

Announcer ([00:27](#)):

On today's episode of Tune in Tuesday, we're joined by SHRM president and CEO, Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. as he shares exclusive updates about SHRM21. And later in the program, we will get a preview of the Champions of Change Video Series to learn how companies like John Deere are advocating for DE&I. But first, your Tune in Tuesday host, Christopher Lopez.

Christopher Lopez ([01:01](#)):

Hello, and welcome to SHRM's Tune in Tuesday. If you're joining us for the first time, thank you for tuning in. And if you're returning, welcome back. My name is Christopher Lopez and in today's episode, we'll be talking about SHRM21, SHRM's annual conference and expo. And a special glimpse of the Champions of Change Video Series. During last month's program, Wendi Safstrom, executive director of the SHRM Foundation brought focus to Disability Awareness Month with updates on the foundation's employing abilities at work initiative and their partnership with the Delivering Jobs coalition, an inclusion campaign dedicated to creating pathways of employment and leadership opportunities for the neurodiverse community.

Christopher Lopez ([01:43](#)):

Later in that program, Emily M. Dickens, SHRM's chief of staff, corporate secretary, and head of government affairs, highlighted International Women's Day by sitting down with leaders from ABC News and Microsoft to discuss how to navigate the challenges, opportunities, and transitions into, out of, and through the workplace. In case you missed that episode, you can watch the replay at any time on this page.

Christopher Lopez ([02:09](#)):

As the voice of all things work, we know firsthand the importance of the work HR professionals are doing around the globe, and with SHRM as your lifelong career partner, giving you immediate access to the resources and related tools that will support you in your day-to-day role and connecting you to a community of 300,000 plus members across the globe, you'll stay on the leading edge of the profession, creating impact in your workplace and communities. You can rely on SHRM for access to compliant resources, one-to-one guidance from expert HR knowledge advisors, interactive tools, a peer-to-peer network, professional development and so much more. Learn more about SHRM membership and join or renew your membership today.

Christopher Lopez ([02:56](#)):

Now, before we get started, let's take a quick tour around the platform. First, if you're looking to add captions to your viewing experience, hover over the player window to find the CC icon. You can click on the button to turn the caption feature on. Now, to the right, you'll see our chat window where you can communicate with your fellow attendees and toggle to the other conversations to ask your questions throughout the show. Just below that window is our polling feature. Let's test it out right now by answering the following question. Which track at SHRM21 are you most excited about?

Christopher Lopez ([03:34](#)):

Use your cellphone camera to scan the QR code and submit your answer. And lastly, below the video screen, we have upcoming dates, announcements, and resources related to this episode for you to

explore so be sure to mark your calendars. The last 12 months have pushed each of us to be flexible and agile when it comes to planning for the future and SHRM is by far no exception. In light of the current state of the pandemic, SHRM has changed the date and location of our 2021 annual conference and expo. We will now be meeting live in person and virtually at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas Nevada from September 9th through the 12th, 2021. SHRM president and CEO Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. is here to talk about the move and to give you the latest on all things SHRM21. Welcome, Johnny, to the Tune in Tuesday program.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([04:36](#)):

Thanks, Chris. And welcome everyone to the April edition of Tune In Tuesdays. I have a lot of things I want to make sure we cover in our time together, so let me just jump right in. I was last on this program in January when I urged all of you to approach a new, uncertain year of workplace change with an empathy lens. So how's that going? Let us know in the chat. Right now, business leaders are giving their empathy muscles a real workout, as for the first time ever, they make big plans to bring people back into the workplace after a long absence.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([05:17](#)):

CEOs want to make decisions that put people first, but they don't have a roadmap for where we find ourselves right now. Should they incentivize or even require a vaccine? How can they be sensitive but fair when some employees don't feel ready to return? And maybe never will. How do they need to adapt their paid leave and workflex policies to stay competitive in the next normal? Fortunately, we have this close community of HR leaders to share our experiences and our best ideas with. And for those really tough questions as you navigate these evolving times, don't hesitate to reach out to our knowledge advisors.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([05:58](#)):

As usual, some of them are in the chat today and they are amazing resources for those times when you need to phone a friend to get some support. So now switching gears. This is our 10th episode. Can you believe it? We keep getting more and more attendees live and on replay. It was around this time last year, we made the sad but unavoidable decision to cancel SHRM20 annual conference and expo in San Diego, but that led to the birth of Tune in Tuesdays and it created an opportunity for us to connect with you every month.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([06:38](#)):

we are so excited that SHRM21 is on and it's on in Las Vegas, September 9th through the 12th. The real deal is coming to you live and virtually. And it's going to be bigger and better. We'll have 11 tracks of program including our robust DE&I line up with concurrent sessions, mega sessions, and more focusing on creating more equitable and inclusive workplaces. Some of the DE&I topics will be exploring our business storytelling through a DE&I lens, global, cultural competence, implicit bias in talent management, building an executive presence for women leaders and more.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([07:21](#)):

