EPISODE 71

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:06] ANNOUNCER: You are listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders, leadership conversations that explore adapting and thriving in a complex world, with Rick Torseth and guests.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:20] RT: Hi, everybody. This is Rick Torseth, and welcome back to 10,000 Swamp Leaders. This is a podcast where you have conversations with individuals who have made some decisions to use themselves to lead in the world and to deal with complex, wicked, messy problems, or what I sometimes call swamp issues. Today is a Tall Cotton Day for me and my work here, because I have two colleagues who are well steep in the work of leadership. Joanne Murphy is joining us again. Joanne is with us a couple of months ago, but she's here in part because of her work and also, because she has a partner in crime here in Keith Grint, who is also with me.

Both of them are deeply involved in leadership. Joanne is a professor of inclusive leadership at Birmingham University. Joanne, you're an author, you've got books coming out, you've got papers coming out, we'll talk about those in a little bit. Keith is a Professor Emeritus at Warwick Business School. Keith has been practicing teaching leadership for a long, long time. Keith, I learned in my prep work that you also have a PhD in philosophy from Oxford, which I did not know, but we'll save that for another podcast conversation perhaps.

All right, so first of all, welcome to the show. Joanne, I want to give you a first shot here. Tell people what it is you want them to know about you before we get into this, if you would, please.

[0:01:37] JM: Oh, well, it's lovely to be here, Rick, and it's fantastic to be here with Keith as well. I suppose in terms of me and my work, I'm obviously interested in leadership, but I always feel that I'm far too thinly spread in terms of my interests. I think I'm too interested in too many things to be really useful in terms of that. I think what I'm particularly interested in is leadership

and really difficult, complex problems. Maybe we'll get into some of those issues later. I'm particularly interested in issues around leadership and conflict.

I might have said this previously on your podcast, but whenever I talk about conflict, we go to conferences, or talk to academic colleagues. People say, "Oh, do you mean bullying, organizational conflict?" I say, no. I mean war. I mean, people killing each other. That is probably because I come from a place which has been driven by conflict in Northern Ireland. I suppose, my perspective on the world, my lens of the world is one which deals with instability and is very interested in why we begin to manage those issues around instability. I suppose that is a thread right through my academic work.

[0:02:46] RT: Great. Thank you. Keith, welcome.

[0:02:48] KG: I think I have the same magpie abilities that Joanne talked about in terms of being over-interested in too many things at the same time and never quite realizing what is I'm trying to do. I also have an interest in conflict and also in the military aspects of conflict. I'm an army kid. My father's in the army for hundreds of years. I never wanted to join the army. I couldn't cope with any of that authority and saluting stuff. I'm always interested in what they're doing and why they do it and whether it works or not.

I started out as really, organizational behavior and industrial relations. I was a trade union official for a long time, and then I became an academic. My stuff has moved away from industrial relations, organizational behavior to leadership. I'm also interested in the connections between leadership management and command. I think we probably over focus on the leadership aspects. We need to start thinking about what happens when people go beyond the collaborative aspects of leadership and start to command people. Why is it that some organizations and some organizational leaders are more successful than others? One of the reasons is because they pay more attention to the management aspects, the infrastructural aspects. Their supplies, their resources, those kinds of things. Without that, you can't actually be successful in the long run.

[0:04:08] RT: Okay, great. Both of you come across each other somewhere back in time. I don't know where that was. Joanne, if you would speak briefly about what it is about Keith's work that influences you and informs you and attracts you to what he's up to.

[0:04:23] JM: Well, that's a really difficult question, Rick, because Keith's work is for anyone who's looking at leadership today, absolutely seminal. There's no doubt about it. And the distinctions that he makes. he's just referred to them, between leadership, management and command, really, for many of us, dimensionalizes our thinking around leadership. We were talking just before we started to press record about the recent conference we were all at. A lot of people at that conference were there and said they were there, because Keith was there. I don't think Keith really accepts this, but that is how significant he is and his work is to how we think about leadership.

I suppose, the thing that I think is really extraordinary about his work is just the depth of it and the breadth of it, particularly in terms of historical analysis. For me, that's why he's the most important person thinking and writing about leadership at the minute in a very crowded field, full of incredibly eminent, incredibly clear-thinking, deep-thinking people. He is absolutely seminal.

