Published: October 9, 2025

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: One of the most important things is, rather than try to indoctrinate people into thinking like you, just asking questions like, “Where did you learn that? How did you hear about that? Who taught you that? Why do you still think that now?” Those questions, those are probing questions that sometimes, even if you don't like the answers, some people have never been asked those questions.

Sam Fuqua: That's Dr. Omékongo Dibinga, and this is Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds. In this episode, we talk with Omékongo Dibinga about how individuals can respond to and undo racist stereotypes. He teaches intercultural communication at American University. He's the author of *Lies About Black People: How To Combat Racist Stereotypes And Why It Matters*. We spoke with Dr. Omékongo Dibinga at the 2025 White Privilege Conference.

I'm Sam Fuqua, co-host of the program with Alexis Miles. Hi Alexis.

Alexis Miles: Hello Sam.

Sam Fuqua: So pleased to have Omékongo Dibinga with us for this edition of Well, That Went Sideways! We're here at the 2025 White Privilege Conference. And Alexis and I both just heard you speak.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: And it was very motivational. Uh, can you talk about the importance of motivation in the work you do and why you do that?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Well, first of all, you know, thanks for having me. Uh, you, you have to motivate yourself in a world that's actively trying to tear you down. And you look at television, you're sold on like every product but yourself. You know, whether it's pills, whether it's programs, whether it's, everything. So, you have to motivate yourself daily. You know, they say, well, some people say, well, motivation doesn't really work for me. You know, it's like, well, do you do it daily? It's like brushing your teeth doesn't work for you if you don't do it daily. So, it's important to affirm yourself before you're going out into, into a world that's filled with so much negativity and hate.

Alexis Miles: You know, that leads me to something, you talk about the need for motivation. So, I'm looking at the title of your book *Lies About Black People: How To Combat Racist Stereotypes and Why It Matters*.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Alexis Miles: So, a racist stereotype is demotivating for those people that, um, are impacted by the stereotype. Can you talk about how that's a demotivator?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah. And I'm glad you said for the people who are experiencing the stereotype.

Alexis Miles: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Because the people who are making the stereotype feel very motivated. But when, when you live in a society where a narrative has already been created for you and about you before you were born, I have a whole chapter in *Lies About Black People* about just the media and, and how ideas came about, about black people with black face, and, and the idea of criminalization, and now people are more likely to think that we're criminals. That's a stereotype. You know, I saw a story about a high school track star, uh, and the coach said that he got so fast running from the police, and the, the kid got so mad that he transferred from the school. So, it's a stereotype. It was a raw product of these stories, and they're hurtful, you know, uh, all. And then there's people, they're ones that people think are good, that are terrible for the community, like the Asian, uh, model, minority myth. You know, you talk to people in the Asian community, they talk about how that's really hurt them on so many levels. So, we have to do a better job of understanding that.

Alexis Miles: Well, what about that old saying, *sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me*.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: It's a lie.

Alexis Miles: These are words.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah. Yeah. It's a lie. Legislation is words. You know, the legislation that said, you know, black people and Jewish people can't live here. Those were words. You read that on a contract, that hurts. So, that, that was a lie from the beginning.

Alexis Miles: And not only does it hurt, uh, psychologically, emotionally, it hurts economically. It plays out in real life.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: "Plays out in real life" is such a powerful word, phrase. 'Cause when I wrote this book, I originally wrote it for white people who are coming out of the Black Lives Matter movement, who are looking for more. But then I went online and I asked people for it, gimme some lies you were told about black people, the majority of the responses came from black people. They were talking about, like they were told they can't swim. You know, how they were, this is some of the chapters. They were told that they're not good with money. They were told that they're not good to go to college. So, they didn't do those things. You know, they didn't engage because of the stories they were told. And some of them talked about how they had to overcome those stories and narratives to be the first one to go to college, to be the first one to start a business, and the like. So, the lies they, they impact everybody.

Sam Fuqua: You know, you asked some questions in your keynote, uh, seven questions, I believe?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yes, Rule of 7. Yes.

Sam Fuqua: And the one that, uh, you know, I was running down in my head was, uh, who are your seven closest friends, right?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: And, what does that tell you about yourself and your relationships? But also, you said something like, if you have friends who are, who are racist...