Other tracks will be offering our compensation benefits and well-being. Yes, well-being. The HR department of one. People and talent management and a whole track on workplace culture. For any of

our tracks, you can customize your preferred way of learning whether you like condensed rapid fire sessions hearing from prominent thought leaders on the main stage and we're going to be announcing those soon, or engaging in deep dive learning through concurrent sessions.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([07:49](#)):

We'll have different session formats to appeal to all learning styles, and you'll be able to earn up to 27.5 professional development credits toward re-certification, and don't we need those. I know you've all been eager to come together in person again, and to meet your new friends from the Tune in Tuesday chat. I can tell you that we at SHRM have been working really hard to make sure your Las Vegas experience is safe, exciting, and fun. But if you just can't be there in person, and remember what goes on in Vegas might stay in Vegas. So consider it.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([08:26](#)):

I can promise you that the virtual experience we're planning for you will be a killer. Virtually, you can chat in real time. You can access content live during the event and even tune into sessions you missed up to 30 days after the event. There's also going to be online networking and virtual experiences, so that you don't miss out on the networking that you'd otherwise have in person. If you haven't registered yet, time is limited for our preview rate. It's going to get more expensive and we've extended this until April 16th.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([08:59](#)):

We wanted to make sure our loyal Tune in Tuesday listeners got a chance to take advantage of this. So make sure you lock in your ticket this week. I also want to remind you about our amazing slate of virtual public policy conferences this month with a new presidential administration in place and a new party in power, we can expect an explosion of a legislation that will impact America's workplaces from top to bottom.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([09:26](#)):

HR leaders need to position themselves to shape those policies that will impact work, workers and the workplace for years to come. Last week, we held our re-imagined "Employment Law and Compliance" Conference, and the response was amazing. Let us know in the chat if you joined and what you thought about it. And tomorrow, we will kick off the three-day California state HR advocacy and legislative conference with Cal SHRM. You know what they say. So goes California, so goes the nation. So even if you don't have our operations there, we will get you ready for what's on the horizon. And next Monday, next Monday is our SHRM Workplace-Policy conference. Three days of professional development and advocacy, as well as a virtual hill day with members of congress.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([10:15](#)):

I actually just did one yesterday and the member of congress actually showed up and stayed longer than he might otherwise have done in real person, so it's a really interesting opportunity. I think you'll also be interested in hearing from several lawmakers with jurisdiction over workplace issues, including the newly confirmed secretary of labor, Marty Walsh. You'll also hear from the EEOC Chair Burrows, and members of congress in key committees.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([10:40](#)):

I mean, you don't want to miss it. We hope you'll all plan to join us. I also want to mention to you that this is Second Chance Month. Yes, April is Second Chance Month. Let's consider some numbers. One in three -that is the number of working age US adults with a criminal record. One in four. That is the number of managers who are unwilling to hire people with criminal records. It's also about the same number of formerly incarcerated people, one in four, who were jobless before the COVID-19 pandemic and we know their situation has only gotten worse.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([11:19](#)):

Every year is a big number. Another 700,000 individuals are released from prison and re-enter society only to be met with significant barriers to getting work. The SHRM Foundation is committed to tearing down these barriers and building inclusive workplaces for people with criminal records. These folks are talented and they're eager to work and they can bring great value to employers and their communities. Our Getting Talent Back to Work initiative provides the resources, tools and case studies to help HR professionals and employers drive positive change in the workplace.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([11:58](#)):

We equip employers to be leaders in breaking down the barriers to employment for second chance populations by giving HR professionals and people managers the skills and confidence to evaluate, hire, and develop this important segment of our workforce. Our offerings include a self-assessment test, a free certification program in second chance hiring and a digital toolkit to help you become more aware of this population, so that you can adopt best practices and define their DE&I strategies to include people with criminal records. Visit gettingtalentbacktowork.org to learn how you can make an impact.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([12:38](#)):

Now, one last thing from me. I hope you've heard about our platform, Together Forward @Work. We have always provided our members with the latest on DE&I, but last summer we punched it up and launched additional conversation starters and resources. We established our Blue Ribbon Commission on racial equity and now, we've created some rich video testimonials from commission members and other global business leaders who have taken decisive action that will inspire others to follow.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([13:12](#)):

Because you're just joining us live today, we have a special preview just for you. One of these Champions of Change, that's what we're calling them, videos, featuring my friend, Marc Howze, group president of lifecycle solutions and chief administrative officer at John Deere. Marc recently sat down with SHRM's own Emily M. Dickens, Chief of Staff, Corporate Secretary and Head of Governmental Affairs. She got a lot of titles, right? I hope it will inspire you as much as it did to me. So let's take a look.

