

Wildkit Way Podcast: Season 1, Episode 4.1

Announcer:

Welcome to The Wildkit Way, a podcast that gives the mic to Dr. Marcus Campbell, the superintendent of Evanston Township High School. Join us on this audio journey as Dr. Campbell shares his stories and insights and has honest, real conversations with people who make ETHS and our community the incredible place it is.

We continue to read about, see and experience violence around the country and in our communities. In a special two-part episode of The Wildkit Way, ETHS Superintendent Marcus Campbell is joined by Ganae McAlpin-Toney, the ETHS Director of Equity, and Calvin Terrell, a motivational speaker and founder of the Social Centric Institute. The three of them sit down to discuss the culture of violence in our society and how we can address it. Let's begin.

Marcus Campbell:

All right. Welcome, eTown. This is Dr. Campbell with another installment of the Wildkit Way podcast, and I am here joined with Ganae McAlpin-Toney, who has been with ETHS for about, roughly about 13 years, right, Ganae? History teacher extraordinaire, equity leader, and now our brand new equity director here at Evanston Township High School. And she's rocking it. And we're also joined with our friend. And I don't even want to call you an extended family member Calvin, but Calvin Terrell, who has been teaching our kids, our students and our staff to be warriors for the last, at least 10 years, Calvin. Right? At least a decade.

Calvin Terrell:

At least a decade, at least. <Laugh>.

Marcus Campbell:

So Calvin and Ganae are joining me today to have a conversation about a lot of things. It's going to center a discussion about safety but also equity and just being able to name that and talk through that. So we're gonna just jump in and get started. And we talk about school safety. Calvin and Ganae, a top priority right now in the United States with the record number of just violent occurrences and happening in schools and in grocery stores, and so many sacred spaces. But we also are holding that up with the kind of state violence that happens against people of color. Most recently, Tyre Nichols. So Calvin, Ganae, how are you all thinking about safety, especially it relates to the tension of policing and what is happening in communities of color. How are we, how are you all thinking about those topics? Calvin, you want to start with you?

Calvin Terrell:

Yeah, yeah, I'll jump right in. So whenever physical violence occurs, and when I say physical violence, that's something that's harm or trauma to something that can be measured or perceived by the animal census, something that can be seen, heard, tasted, touched, smelled, if you will. So that of course, is, you know, shooting, stabbing but that's also a damage to an environment. It's a physical damage to a space, if you will. I think we have to first define physical violence as a symptom of other violences, and that violence is, is the opposite or antithesis of safety. So physical violence is the consequence or symptom of deeper violences, emotional, mental, social, historical, maybe even spiritual for some. And beginning there you know, we do have this urgency around physical violences and physical safety. But again, so then physical safety being a consequence of deeper safety, deeper safety creations we built together.

Marcus Campbell:

Yeah. That's interesting you say that. Ganae, I, and I want you to bring you into this because I know how, where you all come from. I was recently speaking at an event for Martin Luther King's birthday celebration. And they invited me to, we were talking about violence, and Calvin, I said that, I said, violence is a spiritual problem, right? Yeah. Anti-semitism is a spiritual problem. These are exactly, these are, these are spiritual problems, and they can be addressed through political means. But how do we begin to even think about and process that from an educational vantage point, you know, or a landscape Ganae, what are you thinking?

Ganae McAlpin-Toney:

I think the first thing we need to do is reframe the conversation. You know, a lot of times when we're talking about violence, we don't hear what Calvin was talking about in terms of the, the undercurrent of what's going on and that spiritual side. We never, ever, I never ever hear that. And when once people start focusing on that part of themselves and really getting in tune with who they are and their spirituality and their mental health and things like that, that's when we can actually start taking steps to alleviate this stuff. But until we reframe it and not make it about that physical, then that's when I think that we need to that's when I think we'll be able to make progress.

Marcus Campbell:

Yeah. Ganae, you just led a session at the Black Student Summit on black spirituality. What did you, what did you talk about?