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: Who are homophobic...

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: You, you gotta let them go.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah.

Sam Fuqua: Right?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah.

Sam Fuqua: And then, a, a person in the, uh, audience said, "Well, I, I do have a friend who's, who's MAGA," right?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: And this person's speaking's not.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: "Um, and I'm, I, I think I might be getting through to them."

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah.

Sam Fuqua: Uh, so I'm trying to, uh, as Loretta Ross would say, "I'm trying to call them in..."

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: "Rather than push them out."

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sam Fuqua: Where's the, kind of, the line there?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah.

Sam Fuqua: How, how do we know, like, when it's time to just say, "So long"?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: It, it is time to say so long, in my opinion, when you feel like the conversations you're having are bringing you down more than they're bringing you up. People either bringing you up or down, there's no middle ground. And, like I said in the talk, on social media, after like two exchanges with some people, they go straight to insults. I don't got time for that. But I can have a conversation with somebody who has completely different views of mine as long as they believe in humanity. Like, everyone has a right to be alive, right? They can have different views about, you know, things like, uh, gay marriage or Black Lives Matter, or Israel-Palestine, you know, whatever. But, if they're interested in a conversation, hearing what I have to say, and they want to hear, and I wanna hear what they have to say, show me scholarly articles, you know, documentaries, you, video, so we can find, like I said, my most requested speech is *Finding Common Ground*. As long as the conversation is productive, even if it's, if it's tense, that's fine.

As long as there's, people are moving towards something, we have to have those conversations. And when people aren't doing that, all you really can do is plant seeds. Well, I'm gonna share something now that maybe in a year, someone else will drop another seed, drop another seed, a third person, and then people, and it happens all of the time. We see stories about people who were clansmen, who are now building with the black community. Who are now, people who were, who were Nazis, neo-Nazis, who are now building with the Jewish community, you know, building peace. Like, it can happen. But you have to be respectful of yourself enough to know where you can go for a particular conversation, because that's part of your health. And if you're not gonna be respectful of your own boundaries and you're doing this work, we're gonna lose you to this work because you took yourself out.

Sam Fuqua: Do you have specific tips, uh, since this is a podcast about conflict and conflict resolution, specific tips or techniques you use when someone has a different perspective and you're not sure whether it's time to just say, see you or...

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sam Fuqua: Or enter into a dialogue.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: The most important thing, there's several things we can talk about, but one of the most important things is, rather than try to indoctrinate people into thinking like you, just asking questions. You know, like, where did you learn that? How did you hear about that?

Who taught you that? Uh, why do you still think that now? Those questions, those are probing questions that sometimes even if you don't like the answers, they've never been, some people have never been asked those questions, so they never had to think about it. Like I talked about in the speech, I had one of my college students who said my class on intercultural communication made him realize that he was a racist. So, this is an 18, 19-year-old student who went through his entire life not realizing he had racist ideas. And that wasn't my goal to teach him that, but the class made him learn that because in the class I told him the questions we ask in this class are more important than the answers. I don't need you to tell me, well, Dr. King did this on that day. It's important to know that, but what was the spirit of what happened? What did that lead people to? So, that was one of the things I realized really helps people because when you ask some questions, you don't have to have an answer in that moment. Leave 'em with something that has 'em thinking.

Alexis Miles: Well, this makes me think you used the word stereotypes in, in the title.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Alexis Miles: But a, a stereotype is the shortcut.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Alexis Miles: And it stops thought.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah.

Alexis Miles: So, what you're saying is if we can get people to think, to actually reflect on something, that, that makes a difference, that breaks that, that stereotype.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, Chimamanda and her *Dangers of a Single Story*, you know, very famous Ted Talk, she said it's a, it's not that stereotypes are, are wrong, it's that they're incomplete. You know, people pick one thing, you know, a lot of black people do love to dance, so they pick that one thing and they'll say, okay, well a lot of black people do love to dance, that means they're not really interested in education. You see what I'm saying? Like, they, they, they add stuff to it that's not complete. And that's where the, the stories come in. The single stories come in that become problematic. And as I said in the talk, all of us, whether we like it or not, are products of a story that someone else told about our people, whoever our people are, whether we're talking gender wise, race wise, religious wise, narratives that were formed before we were even born. And unfortunately, we gotta spend a lot of our time even just fighting that narrative.