Emily M. Dickens ([13:45](#)):

This is the first edition of our DE&I Champions for Change initiative. One of the takeaways from our Blue Ribbon Commission on racial equity. I'm really excited that a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission, Marc Howze is joining us for this first session. And it's amazing, because before we were even ready to get started in our work, Marc was already making moves with a John Deere, an organization in which he holds a number of leadership roles and he's also figured out a way to make connections between what

he does for a living and all of the social impact work that he's been doing in the community, namely with an organization near and dear to my heart, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. So I'm so excited to have Marc Howze here this morning. Marc, how are you?

Marc Howze ([14:30](#)):

I'm doing exceptionally well. Thank you very much, Emily. How are you?

Emily M. Dickens ([14:36](#)):

I'm doing well. We're making it work.

Marc Howze ([14:37](#)):

Good.

Emily M. Dickens ([14:37](#)):

We're doing this. Now, where are you today?

Marc Howze ([14:40](#)):

I'm in Houston, Texas.

Emily M. Dickens ([14:41](#)):

Okay. He's in Houston, Texas. That's great because you are likely to be anywhere anytime I talk to you. So I'm glad that you're safe in Houston. And I'm so glad-

Marc Howze ([14:50](#)):

Me too.

Emily M. Dickens ([14:51](#)):

I know, right? And I'm so glad you had time to take out your busy schedule to talk to us today. So tell everyone a little bit about what it is you do at John Deere because you've got a pretty big job.

Marc Howze ([15:00](#)):

Yeah. Well, my title is group president lifecycle solutions and chief administrative officer, which means on the business side, I have responsibility for our lifecycle solutions which includes all of our parts business, which is a pretty large business that we have around the world. We've got 35 plus facilities around the world that we deal with parts. It also includes... And that's the real function piece of that, but it includes you know how we think about the entire lifecycle. So all of our connected support tools, all the ways we can interact and predict and forecast issues that will happen with the machine because our machines are connected, so we're getting data from machines all the time to be able to understand what's going on with those machines, that part of the business, as well as supply management for the organization.

Marc Howze ([15:52](#)):

So I also have responsibility for the enterprise supply management globally. Also, responsibility for human resources on the administrative side of human resources, labor relations, communications, the John Deere Foundation, the John Deere brand and all of our brand licensing, aviation, security, a bunch of stuff. A bunch of stuff.

Emily M. Dickens ([16:14](#)):

That's why I'm so glad you could do this with us this morning because that's right, that's a bunch of stuff that you're responsible for.

Marc Howze ([16:23](#)):

Well, you prioritize what's important, right?

Emily M. Dickens ([16:25](#)):

That's right.

Marc Howze ([16:25](#)):

Talking with you guys is important.

Emily M. Dickens ([16:28](#)):

And I have to say you've made all of our meetings, except for one and right after the meeting was over, you called immediately after to get the download. So that tells me just how important this is to you. I think what people may not realize with all the things you name, you're what we call an HR Accountable. That's a segment of our membership that are not necessarily HR Professionals, but they ultimately have oversight for the human resources function within the organization. I think that's one of the reasons why the work we've been trying to do on racial equity in the workplace has resonated with you.

Marc Howze ([17:01](#)):

Yep. Among all the other jobs, I'm a lawyer by profession as are you. I've had a variety of jobs. But among them was CHRO. So the CHRO reports to me now as one of the folks that I've worked with for years and helped develop. So it's something where I may not have grown up as an HR professional, but it's something that I've worked with very closely for almost 10 years now.

Emily M. Dickens ([17:29](#)):

Wow. So what people don't know is on these calls, with these video chats we've had with the Blue Ribbon Commission, you're one of our most vocal members. You won't speak a whole lot, but when you speak, you are very transparent. I'd love for you to share with everyone your journey as it relates to racial equity in the workplace and why you're so passionate about this?

Marc Howze ([17:54](#)):

Well, I remember I had a boss once. I got the opportunity to run a manufacturing facility in North Carolina. It wasn't the first time John Deere had a black factory manager, it was the second time, but I think 180, 175 years old at the time and it was the second time we had a black factory manager and the

prior one had happened almost 30 years before. So for most people, they thought I was the first black factory manager.

Marc Howze ([18:27](#)):

So I had a conversation with somebody. Actually, he was a CEO, and after I've been there about six months, he asked me... And this is how attuned he was. He said, "How is it being a black factory manager in the south?" And I said, "Thanks for asking the question," and I said, "I've been black all my life. I never had a problem with it. Me being black is not a problem for me. It could be a problem for somebody else, but it's not a problem for me and I'm not going to make it my problem." That said, "I've got to figure out a way to get these folks who may be used to working with black people, but not for black people, to work for me so that we can all be successful."

Marc Howze ([19:09](#)):

So when you ask the question about my journey, the fact is I've been black all my life. Whether it's in college when you walk in and people say, "You're not like other black people," and you ask, "Well, how many black people do you know?" "Well, I really don't know any." "So then how do you know I'm different than everybody else." And what you realize is that what they're saying is, "I have a poor conception of black people based on media, based on whatever. Not based on my own personal experience though because I've never met any, but I have a poor experience, I have a poor impression of black people."