[0:05:23] RT: Keith, what about Joanne and her work that drives your interest?

[0:05:26] KG: Yeah. First, thanks for that, Joanne. The £10 check is in the post as usual. I came across the work really looking at some material on resistance and then looking at whether I should do a whole chapter on the nature of resistance to the British in Ireland on a historical perspective. Not just the contemporary, what the troubles in the 1970s, but actually much longer than that and much further back.

Then I decided there was so much material and I was so inadequately prepared, I abandoned that process. I still had knowledge of all the work, especially Joanne's work to do with the troubles and beyond. I'm always impressed by people that live the story, rather than just write about the story. I think I write about stories. I write about, that's what a lot of my material is historical. I think Joanne's work is somebody who has worked in those fields directly and in contemporary issues. I think she brings something to my work that I don't have, which is I don't stand in the field of conflict and ask people, what are you doing and what do you think you're

doing? Mine is much more historical, looking through other people's work, trying to work out why things happened in certain directions.

[0:06:38] RT: Okay. Keith, since you brought this up and Joanne, you responded to it. Let's just begin with this distinction, because I think people who are listening don't necessarily have a clear understanding of the difference between command, management, and leading. I think that distinctions are good foundational elements we might put in place for the conversation. It comes follow on from that. Keith, why don't you go first here? Because I know you've written extensively about this. Help people who may be a little unclear on this. What are these distinctions and why do they matter?

[0:07:06] KG: Okay. First of all, these distinctions are always subjective. Just about everything we talk about is subjective. They're always essentially contested in Gali's original terms that we don't agree on what the terms mean. That doesn't matter, as long as you can define what you think the terms mean, we can have a conversation about what the terms are. In terms of the way that I work it, I try to locate it within the context of different categories of problems. Wicked problems, problems we don't know how to fix. I suggest, since no one knows how to fix it, you as the former leader needs to have some collaborative approach. You need to get other people engaged in trying to address this problem. You may not be able to fix it, but you can do something about it. You can ameliorate it.

In that sense, leadership in the way that I'm defining it in this context is essentially about some collaborative process where you get groups to address a particular specific problem that we're all facing. In contrast to that, we know how to fix tame problems. Tame problems are the ones that we've already – we have standard operating procedures to fix them already. Therefore, I associate that with management in the sense of a manager's role is not to engage the collaborative in addressing a novel problem, but to engage individuals or groups in how you respond to existing problems. This is really more of a decentralizing process.

If I employ you to do a particular job, my job is not to overlook at you when you're addressing the problem. My job is to give you the resources, train you up and let you go fix it. My role is managing other people and managing resources. This is also important in some, talking about the conflict before. Management is a critical aspect of success of military organizations. If you

don't have the resources, if you don't have the food and the ammunition, as we've seen, for example, in Ukraine, then you have a problem.

The third category of decision-making modes is what I'm calling command. Command, I restrict to those kinds of critical incidents that the crisis, where you're no longer interested in collaborative work, nor are you decentralizing control to somebody else who has better understanding and skills than you do. You are now taking individual decisions in a crisis and you have to give people the answer. If wicked problems basically require a good deal of questioning, then critical problems require a good deal of answering. You're not bothering about questions. I'm not asking you to worry about what a fire alarm means, or what a fire means. I'm telling you to get out of the room, because there's a fire.

Management is about, so how do we address the fact that we keep getting fire alarms? Leadership is about, "Well, we don't know why we keep getting fire alarms. Can we have a conversation? Does anybody know why we keep getting fire alarms?" Those three categories, leadership, management, and command, I think are important aspects of the same phenomena, of how do you keep an organization, or a country going? I think in the last 40 years, we've abandoned the notion of management being important. Now, it's really rare to ever see a development program called management development. It's all about leadership development.

When I first started doing this stuff hundreds of years ago, there were virtually no leadership development courses. There were just management courses. I think both of those still omit a really important part of how you organize an organization, which is command. Sometimes you just have to tell people what they are going to do, and that requires a coercive element. A lot of people don't like the notion of coercion. You shouldn't have to coerce people. But trust me, sometimes you need to coerce people. Those three elements and those three decision stars are what are the frames for me looking in my historical material about, why certain organizations and groups are successful and why others are not.

