

Announcer ([00:21](#)):

On today's episode of Tune in Tuesday, we're joined by SHRM's chief knowledge officer, Dr. Alex Alonso, as he shares the latest on culture from SHRM's research department. Later, SHRM president and CEO, Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., sits down with SHRM Foundation member and CEO of Velvet Suite, Inc., Melissa Dawn Simkins, as they discuss her "reset" principles that you can apply to your workplace. But first, your Tune in Tuesday host, Christopher Lopez.

Christopher Lopez ([01:00](#)):

Hello, and welcome to SHRM's Tune in Tuesday. My name is Christopher Lopez. In today's episode, we are diving deeper into SHRM's latest book release, *Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval*, to discuss the book's key principles. During last month's program, we heard from Laszlo Bock, co-founder and CEO of Humu, in conversation with SHRM president and CEO, Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., as they discussed how to effectively manage your organization's talent. In case you missed it, I encourage you to watch replay at any time on this page after this episode is over.

Christopher Lopez ([01:34](#)):

SHRM knows firsthand the importance of the work HR professionals like you are doing around the globe. That's why we want to be your lifelong career partner. Through your membership, you'll receive immediate access to the resources and tools that will support you in your day-to-day role, connecting you to a community of 300,000 plus members across the globe to stay on the leading edge of the profession, creating impact in your workplace and communities. Learn more about each of SHRM's membership offerings and join or renew your membership today.

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

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, click on the CC button on the player window to turn on the caption feature. Now, to the right here, you'll see our chat window where you can communicate with your fellow attendees and toggle to the questions chat to ask our SHRM knowledge advisors questions throughout the show. Just below that window is our polling feature. Let's do that right now by scanning the QR code on your cell phone camera and answer the question, which aspect of your organizational culture are you working to improve?

Christopher Lopez ([02:46](#)):

And lastly, below the video screen, we have announcements and resources related to this episode for you to explore. Now, to kick off today's program, we're joined by SHRM chief knowledge officer, Dr. Alex Alonso, as he shares the latest data from SHRM's research department focused on workplace culture and its impact on cultivating a positive workplace dynamic. Welcome back to the Tune in Tuesday program, Dr. Alex Alonso.

Dr. Alexander Alonso ([03:22](#)):

Thank you, Chris. It's a pleasure to be here with you all today. As you no doubt understand, the work of HR professionals across the globe represents the hardest work, especially when considering efforts needed to create better workplaces for a better world. With this in mind, I'm happy to share some new research with you looking specifically at the importance of positive workplace culture and why it

represents the new currency in a combined workforce economy. Like many employers, you are likely called upon to create positive workplaces serving not just your traditional workers, but others including contractors, gig workers, and beyond.

Dr. Alexander Alonso ([04:02](#)):

Whether considering how to engage them through better people management or diving more into inclusive workplace practices, one thing is abundantly clear; a positive workplace culture is the new currency for sourcing top talent and keeping them engaged in your most strategic work. Let me begin by sharing some of the most salient data points from our recent research. These data points to the importance of culture in times of stress, but perhaps more importantly, the importance of strong people managers in maintaining a positive workplace culture.

Dr. Alexander Alonso ([04:36](#)):

For instance, 74% of working Americans claim their organizational values helped guide them through the pandemic. When considering that nearly 41% of working Americans are considering departing their organizations and exploring new opportunities, this represents a clear path to ensuring retention. While turnover and turnover intentions are at an all-time high with employers reporting time to fill rates nearly three times as high as pre-pandemic times, it is clear HR professionals continue to play a pivotal role in shaping culture, especially by focusing on people managers. Our data clearly suggests this is the path to renewed success when defining culture.

Dr. Alexander Alonso ([05:22](#)):

Specifically, we know that 53% of working Americans who have left a job due to the workplace culture report leaving because of their relationship with their people manager. But what has come into focus even more is also the impact on people managers themselves, with 52% of people managers spending an average of one to 10 hours per week managing their workplace culture and 54% of them reporting they leave work feeling absolutely exhausted. But why is this occurring? Well, first and foremost, we find people managers feeling the increased pressure to maintain positive workplace cultures just as HR professionals themselves report.