Marc Howze ([19:46](#)):

You don't meet that impression. So I have two choices. I can either say maybe my biases in this are wrong. Maybe my thoughts about black people are wrong. Or I can say, "No, they're right. You're just different." Right? So my journey around this is one that is... It doesn't change from whether you're sort of college student or whether you're the group president waiting at the airport at the assigned place for somebody to pick you up, your driver to pick you up and the driver looks you in the eye and drives past you to the white guy down the road because he says, "Well, I'm supposed to pick up a Deere executive and it can't be him." Right?

Marc Howze ([20:26](#)):

So it's something you deal with on a regular basis and the point is you've got to figure out how to, what I would say, be the black man in the room and drive the change you need without getting bitter and taking yourself out the game, because you let every micro indiscretion take you off your game. All those things are just new nuisances that serve to take you off your game. So either I'm going to be dealing with all these little microaggressions that don't really mean anything.

Marc Howze ([21:03](#)):

I mean, they can't stop me from doing anything or I'm going to stop what I'm doing in order to address stuff that doesn't matter. So some of that stuff, you just let it go. I mean, that guy, he finally... As I walked to the car, he looked... When the other guy said, "I'm not the guy you're looking for," and I started walking toward the car, he looked back and saw me and then he's like, "Oh, I'm sorry." I said, "Don't worry about it." "No, no. I just..." I said, "I know what you did. We don't have to talk about it." Then he got in the car.

Marc Howze ([21:30](#)):

Then what he said was, "I'm glad to pick you up. I used to be an ex-police officer." And then I said, "Ain't that something? Right? My point is I don't care if you're a student or whether you're my boss or the chairman of the company. Whether you're at the highest levels of your profession, it's still something you've got to deal with."

Emily M. Dickens ([21:56](#)):

I'm laughing at you because I think the first time I finally got to a point where someone was going to meet me at the airport and imagine you know in their mind Emily Dickens doesn't look like Emily Dickens. And it's the same thing where they just don't see you.

Marc Howze ([22:11](#)):

Exactly.

Emily M. Dickens ([22:14](#)):

It is me. I'm tagging along my black husband with me too and we're going to get in this car. So I absolutely get it. So let's talk about not only where you have been making history and doing these types of things, but remember you're in an industry - agriculture - that when you think about the history of minorities, of black people, black farmers in agriculture, especially in the south when we talk about these issues, the fact that people have lost legacy, land. The fact that for years as someone who's done government affairs, I can tell you that agriculture bill for years has been mired in the loss of the black farmer's lawsuit.

Marc Howze ([22:49](#)):

Yeah.

Emily M. Dickens ([22:50](#)):

You're in an industry that now I remember when Johnny came back and said, "You know that Marc said most of the tractors they use now, they got computers on them. These things are like huge computers. This is not like before." And I know many of these minority farmers probably don't even have access to that type of equipment that can make them viable suppliers and partners for a company like John Deere. So talk to me, as you saw this you decided you wanted to do something about it. You were working on this long before there were issues, long before that fateful day this May when we all saw the tragedy that occurred. Talk to me about why you thought this could happen? And for our members, they're very tactical. They want to know how you did it? Who you talked to? Who were your partners? Can you talk to me a little bit about the project that I think makes you a DE&I Champion for Change?

Marc Howze ([23:47](#)):

I'd say a couple points. One is, it's important to not wait until you think you are at a position to do something. There's a statement that says "Bloom where you're planted", right? And the reality is, each of us no matter what our role is, no matter what our title is, no matter how many direct reports or not we have, we see situations that need addressing. When those things happen, we can either let it go or we can say something about it. I think it's important to always... Your brand should be that you are a

champion for doing the right thing at the right time. It's always the right time to do the right thing. Right?

Marc Howze ([24:37](#)):

So you've got to figure out a way to constantly say, "I'm not going to wait until I think I got some power to do this", because at that time you won't do it. You got to build the muscle of dealing with issues that arise when they arise and continue to do it. So I'll give you a real example about what we call our LAEP coalitions, Legislative Advocacy on Education and Progress. And it's really about heir property. So one of the things that I know is if you go back to 1910, black folks had about 16 million acres. 1910.

Marc Howze ([25:14](#)):

So think about how many folks that were in the country in 1910? Fast forward to the size of the country we have now, and black folks have a less than 4 million, right? So in a lot of that land loss, I'd argue most of that land loss happened involuntarily. So a lot of what you saw at the turn of the century around lynchings and other violence that happened was as a result of driving black people off their land. I mean, this is a fact, right? So what ended up happening is if you go back... And it's happened in my family. On my father's side, they lost the property. They're both from Alabama. On my mother's side, you have folks who have been prohibited from reading, right?

Marc Howze ([26:04](#)):

So if you think about folks, my grandfather was born in 1890s. 1893, I think, to be exact. That's what we believe. It could have been 1892. But at any rate, they could read a little bit, but if you go back a generation, it was illegal to for them to read, right? You couldn't teach them to read. So one, they didn't trust lawyers because lawyers were largely the vehicle that they lost the property through. So what they would do is leave the property to their children and their children would farm that land. And those children would leave it to their children.