[0:10:46] RT: Great. Thank you. Joanne, take what you do, and to some degree, where you see the linkage here between the distinction Keith is making, and then your experience in Northern Ireland.

[0:10:55] JM: I think it's critical, because I think what it does is it allows us to think about these, what we might call extreme contexts, what's being now being referred to as extreme contexts, in much more accurate ways. It allows us to look at these processes within organizations, whether they're state armies, or whether they're paramilitary organizations, whatever they are, in ways that allow us to understand much more about what's actually going on and what's in people's heads whenever they're trying to take decisions. Case does, I know a lot of work with police organizations and military environments. I know that whenever I go into police organizations, because I originally started working with police, that's my PhD was on a particular police organization, and its process changed.

When I go in and I say to them, you say, sometimes to really quite senior officers, and you say, "Well, do you understand the distinctions between leadership management and command?" They're just blown away by it. They just think, "Why did nobody ever tell us this before?" There needs to be. I think it's incredibly important, because it allows people to really clarify their thinking and it allows them to pause whenever they're in an environment and think, okay, what are we actually dealing with here? Are we actually dealing with a complex question that requires more questions and some leadership? Or is it about resources on putting together some processes? Or is it actually a critical incident?

There is a tendency, and I know Keith's written about this a huge amount, but is there actually a point where people are drawn to command, because it's quick and it's relatively straightforward and it gives them a sense of power as well, because power is a big issue in this whenever really, they should be talking about leadership, or management. I think even making that distinction to people who are sometimes in quite difficult environments is just so incredibly useful. That's why the work itself is so useful.

[0:12:51] RT: Keith, do you have a response to that?

[0:12:53] KG: Well, I just think this cultural context that Joanne was talking about is really important. We know, for example, that some institutions, if you repeat the path that Joanne has just gone down, so we're looking at military and police organizations, they have a preference for and they support for command, rather than leadership, in the sense of leadership being collaborative. If you want promotion in the police or the military, you have to be good at

command and they support and reward that. They also support and reward management to a certain extent, but what they don't support is leadership in the way that I'm framing leadership.

Leadership in terms of a collaborative of admitting you don't know the answer and asking people for help is the last thing you want to do in most of those uniformed organizations, because they have a preference for the complete opposite. Bizarrely, what happens in those organizations is that they start by selecting and appointing and promoting people who are good at command. Then when they get to the senior ranks, you've appointed people who are good at command, but they're not very good at dealing with the questions that they are then supposed to face, which is the wicked problems that they don't know how to focus on, or to resolve, because they're only good at command and telling people what to do.

I think there's a irony in the way that uniformed organizations operate. In some ways, it's the opposite of some more egalitarian organizations that would reward people who are good at leadership, i.e. collaborative work, but punish people who are interested in command. Then again, when they get into a crisis, they have real trouble in making a decision, because everything they want to do requires some consensus, or collaborative work, rather than the situation actually requires you to make it a decisive decision, and it needs to be now and you need to coerce people. I think if you take the extremes of both of these kinds of organizations and the more egalitarian and the less egalitarian, both of them operate well in their own tame areas, their own standard day-to-day areas. When you get to the opposite of what they normally do, they have difficulty coping.

[0:14:56] RT: Joanne, I might be forcing something here, so you can clean me up if I am, but the conversation to you're having here sparks a little bit. What's the, from your perspective, since you just published a paper on liminality, to what extent in liminality, and my understanding of your definition of it, is living in between spaces here in some transitional state, to what extent does liminality, the knowledge of I'm in a liminal space help or hinder my capacity to develop the skills necessary to move among these management, command, and leadership functions, do you think? How would you do that? How would you do that if you're doing it?

[0:15:32] JM: I mean, it's a really interesting question, because you're pulling together some quite diverse notions. I mean, I think to a large extent, leadership is always in a bit of a

transitional space. If we think about leadership being about change, this often use definition of leadership being so focused on change. I think one of the interesting things about this is, is just, and again, it comes back to the same thing all the time when we're constantly saying to people about leadership and leadership development, there's just an element of self-awareness in that.