Alexis Miles: Well, there's a, a move in this country to control the narrative very tightly. In your opinion, is that a deliberate conscious effort or is it just the product of running scared?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Oh, it's a deliberate conscious effort based on fear. You know, the, the fear of white people becoming a minority in this country is real. That whole idea about, you know,

white replacement theory and, uh, you know, when they were marching in Charlottesville, Jews would not replace us. Like, all that, I taught at Charlottesville semester, I saw it. So, that's, that, it's real and it's based on the fear. And that's what, uh, Trump ran on. Even his first time as president. I remember, I'll never forget, he said, "You better vote for me. This is your last chance." You know, he's basically saying like, it's your last chance to, like, save the culture. So, get me in there and I'll do that. And he's doing it even more now than he did back then. But even back then, he had the executive orders on DEI. There was places I couldn't go and talk about certain things because of his executive orders. So, he ran on the preservation of whiteness. And people who wanted to preserve whiteness or who are white adjacent, um, and people from the Latino community who are finding out that they weren't as white as they thought they were going to be considered, they're, they're realizing a lot of that right now. Even some black people who thought they can get some of those benefits of whiteness, it's not happening for them.

Alexis Miles: Do you think that most people are aware that the mythology of white supremacy is actually just a stereotype?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: No. No. They're, they're, they've been told that white, Israel, look, this is a country that used to call people yellow if they're Asian. Used to call, uh, indigenous people red, right? They got rid of those, and started calling people closer to the, you know, their terminology. I mean, in the beginning, before they started diversifying Latino, in terms of the language, in terms of, yeah, actually Puerto Rican or Dominican, like, I think everybody was called Mexican. I talk about that in the book, right? So, we started calling people closer to their nationality or ethnicity, but we kept white and black. We did that on purpose because there is no black without white. There's no white without black. You remove black people, what is white? Like, whiteness is not real. Like, blackness is not real. You know what is real? You're Jamaican American ancestry is real. Your Irish American ancestry real. Your, your Italian American, your, your Polish culture, your, your Brazil, like those things are real. Like, what is white food? You know what I mean? What is white dance? You can't tell me what those are, but you can tell me what Irish dance is. You can tell me what Polish dance is. You can tell me what Jamaican dance is. You can tell me what Ghanaian dance is, right? Or, you know, dances based on somebody's ethnicity. Like, if you are a part of, like, the Wolof people or, or, or Pular. But the racial thing, we kept that because many people have their identities tied to whiteness. Jane Elliot has done so many videos on that where she asked people, you know, how many of y'all would give up being white and nobody stands up in the, you know, she's like, that means you know what's happening. If you proud, you want to keep your whiteness, why aren't you standing up for people who are black. It's a story. You get rid of black. That's why I have the book, *Lies About Black People*.

Alexis Miles: I wanna add one more thing to that.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Sure.

Alexis Miles: Meritocracy.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Alexis Miles: Because whiteness and meritocracy seem to be in lockstep. So, white people have merit, other people don't.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah. And what, and what merit is for white people is really the complexion of connection. That's really all it is. You know, the white people in this country, you know, they said Kamala Harris only had three months to run against Trump. No, Trump didn't have a, you know, nine month head start. He had a 400 plus year head start. He ran on white maleness. The two things this countries were built on, no other candidate could run on that. Kamala couldn't do it. Hillary couldn't do it. Vivek Ramaswami couldn't do it. Nikki Haley couldn't do it. He ran on white manhood. And so, he had a 400 year start on that because that is their meritocracy. And the fact of the matter is when you're challenging that meritocracy, equality looks like oppression. So, there's, if you have a country that's built on meritocracy, like, it's not diversity, equality, and inclusion, it's diversity, equity, and inclusion. Equity is about the things you need to do to get people towards equality. And, too many white people don't want that.

Sam Fuqua: Since we're talking about Trump, I've read that, uh, some data shows that he picked up more votes this time from men of color, from Latino men.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: From black men.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm.