Marc Howze ([26:45](#)):

So heirs would end up owning this property. So I have a situation now on my mother side where we've got property in Alabama, and there's probably 40 or 50 of us who have some claim to title for that land. So what's the point? The point is a farmer's number one asset is his farm or her farm. And when you have a piece of some collateral that's paid for, that you own, but you can't leverage it for loans or anything else, because the title is not clear, then farmers actually borrow money in the beginning of the season, they plant, they put it in the ground and then they reap the harvest and they pay off the bills. That's kind of the cycle that farmers go through.

Marc Howze ([27:30](#)):

Well, if you can't use your number one asset in order to leverage to borrow money, then you're always in a hole. Also, you may not be eligible for a lot of the government assistance that other farmers might be eligible for because you don't have clear title to the land. So we can't give you assistance because we don't know if it's really your land, right? So heir property is really thinking about how do we create situations where we unlock the value. So when George Floyd and the tragedy around his murder and the things that happened prior to that happened, companies got very virtuous, right? They started sending checks to people.

Marc Howze ([28:15](#)):

I said, "Hey, this is not about sending checks to people, and then saying I'm done. This is about how do we... There's no social justice without economic justice. So how do we improve the economics of people? How do we improve access to capital for black folks? How do we improve, strengthen our institutions?" That is the key, not to send some money to people you don't know. But what about investing it in the people you do know. Right? So if you want to do something about education, why give money to people you don't know when you've got people, your own employees, sitting in your company that you aren't investing in. You know them. They've made a commitment to you, and yet you'll give money to other folks, but you won't provide that same level of resource to your own employees, or your own customers.

Marc Howze ([29:02](#)):

So we really struck down, started to think about this sort of conversations with my chairman and CEO around this, around the business roundtable, put some stuff together. How do we focus on... There was some thing, "Hey, you should join the education and welfare piece of this." Nah. So in 20 years when somebody, an elementary school student graduated from college, we can say we did something. No, what can we do right now to improve a lot of black people, economically? We really got focused on access to capital. And the thought is what are we uniquely positioned to do?

Marc Howze ([29:40](#)):

So the same thing I use for people, individuals saying, "What are you uniquely positioned to do based on the things that you come in contact with to drive more equity in the environment in which you work?" I put the same question on us. So then it was how do we help black folks get title to their property, right? That's the main question. How do we do that? Well, that's a legal issue. So for me, it's about the ecosystem. So we don't trust lawyers. Folks in that situation don't trust lawyers to begin with, so you got to have lawyers that have the right sensibilities.

Marc Howze ([30:18](#)):

So I said how can we create an ecosystem that does this? So let's go to Thurgood Marshall College Fund, that has several black law schools, that have several black folks who are practicing to be lawyers. And that's fun, those internships for those people that work at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives is the premier organization, what I'd say the premier black farmer organization that operates in 17 states, and they have heirs' rights conference every year. So what they do, that number one thing they do, is really figure out how to get title for black folks. They have lawyers on staff and that's what they do.

Marc Howze ([30:59](#)):

So let's get some lawyers, let's fund that in order to... So they don't have to spend that money on that now. Let's put an ecosystem together where we take black students at black schools and we fund those students to help black people get title to that land that black folks own and so that you know for generations that land can stay in that property, stay in that land because a lot of that land that was lost is still being farmed. It's just not farmed by black folks, right? So how do we create a situation where we can have a virtuous cycle where we're helping each other create better access to capital in a position where we are uniquely positioned to play.

Marc Howze ([31:46](#)):

Maybe banks aren't positioned to do that because they don't work in this space. We do, and we have a credit company. Not in financial. So it's kind of thinking through all the areas where you have relationships and trying to put together something that actually creates an ecosystem where we help people all along the way that help each other, and then you got this virtuous cycle of things that at the end of the day create more economic opportunities for black folks.

Emily M. Dickens ([32:14](#)):

So I'm sitting here and I remember my biggest struggle when we were at TMCF was I felt we could be doing something else for the law students. As a graduate of one of those black HVCUs, it was the one project that I kept thinking how can we really make a difference? What an opportunity, and what an ecosystem, because now you're creating social activists - lawyers who now understand early in their careers how they can make a difference in the long term, and then the fact that you're using - your organization says what are we uniquely positioned to do?

Emily M. Dickens ([32:51](#)):

So for those who are listening who may not be reporting directly to the chairman, talk to me about what your team looks like? Who else has been helping you with this and is there any engagement from HR in this? Anyone sitting at the table from your HR department talking through this? What's a role that someone who is in this profession would be playing in this? Then after that, then let's talk about how tactically someone could do this within their organization?