What we try to do and where Keith's work is so incredibly helpful, we try to get people to say, right, okay, what are you actually doing here? What is actually happening here, as opposed to what you might think is happening, or what your instinctive responses, or what your default framing is in terms of the situation that's in front of you? One of the things, and so that allows people to dimensionalize the differences between the types of environments they face, the type of problems they face, and then the approaches that they might want to take to it in terms of this leadership management and command framework.

Liminality is really, I think, fascinating because it deals with these in-between spaces and the uncertainty of these in-between spaces. I suppose, whenever I begin to think about liminality, what you see with people who are really able to manage those, the uncertainty and the chaos of liminality, is an understanding about when different modes of approaches are required. I think that there is sometimes, without maybe the language associated with it, there is an understanding of what leadership is within those environments. Leaders at times who are successful within liminal spaces are very often pathfinders. They are asking questions. They're asking very difficult questions, very unpopular questions. They're posing scenarios that people don't like to hear. They're very often giving quite negative messages. I think that's fascinating.

I think understanding more about how leaders themselves within liminal spaces are able to navigate that difficult terrain of uncertainty and how they maybe, again, without the language of leadership management commands, how they're able to integrate their thinking within that is very important. I suppose, again, it allows us to say to people who are in transitional environments, or who are in transitional processes, well, again, are these, is this typology helpful for you? Because is it something that allows you to think more clearly about the challenges that you're facing. I think it is.

[0:18:13] RT: Keith, you stepped in there?

[0:18:14] KG: Yeah. No, I think the liminality thing is really important in trying to understand why some people address the worst kinds of wicked problems and do it successfully. Two examples. First will be Martin Luther King, who doesn't come from a very poor black background. He comes from a quite wealthy, well-educated background. He doesn't sit within the conventions of Black Americans in terms of not particularly educated at this particular point of time, but he is. He's the opposite of this. His position is halfway between the notions of a black and a white world in terms of his educational facilities. He's unwilling to go down either of those paths.

I think you can say that the same with John Hume in the Northern Ireland context. He's sitting between the two most popular, most extreme political forms at the time in Northern Ireland. That in between this, that willingness not to engage with either of the sides in terms of a loyalty. I'm born this way, therefore, I'm going to be loyal to this side. That willingness to do that is both very helpful and very isolating. I think this is something which comes out in quite a lot of work about what are the disadvantages of leadership? I think one of them is the isolation, which occurs. It really is lonely at the top, and it's even more lonely at the top, if you're sitting in one of these liminal positions. Because by definition, you don't have a big support network. You don't have a lot of friends, because you're saying things, as Joanne has just said, things that people don't want to hear. It's important that somebody does say these things.

The notion of liminality, I think, gives you a spatial and an intellectual freedom, which loyalty usually overturns. If you're loyal to a particular group, you don't have the ability to say, do you know what? I don't agree with a group. That's a really dangerous position to have in a lot of places. Sometimes it's a choice to be liminal. Sometimes it just happens. You're born outside of the main arenas. That gives you an area, that gives you a freedom, which most people don't have, because they're almost always ushered into this gang, or this gang, rather than, yeah, actually, not in any of these gangs. Isn't it lonely? Yes, it is, but that gives me a freedom to think that you don't have.

[0:20:31] RT: Joanne, I'm sure there's people listening to this right now who may be hearing the word liminality for the first time. You've written about it, and you have a paper that we'll put a link in the show notes where they can find this. Would you give people a more specific definition and understanding of what liminality is?

[0:20:47] JM: Yeah. Liminality is a very, very well-known concept in anthropology. Most people who talk about liminality are anthropologists. Liminal spaces are spaces which exists within the transition from one form to another. If you were an anthropologist talking about liminality, you very often talk about rituals. The rituals that we all engage in, marriage is a very obvious example. Before the ceremony of marriage, you're not married. Then after the ceremony of marriage, you're married. In the middle, what are you? You're going through this transition to being married. The same thing exists. We have all sorts of societal rituals around people coming of age. That's a strange notion when you think about it.

The idea that when people become 18 or 21, that these are particular periods of change. Very often, we mark those periods of change with parties, or ceremonies in some way. They're very, very significant in terms of how we create our societies and how we come together. They're really interesting transitions. Liminality, liminal spaces are the spaces in the middle of the transition where you're not one thing and you're not another thing. It's about change. It's about what happens in that process and where people are able to guide themselves, or sometimes be guided by dynamics within that liminal space through the process of change.