Dr. Alexander Alonso ([06:08](#)):

In fact, 94% of people managers agree positive workplace culture creates a resilient team of employees, but only 26% of them indicate that their organization has provided them with the leadership and training they need to face this kind of strain. Moreover, even their HR professionals agree it has been difficult to maintain workplace culture and people management strength during the pandemic. Moreover, working Americans continue to report a shift in the kind of culture they have experienced since the pandemic, with many of them indicating an empathetic culture was the best way to describe their workplace prior to the pandemic.

Dr. Alexander Alonso ([06:52](#)):

But now, as you look at figure one, you see that we see that as not the case. In fact, the research supports that more often than not, empathy has been taken out of the vocabulary when describing what it is that we see in terms of describing workplace cultures. This all speaks to one clarion call for people managers: build empathy back into your management style. While situational dynamics may

make this particularly difficult at times, people managers can accomplish this in three steps. First and foremost, be brave and demonstrate vulnerability.

Dr. Alexander Alonso ([07:31](#)):

Then maintain a self-reflective approach across all your interactions with your peers. Then lastly, avoid the empathy trap. This is where we practice empathy, but only when we seek it as opposed to providing it for others. I'd like to thank you all for allowing me to share this recent research with you. To learn more about this data and other SHRM research, please visit shrm.org or email us at shrm.research@shrm.org. Now back to our host. Chris?

Christopher Lopez ([08:14](#)):

Thank you, Alex, for sharing those insights surrounding culture. To read the full report, click the link in the episode resources below. Now, let's get into the episode's discussion. SHRM's latest book release, *Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval*, outlines three key principles for readers to follow as they shape their organizational culture.

Christopher Lopez ([08:37](#)):

Here to chat more about the reset mindset and to help you, our Tune in Tuesday audience, walk away with tips on how you can embrace change throughout your organization is Melissa Dawn Simkins, SHRM Foundation board member, CEO of Velvet Suite, Inc., and creator of The She-Suite Community as she sits down with *Reset* author, SHRM president and CEO, Johnny C. Taylor Jr. Welcome, Melissa and Johnny, to the Tune in Tuesday program.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([09:15](#)):

Hi. Well, first off, Johnny, congratulations on your book, making the Wall Street Journal Best Sellers list. How does that feel?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([09:24](#)):

Oh, man. It's like truly, truly a bucket list item. I didn't think I would ever achieve something like this, but thanks to all of my colleagues here at SHRM and SHRM Research, which truly, truly differentiated the book. We're on the list and we're continuing to sell.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([09:40](#)):

Absolutely. Well, it just reaffirms why this book is so needed. Tell us why this is important for business leaders to read and to really understand the principles of resetting for an organization.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([09:52](#)):

Because I think the reality is if all of us reflect back on where we were in March, I'd like to say Friday, March the 13th of 2020, we all thought this was a pause. No one expected that we would be 15 months later or longer still talking about COVID. If you recall, all of the news media outlets, the pundits, as well as the White House was saying if we shut the country down for 14, 21, 30 days at the outset, we can then push the pause button and then come back. Well, it didn't work out that way. So business leaders...and we know the difference between a pause, is you hit the pause button, you let it up and you start just where you were.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([10:33](#)):

Well, because of the period of time that is passed, what occurred was a true reset. So, employees had their COVID clarity, the markets shifted in terms of availability of talent. As you no doubt know and we'll talk about, we're in the middle of a turnover tsunami, we have the great resignation, a whole bunch of things have happened which suggests to you leaders you can't just go back to what you did in March of 2020. You've got to literally reset because your employees have reset their mindsets.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([11:04](#)):

Absolutely. You take us back. I remember it was March 13... we were scheduled to do the She-Suite Summit live.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([11:10](#)):

That's right.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([11:12](#)):

And it was this moment of... We had 36 hours to shift to a virtual experience and it really was about changing our mindset, right?

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

That's right.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([11:20](#)):

So many of your HR colleagues had to make that quick pivot. First it was a pivot, now a reset and a shift, and over time, there's just this built-in exhaustion, of feeling overwhelmed. What tips can you give HR professionals right now who've really been the first responders of the workplace to help them prepare for leading the case and leading the charge of change over and over again in terms of how they reset their minds from a vantage point of their self and their team and maybe their company?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([11:53](#)):

Well, I'm so glad you asked that because the entire narrative about first responders are about law enforcement officials and healthcare workers, and by the way, really important people. But they focus on the lives, right? Human resource professionals focused on the livelihoods of people, and both were equally important. So many of my colleagues in HR have not taken a moment to say, "I too need to reset. I need to rejuvenate. I need to reinvigorate myself because we're tired." We've been so busy giving to everyone else, right?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([12:29](#)):