Marc Howze ([33:21](#)):

Okay. I think it's all about keeping your old friends and getting new ones. There are a lot of people that work in this. So I'll give you an example. As we thought about this, there's a legislative aspect to this. So I called the guy that runs our... I used to also have responsibility for government public affairs, too. And one of the people that I hired is the person who runs our government affairs for the US state and federals. This guy named Collis Jones. Collis, brother, exceptionally talented. I said, "Collis, how can we start to work with the members on the hill? How can we start to work from an advocacy perspective in order to help create laws and regulations that help facilitate owners, clearing title to this land."

Marc Howze ([34:18](#)):

I talked to folks in HR and there's a brother who runs... For me, one of the things I did when I had HR was I put DE&I and global staffing together. If you have diversity, equity, inclusion, but you don't have a big budget and you don't determine the hiring and firing, then you really ain't got much. You're running around trying to convince people to do stuff, right? You've got a nice title, but you can't really drive anything.

Marc Howze ([34:51](#)):

So I put those two together so now this person says where we go higher. They decide what schools we go and deal with. What organizations we deal with. So we can make sure that we're fishing in the right pond, right? Because if you're not fishing in the right pond, you can't get salt water fish in the river. Right? You got to go to where what you're looking for is, right? So putting those two things together helps. So I engaged HR because we're going to engage Thurgood Marshall College Fund, which is a place

where we recruit at these schools to also engage. We are engaged in the legislative piece of this. We engage our communications folks because we want to figure out how do we communicate this to our employees and others.

Marc Howze ([35:37](#)):

We engage the brother who is... He actually runs the sales and marketing for all of our parts business, our lifecycle business for all of US and Canada, and Australia, New Zealand. We engaged him in this saying at the end of the day, we've got to engage other farmers. We engage the National Black Growers Council because once you get the title clear, you may not be farming. That land may have now been more of a forest than a farm. So you got to figure out how do you clear the property, how do you put it back into productive agriculture so we engage with the National Black Growers Council to help figure out, okay, once it's done, they can rent this land, improve it, and now improve the value of the land and put it back into production.

Marc Howze ([36:20](#)):

So it's a matter of putting all these pieces together. We also include our chairman and CEO. So as we think about, we got a new administration coming in and we're going to have a new Secretary of Agriculture. And we're going to go talk to the Secretary of Agriculture about our priorities, and one of our priorities is how do we help ensure that black folks get access to the capital they need to farm and also help us clear title for these folks so they can now actually have title to the land that they really own.

Marc Howze ([36:56](#)):

So you got to put all the pieces together because not one of these pieces can make it happen. You need all of these things together. So now people that are involved in this are hearing it come from their various people. We also, with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, we've worked with them. So we made a commitment to them that for the next five years, we're going to fund the Heir's Property Conference for the next five years.

Marc Howze ([37:25](#)):

I'm not sending a check and be done, I'm making a commitment to you for at least the next five years. All of this is going to happen and we're continuing to develop, okay, first we got to do that, then we got to do this. Then we got to do the next thing and how do we continue to do that? And given my wide range of responsibilities, I hired somebody, a Deere employee, full-time to work on this initiative. That's their full-time job.

Marc Howze ([37:52](#)):

So it's not something that is just like, I want people to do when they got some side, it's like your side hustle. No. We pay you. We're going to pay a resource full-time to help drive this initiative because we believe in it that powerfully. So the point is, one of my rules is, I've got a couple. Never take yourself out the game. You never say, "I can't do it." No. The other is make them tell you no. If it's something you believe is the right thing and you think this is something you really want to do, don't talk yourself out of it and say, "Well, they'll never go for it or they'll never do it. Oh, I'm not sure if this will be career limiting if I..." No. Make them tell you no.

Marc Howze ([38:40](#)):

Put your plan together and say, "This is really what I want to do." I used to be the corporate secretary for Deere and it was one of our chairman, his name was Bob Lane. Great guy. So as a secretary, you get a chance to sit in the room and see really smart people, great business minds and how they work. So you're at the meeting, but not in the meeting, right? So you get a chance to see everything. I used to ask some questions like, "Why did you do this? Why did you do that?" Because I wanted to learn from them about things.

Marc Howze ([39:10](#)):

I said, "How do you decide what to do? I mean, all these ideas that come up, how do you just discern which are the things that you really want to invest your time in and things you don't?" He said to me, "There's no shortage of ideas. That's a good question but that's not the right question. The real issue for me is not the ideas. Every idea I get is a good idea because all the bad ideas get killed before they get to me. The real issue is all the great ideas that never make it to me because people say, "Nah, he'll never go for it."

Marc Howze ([39:49](#)):

We need to be bold in the spaces that we're in if we think this is the right thing to do to help drive what we're trying to do. I think all too often we think the culture of a company is sort of these rules that we have, right? Tell me about your culture. Are you going to go look at the rules? Are you going to look at the policies? You're going to look at it. And that's fine, but those are really guardrails. People experience culture and how they interact with the people they work with. That's how you really experience the culture, right?