I suppose, if you really get into the literature, what you see are this notion of these almost metaphorical beings within liminal spaces. Sometimes you have guides who take you through the change. Again, we can talk about anthropological rituals in society, where those guides exist. Sometimes you also within liminal spaces, because there's a lot of stuff going on in a liminal space, no matter what it is, whether it's political, or whether it's personal, or whether it's social, there's a lot of stuff happening. Sometimes those dynamics are not positive dynamics. Sometimes they're chaotic, negative dynamics. Because undoubtedly, there are dynamics within liminal spaces, what we call schismogenic dynamics, which are themselves negative and which like the chaos. They like the disruption. They like the negativity. They like the insecurity that liminality brings. Particularly within political spaces, we have to be very cautious of those negative dynamics.

Liminality is a huge area of thought. I don't think we deal with it very much. I don't think we deal with it nearly as much as we should within leadership, or management, for that matter. It's a big thing within some other disciplines. I think we can learn a lot from it.

[0:23:35] RT: You both mentioned two historic figures, John Hume and Martin Luther King. I suppose, we could throw Nelson Mandela into this conversation as well as people who had little authority, at least at certain points in their process, and yet, still found a way to keep things moving. From your perspective, what's the craft of this that people might think about beginning to integrate into their work and their lives that might help them build a little liminal muscle, if you would?

[0:24:03] JM: A good question. I suppose understanding that you're actually in a transition, recognizing that we have ceremonies and liminal environments for reasons to mark these processes. I think sometimes people engage in transitions, in ways that aren't very reflective. Reflecting on the reality of what transition means, reflecting on the reality of those dynamics, reflecting on the need for certainly grips of people to have pathfinders within liminal, or transitional environments, for those paths to be eliminated in ways that are sometimes very uncomfortable, but are necessary. It's really important.

I mean, the paper that I did recently was in John Hume. The problem with John Hume is that as soon as you start banging on about John Hume, you just continue to do it forever. He seems to come up constantly in everything. Not just me, I have to say. I'm not the only person afflicted with this. The thing about Hume was that that's what he was. He wasn't a dime in the in the mud person who was pushing things along inch by inch in lots of ways. He was a pathfinder. He was saying uncomfortable things from the very beginning of his political career, right until the very end. That is in itself fascinating, because there's a level of, and I mean, we talk about this a lot in leadership, a level of courage there, as Keith says, an ability to be by yourself, to be alone and lonely in terms of these messages sometimes that you've got to transmit, and to be able to hold that tension in a way that requires enormous courage, just huge courage.

Another person, we mentioned Nelson Mandela as well as being betwixt in between if you think about the transition in South Africa, someone who was very firmly in one camp, but he actively set himself apart from very many of his supporters in terms of his attitude towards political transition. Within those environments, people want certainty, but sometimes certainty doesn't exist. Life is messy, politics is messy, leadership is messy. It's not as straightforward. I think that level of ability to reflect and the courage to understand that this is going to be really hard.

[0:26:23] RT: Keith, what about you? You teach students for years. What counsel do you have listeners about where they might find some structure to develop themselves in these areas?

[0:26:33] KG: I think, probably two things. The first thing is about language. Going back to the notion of those anthropological approaches, and how phrases do things. I now pronounce you man and wife, to go back to Joanne's previous example. That doesn't reflect something. That constitutes something, that changes something in law and in reality. That very announcement changes the way that you relate to whoever it is you just got married to. The same thing holds for a lot of what we regard as leadership. That language is not a reflection of the world. It actually constitutes the world in really important ways.

I think we're too lax in how we describe things, but I think we think we're describing the world, rather than constituting the world. That comes in all kinds of ways. For example, people say things like, oh, the sun is going down, but the sun doesn't go down, the earth is moving. The sun is not moving. Then you have to think about. So, why do we misunderstand and misrepresent the way that the earth is revolving? I think most of the evidence suggests that the way we speak about the world comes before our understanding of the world. People talked about the sun going down before we realized, actually the sun isn't going down, we are going in a different direction.