Sam Fuqua: Why do you think that is?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Well, there're a couple of things. So, in the book, I have a thing on racial vocabulary. I don't even use the term people of color anymore because it blends in a group of people who don't have that much in common. While white people get to stay white, and, you know, we keep shrinking other groups. But to answer your question directly, he had a lar, he won the Latino male vote. Did I, you know, he won that. With black men, it was like a two percent change, you know. Uh, the majority, the second largest group to vote for Kamala Harris was black men. So, you know, that, that's a different narrative between the two groups. But furthermore, to the point, it's because he ran on the idea of, of macho, right? And, and as I talk about in the book, there are tensions within, you know, there are black Latino people, first of all. That's all, we, we know that. But generally speaking, in this country, there are black people and Latinos, there's been tensions between those groups that, you know, there are many Latino men who are like, I'm not voting for a black person, much less a black woman. I'm not gonna do that.

Uh, many black men within our society, there's still some, many black men came out strong for Kamala, but you know, who didn't come out strong for Kamala in the black male community, the black hip hop community. Black male, Hollywood did. Tyler Perry, all of those guys, there are, the singers did. But the black, there were more black men who came out in the hip hop space for Hillary than they did for Kamala Harris. Snoop, all of these guys who endorse it, which speaks to that thing we call misogynoir. The misogynoir directed against black women, which is what hip hop is built on. You see what I'm saying? So, I think those were the issues. So, even though there

was a great deal of distance between the Latino male vote for Kamala versus the black male vote, too many of us didn't come out. Like, one black male vote for Trump is too much for me. The top three groups that voted against Trump were black women, followed by black men, followed by Jewish people. Like, those are the three groups that knew what was up. You know, they knew what he was selling and they weren't buying it.

Sam Fuqua: Say a little more about why you don't use the term people of color anymore. And in your talk, I think you specifically, uh, also addressed BIPOC.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Sure.

Sam Fuqua: That acronym that you're not a fan of.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: I hate it. So, I have a whole chapter on your racialized vocabulary. Like, I used to use people of color probably up until about two, three years ago. And, and I, I started realizing that they were just lumping all of us in. And, the more groups you lump in, the more stories get erased. So for example, I think the one thing that made me realize is when people were talking about there was a rise of COVID related hate crimes against people of color, it's not true. There was a rise of COVID related hate crimes against people within the Asian community. Black people didn't experience, uh, I'm talking about disproportionately. Hate related crimes relating to COVID. During the 2016 election, when people talked about there was a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment against people of color, that's not true. It was primarily against Latino people. When people talk about a rise in unarmed police shootings against people of color, that's not true. That's black people, disproportionately. So, we throw in all of these groups and, but white people still get to stay white. And the thing is with that is that white is a color too. Like, so why isn't that part, you know what I'm saying? So, when we say people of color, you're using white people as the original, like a piece of paper, and everybody else is colored into that. When historically that's not true in terms of who's been on this planet the longest. So, that's the type of stuff I'm saying in terms of we know how to rethink the language that's been given to us.

BIPOC is a term that got popular on social media. Black Indigenous People of Color. Doesn't make sense to me because if black people are people of color and indigenous people are people of color, it's almost like you're saying people of color, people of color. And then, black people and indigenous people don't have, in my opinion, that much in common to be labeled as a group. Indigenous people own slaves. They enslaved people. So did white people. But there's not a white pot category. Black people and indigenous people have had moments of solidarity. True. But the Buffalo soldiers, black soldiers, were part of slaughtering indigenous people. So, like, why do we keep coming up with these new terms to group people in? But we try to expand whiteness. Like, Italian people weren't white in the beginning. Irish people weren't white in the beginning. But whiteness has expanded over the years where other groups are contracted. And, that's part of the problem. That's what Roland Martin talks about in his book, *White Fear,* that people are fearful of white people becoming the minority. So, they do these things to dilute other populations, and I think it's problematic.

Alexis Miles: And when you say they, who are you referring to? I know we're talking about white people, but my impression is that most people don't think at that level.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah.