Marc Howze ([40:20](#)):

If the people you work with and for are people that try to develop you and try to invest in you and try to get the best out of you every day, I don't care what the rules of the company are, you're going to feel like that's an inclusive place to be and that's a good culture. Likewise, if you've got all the policies in place and everything, but the people you work for play you to the left, they don't invite you to the meetings. When you raise your hand act like they didn't hear you. When you have an idea, nobody says it, but when the other person at the table says the same thing and everybody does this, I don't care what your policies say.

Marc Howze ([40:57](#)):

You know for yourself that that's not a good culture, right? So I think the important piece of this is figuring out how to continue to drive forward regardless of what your position is to make sure we're doing the right things.

Emily M. Dickens ([41:14](#)):

So I love this. First of all, my husband would love for you to pack ... The fact that you talk about being corporate secretary, because I have that role and the average person doesn't know what you do in that role. So you're so right. You get to really see the nucleus of the company, the people who are advising your company's leaders and hearing those business minds, really that's a great professional

development people don't even think about it. It does prepare you for some other things. So that's one piece. And I think there are two things that are really clear.

Emily M. Dickens ([41:44](#)):

You said, "Look, how can your organization make the most impact, right? What is it that you are uniquely situated to do that can make the most impact?" So I would say that to those watching, that's number one. But number two, you can make a difference from anywhere within the organization. It doesn't matter. Then I think, also number three is you have friends all around the organization. So for those in HR, you can come up with an idea and you don't have to be dependent on HR to make it happen. You got friends in government affairs. You've got friends in comms. You've got friends who would be willing to sit down and noodle on this idea that could be the great idea that never got before the chairman because you didn't bet on yourself. You didn't bet on sharing that idea.

Emily M. Dickens ([42:29](#)):

Then something else we talk about a lot about how our culture trumps compliance every day. We talk about that and it's so important. You're right - where all HR professionals can end up looking at all the rules and saying, "We've got the right rules. We've got this, but if they're used as guard rails as opposed to developing a culture where people feel like they're included, and that their voice matters, that makes a real difference.

Emily M. Dickens ([42:54](#)):

So I would say what does success...I think my last question to you on this is what does success look like? You've invested in this. You got a full-time staff member. You've got at least five years of money and I don't know how much time did you tell TCMF you're going to support these law school students, too. So you got five years committed to the conference. You're in this .

Marc Howze ([43:16](#)):

Yeah. We've been with TCMF for a long time. But we're committed to have these law students. My view is get these folks through law school and then my vision is, and then fund them as fellows to do this work. Right? Afterwards, right? So it may not be 10 law students that we fund as fellows. But if we can get a few through and then have a two or three who actually go and do that work for a year or two, then that's going to be really good work, that will position them well for something else because the hard thing is how do you as a new lawyer get really good work, and not sit in on somebody and watch somebody do a deposition, right? But really get real work that you're actively involved in, and this will have them involved with clients with the law, with judges, negotiating between family members on the resolution.

Marc Howze ([44:12](#)):

So a lot of skills that you're going to need to have, they're going to start developing as interns and then hopefully as fellows they'll be ready to do this. So at the end, bottom line, I like to keep it simple. Do more black people have title to their property than had it when we started, right? If that's the case, then everything else is chit-chat. If there's more awareness and there's, "Oh, that's fine, but that's not the point." The point is do more black people have - own the property, have title to property that didn't have it before. That's the only success measure. So that is what we're looking for.

Marc Howze ([44:54](#)):

Again, it's something that our company is committed to, for me I want to make sure that we put an infrastructure in place so that this is not my project, right? So that if I retire or if I'm gone, then okay, we can get out of that. No, I'm trying to integrate this into what we're doing. I don't sit on the board at TCMF anymore. I used to be on the board member at Thurgood Marshall College Fund, but I'm not. I haven't been for several years. But I'm still very committed to it and Deere has a board member. There's another Deere employee who's a board member there because I want to make sure that that is a... Long after I'm gone, when I'm going home to glory, if TCMF is still around, I want to make sure that there's still a significant partner for them.

Marc Howze ([45:42](#)):

You do that by creating an infrastructure and an ecosystem so it's not driven by one person, but there are a lot of people who have an interest in making sure that this happens. And making sure it's successful. One thing I know is success has many parents and failure is an orphan. So the more successful we are, the more everybody's going to jump in and be on the bandwagon of it. So for me, being successful and not sort of doing a whole lot of talking about it, but being about it.

Marc Howze ([46:16](#)):

One of the things that a lot of the stuff that happens are all these pledges. We're going to sign a pledge to hire a million black people. We're going to sign a pledge to spend more money with black law firms. We're going to sign a pledge.... Why do you need to sign a pledge to spend more money with black law firms when you spend money with lawyers. Just do it. You don't have to pledge to do it. That's like pledging to brush your teeth in the morning.