What happens is our language constitutes the world in particular ways. You can see that in other kinds of things. I used to have a boss in the post office where I worked for a long time. He'd always say things like, "Keith, if you screw up, come and tell me about it. My door is always open." I'm thinking, yeah, your door was always open, because it's full of dead people who came to tell you something that they just got wrong. One of the things to think about is, no, why don't people believe the phrase, come and tell me when you screw up? The answer is because I don't trust you when you say, come and tell me when you screw up. What I want you to do is to say to me, to articulate, to constitute a different reality by saying, "Keith, this is where I screwed up last week. I did this, it went wrong, it didn't cost us very much. Nobody died because of what I said, but I made a mistake. If you do the same thing, I want you to come and tell me."

Now, I can begin to trust this person, because they've exposed their weaknesses to me. That reflects the whole notion that leadership is really about a relational issue. I mean, if you don't

have any followers, then you want a leader anyway. By definition, leadership is relational. That then runs into a secondary aspect about what kinds of things do people worry about. The first thing is about language. The second thing is about how we talk about, how we use language to think about time.

Normally, our understanding of time is again, this descriptive phenomena, but it's not descriptive, it actually constitutes time in a different way. For example, there's quite a lot of research on why is it that victims of domestic abuse, primarily women, 95% of women, why don't they report things to the police to get something sorted out? What do they report when they're questioned about it? Here's one of the major problems with that field is that many victims of domestic abuse, many women, or should I say, survivors of domestic abuse, what they talk about is they say things like, okay, so I'm going to give him until Valentine's Day to change his attitude, or I'll just give him one more go, or I'll wait until his birthday, or I'll wait until he's undertaken his anger management course.

For them, time is linear. There is a certain point in the future when things will be completely different. That almost never happens, because time is actually circular in this phenomena. He will do it again. Until you get your head around reframing time, you will always end up on the wrong end of a stick here. You have to be able to start thinking about how do we talk about time? You can see that. I mean, for example, Wes Streeting, who's a British health secretary. He has just announced yet another review of adult social care. This will report just before the next election, interestingly enough.

Now, we have had loads of reports on adult social care. We know what the problems are, and we know what the answer is. The answer requires an increase in taxation and a reconstruction of the NH of the health service. Both of those are unpopular and long-term issues. Governments don't like taking unpopular decisions even though they should do. Here we have another example of an assumption of time being linear. Three years from now, when the report comes out, we will make a decision about what we're going to do. We've had reports for ages and nothing has ever happened, because we're working in a circular point of time. We know this is exactly the same thing will happen this time. Three years from now, the report will get squashed because there will be an election, and then we'll start all over again.

They will never address it, because they don't have enough people, to go back to Joanne's point, who are in a liminal space who say, "Do you know what? I don't care about being popular. I'm not joining your loyalty brigade. There are some really important questions that need to be asked and things need to be done. Therefore, this is what we are going to do." That requires you to think about, is this the end of my political career? Probably, yes. Is it an important question? Yes, it is. It's important for someone to do this.

By the way, this is a completely separate issue about whether our temporal understanding of politics is part of the problem. Because we allow people to reenter parliament over and over again, they are constantly looking for popularity. If you said to people, you can be a member of parliament, but only for one term, then your popularity doesn't matter. Now, that gives you the liminal space to be able to say, and because it doesn't matter, what I'm about to say is very unpopular, and you might hate me, but looking back 30 years from now, you will realize that I was right.

I think that the way that we talk about, the way that we use language and the way that we construct time are really important and actually, really quite simple changes in our everyday lives. If we just thought and reflected more about what we are about to say and how we can figure time, I think we could change quite a lot of things.

[0:32:30] RT: Joanne, does that provoke something for you?

[0:32:32] JM: Well, you see, this is why Keith is fantastic, because this is why I'm sitting here with my hand writing it all down. I mean, yeah, exactly. That's exactly the issue. Because our understanding of what is required is incredibly difficult, and because a lot of the time leaders don't want to be unpopular, they don't want to say things that people don't want to hear, they're trapped. They're trapped in these really difficult cycles of a lack of any ability to change, or to change what's around them. It is immensely frustrating.