Our employees have healthcare concerns, our employees have childcare concerns, our employees have, frankly, livelihood concerns when you consider we were laying people off, we were furloughing people. So here we are 15 months into this and a lot of HR people could not take a break. We were at our best, full out, running hard. So, what I've recommended to people is especially as we get toward the end of this year, when we think about the holiday season, do everything you can to set aside some time for you and your family. I can tell you personally what I'm doing.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([13:04](#)):

I've almost literally blocked out my calendar to say, "Starting around Thanksgiving when I take that break and I'm going give thanks to God, to my family, and to my colleagues for all that we've been able to overcome during this last 18-month period, I'm also going to recharge Johnny." So, number one tip is to be intentional about how you spend the last four, six weeks of the year, because 2022 is frankly not... Right now, every indication it's not going to be any easier because, again, the pandemic continues to play. We're going to be in the middle of a flu season, a real flu season.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([13:40](#)):

You've got the flu, you've got the pandemic, you've got Delta, Lambda, Mu, and all of that continues to put pressure on HR people. But the number one thing is to be intentional about setting aside some time to recharge. One of my colleagues would tell me all the time, "Johnny, you can't sprint a marathon. You just can't do it." We have been forced to sprint and it's time to take a break or you too will burn out and you won't be any good for your organization.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([14:07](#)):

Absolutely. We think about women specifically in the workplace, we've been hit so hard by this idea of burnout and overwhelm. What are some of the things that you think we can do, whether it's through policies, to bring women back to the workforce after this mass exodus and really address this?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([14:30](#)):

I'm so glad that you mentioned that one because we had finally, when you talk about all of our diversity work that we've done for two, three decades to bring women into the workplace and meaningful numbers and representation, and then like overnight, for the first time pre-pandemic, the American workforce was majority women. Then as quickly as COVID rode into town, we lost women in the workplace and now the numbers are staggering. Millions of women left the workplace and SHRM's research suggest that women in the really important age demo of 35 to 44 are still looking to leave.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([15:08](#)):

We have to do something about that. And what's the answer? It is to care for the women who you still have in the workplace first and foremost. We've got to acknowledge that women are doing double, if not triple duty, in many instances. Not that men don't provide for their children, but most of it, frankly because of the way our society has worked and likely will work for a long time, is on women. So, they're not just childcare, but they're dependent care more broadly.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([15:35](#)):

If you have older parents, and many of us sit in this sandwich generation where you're providing for the job, you're providing for your children, you're providing for your elderly parents who themselves could not be put at risk during the pandemic since they were especially susceptible to catching COVID and dying from COVID, it's put so much pressure on women. So, what we're saying is, for your women in your workforce, we've got to be cognizant of it to make sure that we give them breaks, that we are being empathetic.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([16:05](#)):

When that woman says, "Listen, I know that you want to have a meeting right now, but these three things are happening in my personal life. Can you help me work this all out, not a balance, but can you help me integrate work as well as the demands of my personal life?" We can do that. We've talked a lot about, from a policy perspective, adding a lot of flexibility into our policies, specifically policies in the workplace, but federal policies around paid leave. That's my number one issue right now. It's embarrassing that the United States has not sorted this issue. We passed the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993 and we thought that's stage one.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([16:46](#)):

That's web 2.0. Well, now it's time for us to go to web 3.0, and that is how to figure out how to provide leave for women where they're not making a choice between, do I go to work or do I feed my children? Even if I'm not feeling well, I need to go to work because the leave is unpaid leave, which is tantamount to no leave. That's just one example of the work that we are doing at SHRM and our government affairs group is really pushing the government to have real conversations about how we're going to solve for and present as an option paid leave for all employees. But women in particular will be especially impacted by this if we don't get it right.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([17:25](#)):

Yes. I loved your point about taking time at the end of the year to reset. One of the things that we're doing is an answer to with this chronic problem.. Is a newsletter that's really focused on weekly reset.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([17:38](#)):

I saw it by the way. I saw it and I was like, "Wait a minute! The stars are aligning."