Marc Howze ([46:40](#)):

You brush your teeth in the morning. Well, I don't have to send a pledge to do, it's something you do, so just do it, right? And for me pledges are a way... Just like going to a nice dinner. Well, what does your company do? "Oh, we support X organization." How do you do that? Well, we buy a table every year. You go get a chicken dinner at a hotel and you think you did something. But all it is virtue signaling. I send some money, I got a check, I sent my check and I'm done. No, that's not done and I think it is... As long as we are okay, those of us who can actually have an impact are okay with sort of mailing that in, then that'll continue to be what it always is.

Marc Howze ([47:27](#)):

So you won't find Deere signing a lot of these pledges. And it's not because we aren't committed to it, it's because we are committed to it. We're committed to it so much that we don't need to say in 20 years we're going to do something. Let's start doing it today. And as we begin to do it today, it may not be public and people may not see it, but the folks that actually, that it matters to, will know that it's happening. And the more we can do that, the more help we can get, the more people we can engage in this process, not because they want the publicity of it, but because they believe in the mission, because they believe in the outcomes, then I think we're doing the right thing. So that's success.

Emily M. Dickens ([48:15](#)):

I can't thank you enough. I think this is an excellent example to lead off with because it shows patience, it shows thoughtfulness. It's not going to be a one-hit wonder, and I think people have to understand you got to play the long game when you're thinking about making changes like this and being champions of change. You can't do it yourself or by yourself, you need a team. So none of the people watching, you shouldn't feel alone. There are others that are willing that look nothing like you. People who understand it's the right thing to do, that we can do more and we can do better. People just like Marc Howze who is out here making change every day and being a mentor.

Emily M. Dickens ([48:57](#)):

I have to say I have a good friend who went to A&T who works for John Deere and he speaks so highly of you. You're such a great example for others who are coming up behind you. And I just want to say thank you again for taking time out of your busy schedule to serve on the BRC. We're getting close to finishing up that work. Is there anything you want to say to the members about BRC? I know we talk about people think that's - we think it's going to be a solution. Really, it's an opportunity for us to discuss an issue and figure out a game plan. Is there anything you want to say to our members about that work?

Marc Howze ([49:30](#)):

Yeah. It's extremely important work. I would just commend you. I commend SHRM leadership, SHRM board and Johnny for putting together a really diverse set of folks to really think about how to address this issue. Just to build on one point you made that this is not something that gets done. It didn't get broken in a couple days, or a couple weeks, or a couple months, or a couple years. This is something that our country has struggled with since its inception, right, and we're trying to make improvements in this. We're better today than we were yesterday.

Marc Howze ([50:16](#)):

I think the word says it this way. Don't get weary. Be not weary in well doing, for in due season you will reap if you faint not. So the point is we may not get it all done during our tenure in work, but can we make some progress and can we set the next generation of folks up to have it better than we had it? I'll leave with a story. I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time with my grandfather. My father's father, who I said was born in 1800s. One of the things my grandfather, my father told me about him, he told me a story about when he was a young man and they were down in Alabama and folks would... They were actually out selling vegetables or something and folks were just being disrespectful to my grandpa, as it was the custom then.

Marc Howze ([51:08](#)):

You had to get off the sidewalk if white folks walked by. You had to call them sir. My grandfather would have to call a boy sir. That was just the way it was. And my father asked the question, "Why do you let these people treat you this way?" He was angry. And my grandfather said to him, "Son, I'm trying to get you grown so you can leave here. And the things that I have to take, you won't have to take. And the things that you take, your son won't have to take. And the thing that he takes, his son won't have to take. And eventually, we won't have to take anything at all."

Marc Howze ([51:49](#)):

So my point there is that there is a recognition of what's wrong right now, but also a hope that's born of commitment that it will be better. And something that we used to say at church, trouble don't last always. So we know that it's going to be tough, but if we don't do the fight, who's going to do it for us? If we're not investing in us, why would we expect anybody else to do it? Don't be weary in your well doing. In due season, we'll reap if we faint not.

Christopher Lopez ([52:40](#)):

Thank you, Johnny for your insights on the program today. Take advantage of the extended discounted SHRM21 registration preview rate by April 16th. You'll find the link in the episode resources below. Additionally, we hope you enjoyed the conversation between Emily M. Dickens and Mark Howze about creating a real workplace change when it comes to racial equity at work. I want to take a moment to remind you our workplace policy conference will be taking place virtually from April 19th to the 21st.

Christopher Lopez ([53:11](#)):

This conference is an opportunity to forge the future of your profession and your organization through two education-packed days followed by a full day of advocacy in action with federal lawmakers, gain the knowledge and skills you need, Now More Than Ever, to become an executive thought leader in the workplace while elevating the HR profession. With April being Second Chances Month, the Workplace-Policy Conference is the perfect opportunity to learn the skills necessary to impact the policies affecting this untapped pool of talent.

Christopher Lopez ([53:46](#)):

Register for the Workplace-Policy Conference by using the link in the episode resource section below. Thank you again for joining us today for Tune in Tuesday and I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, May 11th for our next installment.