The Wes Streeting thing is a brilliant example, because as Keith says, we know exactly where we're going to be in three years' time. This is a circular debate. It's not going to change. We already know what the answer is. We already know what the problem is, but we know that it's going to be so politically unpalatable to people, that the political system, as it is constructed at

the minute, simply pushes it aside as being too hard. In the same way, the climate change is pushed aside as being too hard to deal with. All sorts of other issues are pushed aside. That creates environments which were already intractable problems become even more intractable over periods of time, because the roots of those problems get deeper and deeper and deeper, and the solution to them becomes harder.

I was listening to something the other day, or saw something on I don't know, social media or something that said, someone said, "Well, I got a piece of advice from my grandfather, which was that if you get on the wrong train, get off as quickly as you can, because it will cost you less to get on the right one." He wasn't talking about trains. I think that's true. If you understand that you're on the wrong track, you got to get off it and you got to get off it really quickly, because the longer you stay on it, the more difficult it's going to get. That's where we are with a lot of these really difficult problems. The courage required to get off that train is immense. The system at the minute is not constructed in a way that encourages courage. It encourages the opposite.

[0:34:32] RT: I want to toss something in here and ask you after that another question or two. Part of what I hear you say is, and you both are provoking for me a reminder that the point of view, I think that Heifetz says that leading is a choice and an activity can come from anybody, anywhere, anytime in the system. If that's true, plausible, I think it's true. Part of it is agency and having the opportunity, or the courage to actually raise your hand to do something. I'm thinking of it in the specific context of the country that I live in, although I'm not there now. In two weeks' time, as of today, we will have a change in administration. There's all sorts of, as you well know, all sorts of stuff going on about what's going to happen, what's it going to look like, etc., etc.

It will be what it is from a political standpoint for a little while, but there's a whole lot of people who are out there who are trying to figure out, what can I actually do now? Looks I need to get off the bench and into the game and do something in my community to try and provide help. When I was thinking of doing this, I thought, well, surely Joanne and Keith will know what's going on and have some ideas about how to sort it. I'm going to toss this ball to you as an observer of, and it's not just the US, we know there's a lot of stuff going on in other "democracies" that are drifting in this direction.

When you read this world, and you know what you know about what it takes to lead and manage and command, how can you provide hope and ideas for people about how they use themselves in this state that we're now in? It's very unusual. Keith, what do you think?

[0:36:02] KG: Two things. The first thing is to, I'm a fan of Camus' work, Albert Camus, especially his work on Sisyphus. Sisyphus is the guy that's condemned to push a rock up a hill, wherever. In his work on Sisyphus, Camus at one point says, we must imagine Sisyphus smiling, which is bizarre thing to think about. When this guy who's permanently condemned to do this completely mundane but horrible task should be smiling. The reason he's smiling is because he doesn't want the gods to have any pleasure in him being destroyed, or being undermined. I think that notion of your duty is not to be ground down, you have a duty to be resilient in some senses, to recognize. If you give up, that's precisely what the opposition is hoping that you will do.

The whole point of this is to undermine any formal opposition, or informal opposition. The whole point of the system where populism is to make it more difficult for people to impose. That in itself should be a reason to think, well, I'm not going to give them the pleasure, the benefit of me giving up. You have a duty in some philosophical sense to keep going.

The other bit of that is to think about, I just did some work on resistance in the Second World War in the Netherlands and also in France, or the French bit wasn't published. In both countries, it is clear that only a very smallish minority ever get involved in any resistance to those kinds of organizations, in this sense, the occupation of the Nazism occupied Europe. Never more than 20% were ever involved under any circumstances. Of that 20%, it splits 50/50. Half are actually pro-Nazi and half are anti-Nazi. We're down to 10%. 10% of the population are resisting. On of that 10%, no more than 3% or 4% are actively doing things that we might normally recognize as resistance in terms of things like, armed resistance.

If you really find resistance as doing stuff which undermines the opposition to some extent, or gives sucker to other people, there are all kinds of people who are doing things like that. There are lots of stories of women in Auschwitz, for example, who were employed to knit socks for the German army, who would consistently knit knots into the toes of the sock to make the sock

uncomfortable. This is a minor irritation to the German army, but it's a manifestation of some level of resistance. All these minor levels of resistance matter.