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([17:45](#)):

That's right.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([17:45](#)):

That's great stuff. This is a brilliant idea. Tell me.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([17:48](#)):

Yeah. Well, the reason I bring it up is because there is so much pressure around women today. I mean, personally, I care for my parents who live down the street. I'm a mother, I am an entrepreneur. It wasn't until someone in my life, my husband, said, "You need to take time and step away so that you can get the clarity that you need." And I think a lot of times, leaders in the workplace, particularly HR leaders, are so busy doing-

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([18:12](#)):

That's right.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([18:13](#)):

... and being present for everyone else. So we said, "How can we give a gift back to women once a week to challenge them to take back their time, whether it's 30 minutes, 40 minutes, take time to reset and

create a strategy to win their week." I think it's a great leadership principle. I mean, I'm sure you've got some ideas around how you do that each week. What do you do to reset, Johnny?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([18:35](#)):

Well, and I think that's exactly why your newsletter- even though I'm not a part of your target audience, I follow you -and why it caught my attention. Not only the naming of it, because I had a book coming out, it's Reset, that you didn't know about, so we share the title, but I also really like the idea. I personally reset typically every Sunday afternoon. I'm a single dad by the way, so I actually have more in common than many of your members might think. I have an 11-year-old baby girl, the love of my life. So, I'm traveling, I'm working, I have elderly parents. In the middle of the pandemic, my father had two strokes.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([19:12](#)):

Oh, wow!

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([19:13](#)):

It wasn't COVID that impacted him, it was a stroke. So, I'm in the middle of trying to balance this all, and it was at that moment when I realized I've got to recharge Johnny or I'm not going to be good for anyone. I think a lot about what you do on the airplanes. Many of you who fly, they tell you if for some unfortunate reason this plane starts going down, you've got to put the oxygen mask on yourself first. The temptation is to put it on the dependents around you, but you can't save them if you're not okay.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([19:46](#)):

So, every Sunday, I make a point of just taking some time, it's about an hour, to reflect, to engage in introspection. I play my old school R&B, and it's in the background, and I'm just thinking about the week that I just passed the week that I'm coming into and what are those things I need to do to be effective? Because I'm not any good for that daughter if I burn out. I'm not any good for 500 colleagues here at SHRM if I deliver a less than wholesome experience at work because I'm exhausted. You asked, what do I do? That's what I do.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([20:21](#)):

And I tell you, you have the luxury, and it is such a blessing, to have a spouse. To your point, you said, "My husband kind of said, 'You got to get this together.'" It's still no less difficult trying to balance all of that stuff. But even for those of your members, your audience who say, "Well, I don't have the luxury of that," you've got to force the time. You asked me, what do I do? I have to find a way. So, if it's during that hour-long period that I take my... And I do this, sometimes I'll double dip. I'll take my daughter to the park.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([20:51](#)):

She's running around having a good time with other kids and I'm actually sitting on a bench engaged in introspection, stepping away, not taking phone calls, not doing text messages, not doing any of that, but just having my moment. And it's the fall time, so it's a beautiful time to do it by the way. The weather is beautiful.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([21:10](#)):

Well, I love it because, Johnny, we see you so dynamic, we see you leading the charge at SHRM up on stage, motivating the masses, leading our strategic vision. But you're human, right?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([21:22](#)):

Yes.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([21:22](#)):

And you gave us insight of what you have to do. And I think this book really speaks to strategies that are for the profession, but also for the person.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([21:31](#)):

For the person.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([21:32](#)):

I love that you shared that experience with us and brought us into your world. The book talks about these reset moments for the organization, and there's a mindset reset. How can organizations identify these moments and prioritize which triggers they should act upon immediately?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([21:51](#)):

Wow! The pandemic made one for us, right?

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([21:55](#)):

Right.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([21:55](#)):

I mean, universally, we all understood there's something going on. But it's interesting and I think about it in the way we think about earthquakes. Those aftershocks, that's what we've experienced. March of 2020 was an all out, off the richter scale earthquake. But we are now seeing the Delta, the Lambda, the Mu. Those are aftershocks if you think about it in that way. So, each of those present really meaningful opportunities to reset because you're just modifying a little bit, incrementally. Think about it, we started out by saying we're going to have people work remotely. That was March of 2020.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([22:39](#)):

