me?

Jimmy Etheredge: Okay. So, you hosted the Bachelor's After the Final Rose Special. Tell me about that. Was there tension on the inside?

Emmanuel Acho: First off, for you all that don't know, Jimmy pulled that question out a hat because that was not one of the predisposed questions. Oh, man, but it was a phenomenal question. Hosting After the Final Rose was the hardest thing I've ever done on television. True story. If the most difficult thing was a four out of five, that was a 10. So, like that was significantly more difficult than anything I've done on TV.

Jimmy Etheredge: More difficult than this podcast with me?
**Emmanuel Acho**: Jimmy, this has been fun, it's been a cakewalk. That was difficult because you're balancing race and you're balancing love. People want to watch that show for love. They don't care so much about the racial tension. Some do. But it's kind of like our society as a whole. Some people want to talk about race. But most people want to live their life. They just want to act ignorant to the issues going on in our world. So, I, Jimmy, had to find a way to, in the midst of a show watched by millions of people who were here to talk about love, I had to drop morsels of racial equality. Things like, history is meant to be remembered, but not all history is meant to be celebrated. I had to intertwine racial equality nuggets with a love story. It was so very difficult. It was a six-hour shoot that was cut into 48 minutes with commercials making the 60-minute show. But I mean, we were there forever. It was so emotionally and physically taxing. But it was awesome. It pushed me to the limit of my skill set. It was great.

**Jimmy Etheredge**: All right. Emmanuel, what went through your mind when you saw Colin Kaepernick take a knee?

**Emmanuel Acho**: Man, so 2016, that was really the first catalyst for so much of this social unrest. First, let me say this. Colin Kaepernick was not always taking a knee. Colin Kaepernick was told to take a knee by a Green Beret named Nate Boyer, former Green Beret. Nate Boyer play football with me at the University of Texas. Nate Boyer was actually who advised Colin Kaepernick to take a knee out of respect for the military.

Nate Boyer walked onto the Texas football team my senior year and I'll tell you the story because you should find it funny. I'm the senior, big man on campus. I'm 6'2", 235, 5.7% body fat. I'm supposed to be the alpha male, the leader. We're doing this one drill where we are sprinting around the football field. When coach blows a whistle, you sprint. When he blows a whistle again, you jog. When he whistles again, you sprint. When he whistles again, you jog. You're doing that until he says stop. I'm the leader. I'm the guy. Here's this like 5'9" skinny white dude that is lapping me. Who the hell is this dude? I never seen him before my life. I'm a senior, I know everybody on the team. Who in the world is this guy? The end of the drill, we have a strength coach probably 6'5", 380 pounds. His name was Mad Dog. He had a huge gold chain just said Mad Dog, another huge gold chain with like a pit bull face on it, just the epitome of a strength coach. Brings this guy Nate Boyer up, "This guy's a walk on and you all let him shine on you. Y'all just let him out work you." Turns out this dude's a Green Beret. I don't know if he's killed people or not, but this dude's like military. So, I didn't feel as bad. Nonetheless, full circle.

So, when I first see Colin Kaepernick taking a knee, I was like, okay, I wonder if he knows what he's about to get himself into? I don't think he did. Colin Kaepernick was just trying to raise awareness for something. Now, he didn't go to the end. I think had he gone to the end, he would have done some things differently. I don't know that he would have worn the pig socks. So many people got offended by Colin Kaepernick wearing socks with I think
conversations is something that really resonated with me. Because what I see what it takes for us to grow individually. And you listening, that is what it will take.

**Jimmy Etheredge:** We go with 40 doctors and nurses. We go like to a village, village, not out for one another. I think as we have these dialogues around change, and as we go to the end. I think had he gone to the end, he would have done some damage.

**Emmanuel Acho:** Other countries are receiver-oriented, in which it is the listener's responsibility to understand what the speaker is saying. The reason I choose my words so intentionally is because I am taking the responsibility, the obligation to make sure you, the listener, understands what I'm saying. I don't know that Colin Kaepernick took that same obligation.

Because had he taken that same obligation, I think he probably would have gone about things differently. So, when I first saw that, I was proud of him, because I understood his goal. I understood the change he was trying to accomplish. But I was also concerned for him. Because when you navigate conversations like the conversation you and I are having, you have to understand you are walking a tightrope, and people are waiting for you to fall. So, it is now your duty to be even more intentional to walk across that tightrope safely. All right, it's on me. "What do you think our hardest moments are going to be in the next few years?"

**Jimmy Etheredge:** I think the hardest things are going to be to continue to create shared experiences and shared conversation that can lead to the empathetic integration. With technology and social media and the media today, I think it's easy to get into echo chambers, and only hear one side of things. And I also think that it makes it easier to sort of disengage from leaning into difficult conversations like you and I are doing and want others to do.

I also think going back to some of the discussion we had on mental health, what I see in the younger generation is just how everyone's life on social media is marketed as perfect. And they got life figured out. In comparison, it leaves people anxious, and depressed, and stressed because they feel like, you know, "I don't. I'm struggling." For me, the hardest thing is going to be how we can get our shared experiences and our ability to show grace towards each other and listen to happen in a world where it's so easy to be tribal.

**Emmanuel Acho:** That's good. That's good. Jimmy, as we conclude, what would you say is your goal? What is your intention, rather? The first question, Oprah asked me, she FaceTime's me after uncomfortable conversations. Let
Jimmy Etheredge: Well, you hear a lot of people talk about how do we make sure that this is a movement and not a moment. What I want to accomplish here, my intention is to create dialogue so that this isn't just a moment. I have been blessed and have grown through having black friends that I can ask any question of and not worry about offending, and that I can listen and learn. If you and I can have conversations and people, one, learn about things that they've wanted to ask, but haven't. But more importantly, that it inspires them to then go have a conversation with someone. To me, that would be success.

Emmanuel Acho: I will try to add to what you said so eloquently and said so well in they say if you want to go fast, you go alone. But if you want to go far, you go together. If we want to go far in a society as far as reconciliation, if we want to go far in our society as far as bringing forth empathy, if we want to go far in our society as far as being a catalyst with our company to encourage and change other companies, then we have to go together through dialogue between ourselves and through listeners listening, sharing, responding and acting as they're moved by our words.
Join us for our next conversation. Let’s make equality for all a movement, not a moment.