Alexis Miles: So, who is the they that perpetuate this?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Well, it's, it's perpetuated at the top by the, the, the Trump types of the world. But many of us unknowingly, that's why I said in the talk, when we're using the language of our opponent, we're losing. So, that's why I said many of us who do this work, and one of the things I made clear when I was speaking, I'm not the decider on this. I'm not the five, because I said, don't use BIPOC, you can't. What I'm saying is that those of us who do this work, we need to have a deeper conversation about the language we are using. Are we still using language of our colonizers, of our enslavers, of our oppressors? And so, we unknowingly become the messengers as well of a narrative that was created up top. Even though we are committed to the social justice work. It's like in international affairs I teach, my students are, why are y'all still using terms like, uh, developing countries? Why are you still using terms like third world? Like, we're using language of the Cold War in our international affairs classes now. So, I'm like, you gotta reevaluate. Are you still using language that's appropriate now? That's what's more important. So, I don't care who you are. I don't care where you are. Whether you're somewhere in MAGA, whether you're somewhere in the work that we're doing. We all need to reevaluate the language that was given to us to determine whether we need to come up with new language that fits our time, and not just go by a social media popular phrase.

Alexis Miles: When I hear you say that, I'm also hearing, slow it down.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Alexis Miles: Slow down.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: That's right.

Alexis Miles: And even look at the very language that you're using.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: That's right.

Alexis Miles: That if we really wanna resolve conflicts at, at any level, we need to, we need to at least think about the language we're using.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yes.

Alexis Miles: What's implicit in the language.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: That's right. And ask people how they should expect to be defined. The so BIPOC thing, I'm like, okay, we got this term. And again, if people disagree with me on it, that's fine. Let's have the conversation. The term itself, from what I can term that popular in social media now everybody's using it. So, people were calling me black all of a sudden started calling me BIPOC. People were calling my children in school, BIPOC children. And I'm like, did you talk

to me? You know, my, my children are black children. They've always identified as that. I'd love to be called Congolese American. That's where my parents are from. But y'all created these terms. I'm gonna define them for myself. And that's what matters most, you know. And when people don't do that, we run into these problems. And, that's what people do when they say people are color. I don't even use the term minority. I've never used the term minority because I was taught as a black person, I'm part of a global majority. So, I'm, I'm at a, I'm at a point in my life where I'm trying to get rid of all of the disempowering words that have been given to me. I don't even like the term disability, but a lot of people who are part of that community are fine with the word. Um, not all of them, but enough of them of different backgrounds are fine enough with the term that I'm not the one to say stop using it. I'm listening to the people who are part of that community. But I've had some of them say, it's not that we're disabled, it's that society disables us, which is a whole different conversation people don't want to have. So, I'm learning from those communities. We have to learn from each other.

Sam Fuqua: Well, speaking of, uh, people doing the work, you had a strong message for, uh, people in the room you were talking to earlier today about taking care of yourself. Taking care of your health.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: We're no good to the movement if we're not taking care of ourselves. All of the stress that we're doing, if, if we are just gonna be stressing and everything that's going on, and just keep smoking, keep drinking, keep eating unhealthy foods, things our doctors say are bad for our cholesterol, whatever, then we're gonna take ourselves out before these guys take us out. So, I talk to people about the importance of exercising, sleeping, drinking water, looking at your diet, uh, meditation, whatever it is, you have to fortify yourself internally. I gave the example of Dr. King who was assassinated at the age of 39, and when he did the autopsy on him, had the heart of a 60-year-old because the stress of the movement, I mean, he couldn't be in rooms that had windows. Like, all the death threats, you know, those things. And so, I use Dr. King because he's like the most extreme example of the stress that people, that comes with the movement. And so, I'm saying when we know that that stress is coming, we have to extra fortify ourselves so we don't take ourselves out. That's really important. If we don't claim our health, forget it. They, they've already won before they even open the, open the door on us. You know what I'm saying? Don't close the door on yourself. Digging your grave with your teeth.

Alexis Miles: That reminds me of what you said earlier in your talk about centering humanity.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yes.

Alexis Miles: That feels like part of that.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yes.

Alexis Miles: Like this, this is my humanity.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yes.

Alexis Miles: This is part of this. I need to take care of this. I need to think about the language I use to describe myself.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: That's right.

Alexis Miles: Other people's situations.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: That's right.