Then we brought people back into the workplace and then some organizations took people out of the workplace because of the variants. You're constantly... And this is a point I want to make and my book tries to make, the new normal is always changing. If you think about pre-pandemic, we used to... in HR, when people were talking about their organizations, they were like, "Listen, there's too much change. We need to slow down and stabilize so our employees can get used to that reorg that we did last year." Well, now organizations are agile and are doing reorgs once a month, once a quarter.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([23:16](#)):

So, we literally have to get comfortable being uncomfortable. It has to become the new norm for employees and change is a part of it. So, how do you identify them? You don't spend a lot of time, they're happening. They're happening constantly and your job is to figure out how to teach people, equip them with the skills to manage through a world that's just going to be filled with change. I mean, constantly. As late as this morning, someone was saying... Well, it was actually this weekend. So, Friday afternoon, my colleague said, "What's the latest? Can employers mandate vaccinations in a private sector?"

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([23:55](#)):

So the courts had already spoken to the Houston medical hospital situation and they talked about the University of Indiana or... Right, all of that. Indiana University it was. Okay, by Sunday, a federal court had said, "Yeah, private employers, you can do that. That now leaves all of us scrambling trying to say, "We now have a new direction, a new change in law from the courts." That's it. It's just I wish I could tell people what it is. Listen, it is the new norm, is change.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([24:29](#)):

Yeah. One of the things that I've started to think about, Johnny, I don't know if you've thought about it this way, but as we change, we often think about the motor being the change, but not who we become because of the change.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([24:40](#)):

Amen. Yes.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([24:40](#)):

Like how our identity has changed because of what we've gone through. I don't know if you have any thoughts around what you've observed about how you've become a different leader because of what you've gone through that maybe you can share with our audience.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([24:56](#)):

I can tell you some positive and some negative, okay? One on the positive side is I've become more empathetic as a leader. We talk about the country, and I would argue the globes, empathy deficit, right? Pre-pandemic, we were so in our own world and in this "I" environment, have it your way, like Burger King, right? I want my sandwich to look like this, I don't care about anyone else's. Our employees were constantly saying, "60-year-old employee needs pension benefits, I don't care. I'm 25, I need my student loans paid off." And you just didn't care.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([25:32](#)):

As a leader, you had this environment to operate in and pressures from the financial sector to deliver, you got to pay your employees, you got to do... And so, guess what? I lost my sight a little bit and I became less empathetic and I was more focused on just getting it done on it, and if you didn't get on with me, then you could move on. The pandemic made me stop and realize that woman who is not focusing on work right now has a sick mother, a child who's not learning and is struggling, and just because you can do math doesn't mean you can teach math.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([26:02](#)):

All of this is coming down on her at once and I don't understand that. I don't understand it partially because I'm not her, but I also have significant financial resources. So I can call a tutor in when my daughter is stuck on a math problem, she doesn't have that luxury. So, she's watching her child struggle and she can't do anything about it and I can. I love what you say about the pandemic changed me for the positive. In fact, I can always see the positive. But some of the downside, and this is really important that we all have to be cognizant of and you've alluded to it already, right?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([26:37](#)):

I work too hard. I just don't let up. And the pandemic, I have rationalized in my mind, well, I would've had to get up at six o'clock in the morning and feed my daughter breakfast and get her dressed and da, da, da. So, I found time. So what happens is we start at seven o'clock in the morning because we found time and then we work until seven o'clock in the evening. You don't stop to go eat lunch, you don't stop to pick your child up, you don't do those things, so we're burning ourselves out.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([27:07](#)):

In fact, the data is out, fresh off the press at SHRM, that people are working harder than before the pandemic as a result of the pandemic. Although you're not traveling to work, you're not on airplanes as much as you did, you're working harder, which means you're burning yourselves out. That is the biggest aha, is I think we've gotten an uncomfortable relationship with working all the time.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([27:31](#)):

How do we break that?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([27:32](#)):

Yeah. With conversations like this one right here and just calling each other. Listen, I had an employee say to me, "I don't feel like..." This is last year in 2020. "I don't think I could take a vacation because I've been working from home." I said, "And you've likely been working harder". And so we had to force our employees to use their vacation time, and that means people leaders have to really... Because employees are like, "Gosh, I feel so badly. I've been working remotely. What do I say when I say I want to take a week off?" Well, we should encourage people to take that week off. You don't don't do me any good if you burn out.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([28:06](#)):

That's right.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([28:07](#)):

That's tactically something you can do and anyone listening can do, is to force people to step away from work, decompress. You just can't keep doing this thing at this rate and think this is going to turn out good for the organization.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([28:20](#)):