Ganae McAlpin-Toney:

Yeah, so we talked a lot about West Africa, but the biggest thing we talked about was manifesting positive thinking, making sure that your actions really connect to your words and just being a person of dignity and a person of integrity. And not just talking about stuff, but actually putting work behind what you want and what you're trying to manifest and affirm.

Marcus Campbell:

Yeah. So Calvin, Ganae, how do we bridge the two? Like how do we as educators, and how can we as a community and Evanston begin to address the symptoms of violence that we have experienced right here in our town with the kinds of concepts and things that you all are bringing up today?

Calvin Terrell:

People want quick fixes for this, right? They want, because they're, they're scared and rightfully so. They're worried about the wellbeing of their family and children, you know, in spaces that historically have been physically safe, historically have been mentally, emotionally, socially, spiritually violent.

Marcus Campbell:

Yeah. Unpack that for us. Tell us what you mean by that.

Calvin Terrell:

So the idea of what we call education has actually been schooling. So there's a lot of pushback right now on this indoctrination. And we have been indoctrinated to be a materialistic worshiping eco-sidal, meaning eating the earth, anti indigenous, anti-black. A spectrum might be identity prejudice, white dominated society.

Marcus Campbell:

<Laugh>, come on, say that.

Ganae McAlpin-Toney:

Say it.

Calvin Terrell:

We have not been educated, we've been schooled, and all of us, all colors of humanity and even our institution. Civilization falls into basically three core pots, arts, religion, sciences. And then

there's a sort of a synthesis of that. And the concept of governance, and not necessarily government, but governance, how a system is, systems are governed, and schools are, systems have been historically systems of art, religion, and scientists, right? And so even in places of worship, even in industry and whatnot, it's all been mentally violent. It's all been violent to the earth, it's all been emotionally violent for centuries. And so this process, what Ganae was just talking about, is almost a re-indigenizing of ourselves. A reconnection with our reality of the planet, our interdependence with each other as a human race, our interdependence with each other across lines of difference and how we need each other. A violent mind is inherently kind of sociopathic. It's selfish. It does what it wants. You know, if you work with a toddler, they're borderline sociopaths, right? They'll knock you across the head with a hammer. But a toddler needs education on how to share and how to, you know, say, I'm sorry and thank you. And you know, enter spaces. And so as a society, we're very spiritually, mentally, emotionally immature. We're about hoarding power. That's a violent mindset. And now it's manifesting physically in these spaces that have been historically physically safe, but holistically violent in other ways. You know, when a school shooting happens in someplace affluent, a lot of times the phrase is, that wasn't supposed to happen here. And I say, well, where was it supposed to happen? Right? So what's, what's happening is, like right now, all these areas that have been built upon the illusion of safety. The illusion that we are the moral authority high ground, are now also feeling the, the lie of safety and their, their, that their children are suffering along with the children who have historically been suffering. And the blame is being put on the historical people that have been suffering when really it's the history of the whole system. Let the electricity turn off and the water turn off like those neo-Nazis were trying to do over in Baltimore recently that were busted trying to destroy that, those...

Marcus Campbell:

Power grids.

Calvin Terrell:

Power grids. We'll see how basically the illusion of our safety is, our safety, is what Ganae mentioned. Our safety starts with our spirit, our thinking about ourselves, our, our relationships with each other. So we can put up metal detectors and do all those things. But it, it, again, it's just, it's still more about dominance and force. We do need to take measures, don't get me wrong. At the same time, for every 10% we put towards that kind of physical defense, if you will, we need to put 90% towards the spiritual concepts and the emotional socio-emotional concepts, the justice related concepts that Ganae was just talking about.

Marcus Campbell:

Well speak to this Calvin. Like you talk about guns. What is your conversation, Calvin, when kids of young, as 10 years old, are in our communities carrying guns. What are your, what are your thoughts about that? Like middle schoolers, high schoolers carrying guns?