Alexis Miles: Because I can diminish our humanity by the words that I'm using.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: That's right. Listen to the music. Listen to the music, right? I mean, especially we go to hip hop, I mean these kids walking around, how they referring to themselves and how they talk about each other. What's empowering about them? And I say it to them. When you listen to this music, what does it make you wanna do? And you know, I'm not like a generational hater. 'Cause when I was younger we had all that as well. But in my generation, like, you know, you go back to like nineties hip hop, somebody like, like, say somebody like a Cardi B who's a big artist now, somebody like a Cardi B and a Lauryn Hill could exist at the same time, right. But nowadays they push the Cardi B model, you know, somebody who they look at as selling sex or all of the other type of stuff. And, there are deeper levels to Cardi B that a lot of people don't look at because they don't care. But like, why is it that female rappers who make it to the top today have to take their clothes off to do that, or sell sex to do that? That wasn't always the case. But the kids, you, you see five year olds dancing to an artist like Sexy Red. You know, it's just like, come on. It's narratives, it's stories, it's stereotypes that are being sold to them at young ages, and we have to do the work to counter it when they get to high school, college, and other spaces.

Alexis Miles: And you're saying that's deliberate?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: It's deliberate. Nothing in this world is unintentional. They're not fighting you to stop playing PlayStations. They're fighting you to stop voting. You know what I'm saying? They're not fighting to remove hip hop from the curriculum or hip hop from the mainstream conversations, they're fighting to remove stories about Rosa Parks and Dr. King and Malcolm X and Cesar Chavez, like, and Gandhi, like, they're not fighting to remove you learning, listening to Biggie or Lil Wayne. Do you know what I'm saying? So it's all, everything is intentional, and when people understand that, it's a whole different ballgame.

Alexis Miles: So, you talked about the seven questions. What are a couple of questions you would have people ask themselves so that they aren't falling into stereotypes?

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Yeah. In, in, in the book, you know, um, you know, the solutions in the book, the Rule of 7, seven questions you should be asking yourself. And it's gotta, like I said, it's gotta be seven questions. Anyone can be committed to DEI with one or two questions. But like, what are your seven closest friends look like? What do your seven neighbors look like? What do your seven co, coworkers look like? Uh, Malcolm X said that, you know, high noon on Sunday's

the most segregated part of America. What do your seven closest congregants look like? If you are able to hire people, what do your seven last hires look like? You listen to podcasts. What do the seven hosts of your podcast look like? You go watch shows on Broadway or plays. What does the cast of the shows you watch look like? You got kids in your lives. What do the seven toys you bought for them look like? When you do, answer those questions, some people when I do this exercise, they start crying. Because they realize they haven't fully been committed to this stuff. They realize they're not living it in their own lives, so they can't really talk about it outside of some books that they've read. And everybody should do, I encourage everybody to do that right now, whether you're reading the book, listening to the book on audio, 'cause you can get it that way as well. Do that and you'll see how much you're really about this life. I will end with a poem, if that's okay. This poem is called, uh, *Let's Go Upstander*, and if we wanna create a society where everybody can be celebrated and not tolerated, you know, we just have to do the work to dig into books like mine and other ones in order to do this work. So, this poem is called *Let's Go Upstander*.

> *If I want to change the world, I have to change myself. For changing the mind, it's true wealth. It's true health. My environment will never change until I change me, rearrange me. My thinking can never be the same. See, Gandhi went from lawyer to leader. Changed his mind. King from Preacher to Nobel Peace Prize. Changed his mind. And find time. Align your mind and align the world. Liberate girls. Turn child soldiers to child scholars. If you just believe that you can take your mind farther. But are you too comfortable to speak up on war? Are more of us shedding apathetic armor? I call of us all to do more. It starts now. See, we can change the TV, but we need to change we. It only takes a minute for you to change your life. It starts with you, but ends with the world. That's right. You change yourself. You change your home. Change your home, you change your block. Change your block, you change your hood for good. But don't stop. Change your hood. Change your city, your state, your whole country. That's how women got free. Slaves to citizens, see. If it is meant to be, it's up to you. So, do you. Unleash the power of one, is all you need to do.*

Sam Fuqua: Omékongo Dibinga, thank you so much for your time and for your work.

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga: Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Sam Fuqua: Dr. Omékongo Dibinga is the author of *Lies About Black People: How to Combat Racist Stereotypes and Why It Matters*. He's a professor at American University where he teaches intercultural communication.

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