Yeah. It's a powerful truth that I love that you position both with the positive and the negative and we have to address both. How can leaders support their HR teams and empower them to have these aha moments or these reset moments as we would like to call them?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([28:36](#)):

HR for a long time has been the stepchild. It's the place where you only show up when things go wrong, you only complain what goes wrong, et cetera, and so you're taking all of this. What leaders need to do, and they're doing, I'm proud to report based upon all of the SHRM research, is they're actually valuing the HR function and their HR practitioners. If you think about what happens in healthcare, there are no shortage of people constantly saying, "Our nurses, our doctors, they've saved us."

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([29:06](#)):

Now you're seeing CEOs say, "My HR department has saved us. Our HR people should be celebrated as workplace first responders". That's what I would ask leaders... Sometimes we know we're going to have to work hard, right? We know the day doesn't stop 9:00 to 5:00 when we're in HR, right? If someone calls you and says, "An employee is in stress. We had an unfortunate situation where one of our employees was thinking about or had stated they were going to commit suicide," the HR person worked all night to resolve the situation and make sure that person had access to trained mental health professionals and then had to get up the next morning and sit in the office and do what they do anyway.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([29:47](#)):

So it is incumbent upon leaders to understand and fully appreciate how hard the HR people are working. And this is not to have someone play a violin and feel sorry for you, an acknowledgement that we carry not just our own burdens, but the burdens of all the people who work with us every day, every night, 24/7.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([30:07](#)):

Yes. It's a great point that we have to make sure that we raise, because if not, it can be overlooked. We're at a crucial point across diversity, inclusion, mental health. How does resetting in those areas impact our future?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([30:25](#)):

Well, so if the pandemic weren't enough last year, then we roll around to May 25th and George Floyd is murdered. So the country now has a racial reckoning like nothing we've ever seen before, and for good reason by the way, we were in a long time in the making. So, we forced some conversations. But that has been the biggest change. I mean, you're talking about a culture shift of... You and I know, both African Americans, right? Companies did a lot of lip service to diversity, right? "Yeah. I got to do it." And I mean, for a long time, they did it.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([30:58](#)):

Finally, there's been a real discussion. And it's not just because of George Floyd, because remember there was a Rodney King, there was a Freddie Gray. I mean, there have been plenty of instances like this, but there was something palpably different this time. And I think it was it's time for us to be able to have conversations around diversity, now equity and inclusion. And that's very different than anything we've

ever experienced before. So I think the biggest change is you had the pandemic, and since everyone was at home all day, they could watch on a 24-hour cycle Mr. Floyd laying on the ground and being murdered.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([31:35](#)):

So, it finally dawned on people who were not anti... They weren't racist, they were just like, "I hear some people are harmed, but not a lot of people," and they saw the depravity of it and they're like, "Okay, this is a problem and this is why my black employees in the workplace are feeling the way they feel." They also had the opportunity to see the very ugly stories around what Weinstein was doing to women and they said, "Wait a minute." Or most recently breaking news, R. Kelly's conviction. They were again sitting in the front of that screen all day being bombarded with it from social media or live television radio and saying, "Wait a minute, something's got to happen."

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([32:12](#)):

We've got to do better from a diversity, equity, and inclusion standpoint. This is our moment." So, I think that happened there and it's really critical. Coming out of all of that in 2020, I've got to take care of diversity, equity, and inclusion, I've got to take care of a new conversation that came out of that, and it was around culture, it was around workplace culture. So, diversity, equity, and inclusion has been an initiative. And you've seen them. "We're going to start a program, an initiative."

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([32:43](#)):

And what I think came out of this, which I'm actually... I think this is the lemonade out of the lemons, is we finally have said, "No, this has to be a part of the way we operate as business just normally. It's not a special program. It's not a meal once a month or a recognition of a group on a particular day. It's culturally embedded. It's the way we're going to operate going forward." The best leaders figured that out and said, "This is no longer about compliance because I can do a whole bunch of things to avoid breaking the law." But that's the floor, not the ceiling. There's so many opportunities above what the law requires.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([33:18](#)):

So, I think that's been a huge reset moment for us and I'm hoping, I genuinely hope that we will take this and go forward. Because one of the things we've historically seen is there's that moment when literally the country is on fire, there's riots, there's this, there's that, and then three months later we get back to normal. I'm hoping that this is a reset moment versus a pause moment, because the former responses were pauses until people got over it and forgot. This time, I think we actually have a reset at our hands.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([33:52](#)):

Yes. For those who are listening in and shaking their head, "Yes, Johnny, I agree with you. However, we've had this history of pushback."