Calvin Terrell:

I mean, real talk if we started calling gang bangers in our society, child soldiers, people would look at 'em differently. So all over the planet right now, there's 10 years old, 10 year olds, six year olds, five year olds carrying weapons so that we could be talking into these smartphones. And we call them child soldiers and we send missionaries and people and NGOs to those parts of the world to do things. But are we really, because we have child soldiers in our society and they're called gang bangers, or now just little cliques and squads and crews, you know what I'm saying? Right, right. But then at the same token, we also have 10 year olds out in the middle of Casper, Wyoming you know, billings, Montana Lawrence, Kansas or Minneapolis, Minnesota, that do not look like those black and brown kids in the west side of Chicago or where am I from- the north side of St. Louis originally- and that are, would be considered white, that are taken pictures with their grandpa's and grandma's where, you know, with a pink AR that are being groomed to love weapons that are being groomed to love shotguns, being groomed to love high-powered rifles. And so on one token, we have a six year old, or a 10 year old carrying because the violence the racial and oppressive violence of their society has never been addressed. And so they're navigating that structure. And then on the other side, we have a child that is a face of the descendant, of the creator of that type of violence being groomed to be a sustainer, an authoritarian figure that sustains that violence for the others. And then that child that's black or Filipino, walking with that weapon at 10 years old in their area, is suddenly being portrayed now as the boogeyman to that child that is considered white out in Wyoming. And there are forces using that to turn these kids against each other.

Ganae McAlpin-Toney:

I gave a speech at King Arts for a Martin Luther King ceremony. And one of the things I brought up in the ceremony was when we are young, y'all know, when you are young and you go to the restaurant and you get one of those mats to color on when you're in the restaurant. Every single mat has "find the differences." And so we're having our children at a young age look at the world to find differences and not to find connections with people, but to find differences. And as they grow older, those differences manifest into all of these things that we're talking about. And we don't realize that as children, we're putting these things in their faces the whole time, oh, I don't have this in common with them. Oh, I don't see this in common. What about the things that we have in common? What about the things that we have that are the same and

that we can flourish on that way instead of always looking at the differences that we see in everybody?

Calvin Terrell:

And well, Ganae, one of the challenges with this is that for centuries, we have operated within a social order that has ranked those differences.

Ganae McAlpin-Toney:

Absolutely.

Calvin Terrell:

Right. It's, you know, differences aren't really the problem. Right? It's the ranking. Absolutely. It's the measuring. Somehow your skin, the tone of your skin, your phenotype, your body type the way you present as with regards to the gender binary all of that somehow ranks on your intellect. Your moral capacity, your work ethic, beauty, if you will. Right. And so what's happening right now is energetically on the planet, the people that have been hoarding power for so long are feeling like sharing power is the same thing as losing power.

Ganae McAlpin-Toney:

Losing power. Yep.

Calvin Terrell:

And it's, again, I go back to this immature mindset. And so that happens at a micro level, like some stuff that'll go on, like on the res in the hood, in the vaio, right. Or at a macro level between superpowers like the United States and China. And so all of that energetically is affecting us. And not to mention we had an opportunity to really unite the human race because of the pandemic. This crisis...there is a Chinese proverb that says A crisis is an opportunity riding on a dangerous wind. We had an opportunity to really unite. And what it did was it showed the truth of just how distorted our thinking is, how divided we are, how historically traumatized all colors of humanity are. And now here we are, the three of us trying to figure out how to protect our babies. And then we're talking about metal detectors, and we're talking about all these other things that we need to do when we're not addressing the violence that built the land of the thief home of the slave. The worship of guns. What's underneath that is about the hoarding of power. So there's a direct connection with guns and power, and then to the colonial history of how the U.S. is the first system that allows commoners to carry weapons. We don't trust each other. We've never trusted each other. Our system was built out of violence with the American

Revolution. And so we don't trust government, we don't trust anything. So that's why we are such a weapon-oriented culture because we don't trust.

Announcer:

Marcus Campbell, Ganae McAlpin-Toney and Calvin Terrell will pick up their conversation on the culture of violence in our society and discuss what it means to feel safe in the second part of this special podcast episode. As always, be sure to stay connected to the Wildkit way by subscribing to it wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts, including Apple, Spotify, and Google. Thank you for listening. This is the Wildkit Way.