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([34:00](#)):

That's right.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([34:01](#)):

And the tendency is to just go back to what was before and continue that push and pull." How do we create sustainable change?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([34:11](#)):

One thing is it has to be culturally embedded. It just has to be the way we operate. The second thing, and I'm so glad you asked this because it's an important point, in the past, the diversity work has focused on, A, our differences, and two, getting past the moment. Okay? We just did. Part of it was find someone who was at fault and blame one group. This group did it all wrong. Well, that has not proven to be a good idea. It has not worked. What we've got to do is show every person within our organization that we all have biases.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([34:47](#)):

Me as an African American man, I have biases towards certain groups. So, when you hear unconscious bias, this isn't a black man saying the white people are bad, it's saying, "I too have my biases." It may be toward the differently able. I may have biases toward people who are differently abled and disabled in my mind. And I may have biases toward women. So, that's what's different now, is that the DE&I is challenging us all to be better human beings, better colleagues, better parents, better communities and community members and global citizens.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([35:19](#)):

And I think if we get this right, we're not going to have that. But listen, it is natural for people to push back when you point fingers at them and blame them for all things bad. Yeah, that's the way it was going to work. I think this time we're going to think very differently about it. I'm optimistic.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([35:36](#)):

Yes. Well, it's interesting because we had a great time together at the SHRM conference, SHRM21 in Las Vegas. You all really did an amazing job in leading through change, doing something that hadn't been done before successfully and safely with this virtual and in-person event. And I think it's just setting the bar, raising the standard.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([36:00](#)):

Can I say something? So, Juneteenth, the recognition of it as a national holiday, was politically charged. People said, "You don't need this. You don't need that." And you're right. At the SHRM conference, we put a face on it, a 95-year-old woman, and everyone erupted. There was no division. And she made the most compelling point, which I think really makes the point that you're making. She said, "This country is not free until all of us were free." So, July 4th, wonderful. But she said, "June 19th, a percentage of our population did not know and happened not to be free."

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([36:37](#)):

So, until everyone was free, no one was free. See, that's not your bad for doing this to me. It is, why don't we open this up? Everyone should enjoy the dignity of life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. All Americans. And if we deliver that now, that's the new approach to diversity, equity, inclusion. It's not "you're bad, and I'm right or you're wrong."

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([37:01](#)):

Yes. It's bridging that diversity divide.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([37:04](#)):

Yes.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([37:04](#)):

I want to know as we wrap up, Johnny, what is your hope for this book? At the end of the day, there's a lot of authors, there's a lot of pages written about change and leadership. But from Johnny C. Taylor Jr's perspective, what is your hope for this book?

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([37:18](#)):

I hope that this book, and not just... By the way, all proceeds go to the SHRM Foundation. So, Johnny gets nothing. If you sell a million copies, the SHRM Foundation's going to have more money for scholarships and things like that. But my real hope is that leaders at all levels, this is just not for CEOs, it is, if you are a frontline manager, pick it up. There are kernels of knowledge there... and I tried to write it in a very conversational way so it's not reading something from a Harvard Law book, right? Where you could actually take it and put it into practice and make your workplace a better workplace, but also make you a better person.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([37:52](#)):

I love it. Johnny, thank you for being so inspiring.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([37:55](#)):

Thank you.

Melissa Dawn Simkins ([37:55](#)):

Thank you for all the work that you do for SHRM. I know it's often understated, but we have to give our flowers and our recognition, our appreciation. Thank you. We're so excited about this book. It's awesome.

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

Thank you so much.

Christopher Lopez ([38:17](#)):

Thank you so much, Melissa and Johnny, for joining the program today. If you haven't picked up your copy of *Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval*, click the link in our episode resources to get yours today. We look forward to seeing you at SHRM's Inclusion Conference later this month, October 25th through the 27th. If you haven't registered, visit the link in the episode resources below to join us in person in Austin, Texas, or virtually online. Thank you so much for joining us today for Tune in Tuesday. We'll see you back here on November 12th at 2:00 PM Eastern.