There are also examples of French women traveling across the Normandy coast on a bus, and they would knit. As far as the Germans were concerned, they were just knitting. But what they were actually knitting was the pattern of defenses. They would be three pearl stitches, and then they'd drop a stitch, and the drop stitch meant this is where our gun in placement is, then there'll be four other kinds of stitches, and that would demonstrate something else. If they were ever questioned, it would just be a pattern. It would be really hard to understand a knitting pattern is actually really important to the resistance. Actually, in many ways, that nonviolent resistance was way more important than ever taking out two or three military officers and assassinating them as other elements of the resistance did.

I think there are issues here in terms of thinking about, so how do you get people mobilized? What does the mobilization of resistance look like? We know, for example, that in France and the Netherlands, the numbers of people resistance only really radically increased when something happened in both countries to generate a problem for many more people. That something was the compulsory labor movement of men between the ages of 16 and 45. They were shipped in very huge numbers from the Netherlands and France to work in German industry. At that point, when so many people are directly affected by this, does the resistance start to become significant? Until that point, it's just a very small minority of people who have a philosophical, or a political opinion, which generates a response of resistance.

When this compulsory labor movement starts, then you get a massive increase in numbers of people who are in the resistance. There's something about two things. One is you only have respect to minority of people to get involved in any resistance to any authoritarian rule. Secondly, what that resistance is manifesting can be all kinds of things. You don't need to be on a street with a banner. You don't need to be engaged in any violent activity. There are all kinds of ways to manifest that resistance and to encourage other people to resist.

I think the third thing is to look out for those kinds of trigger points, where the authorities will do something that will allow you to articulate, and this goes back to the language issue to articulate a way of understanding. The only way to now resolve this issue is for you to join the resistance.

What I think a lot of resistance leaders do is they channel all these diverse and heterogeneous complaints about reality and channel them into a particular strategic vision, which says, the only way out of this problem is to join this particular movement.

I think there are things that you can do and they don't all need to be headline taking. I think that the alternative would be for everybody to give up. That is naturally what all authoritarians want. They want the population to give up, so that they will comply and it won't cost anything.

[0:41:30] RT: Joanne?

[0:41:30] JM: Yeah. I mean, I think that's a really good analysis, actually, in terms of where things possibly are at the minute in relation not just to the United States, but in relation to lots of other issues and things that so many of us struggle with. When we first had a, I suppose, a conversation about this conversation, we were right. I just did the wake of the US elections. I think many of us were just a bit despairing in a way that Keith says not to be about the state of things.

I've really since then been thinking about this and consuming media and trying to understand what happened and trying to get a handle on it. I suppose there's two or three things that I thought were really important in the thinking around that. I think the first is that and I say this as someone who's very interested in politics and who thought my political judgment was better than it was. I think that we are very, very reluctant as human beings to accept messages that we don't want to hear, which relates to the conversation we've just had and the difficulty about sending and receiving unpopular information.

I think that very many of us, particularly in relation to the elections in the United States, were actively screening out material that interfered with our analysis of what we thought we wanted to happen. That's really, really worrying, because we have to think about that and we have to start being much more disciplined in seeing the world as it is, rather than the world as we would like it to be. It's a very simplistic point, but I think it's important, and certainly important in terms of my analysis of what I felt that I got wrong about the whole thing.

The second point is actually, ironically, the best analysis I've seen in relation to the situation in America at the minute, isn't a political commentator, or politician or anybody else. It's an author, Barbara Kingsolver, who wrote the recent Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Demon Copperhead*. If anyone, I don't know if you know about this novel, or you've seen it referenced, but it's a retelling of David Copperfield, the Dickens novel, but based in the Appalachian Mountains in the middle of the opioid epidemic and the rest of it. Those are the areas that Barbara Kingsolver is from. She actually is from Kentucky as opposed to JD Vance, who just tells everyone he's from Kentucky. Her analysis was fascinating, because she said, there are more rural voters in America than urban voters, and these people are treated like absolute rubbish.

They are ignored. They are looked down upon. They are angry. They're furious in terms of what's happening. They are in chaos in a lot of those communities, and they need to be understood much better. That was the first analysis that I had heard from anybody who really seemed to get to the source of the issues. I think that, again, coming back as was the original point, really understanding what is going on within communities and within electorates is incredibly important. I don't think very many of us were doing that.

Then I suppose, in terms of how we move ahead, I think that the – I suppose, I don't want to call it a resistance to Trump, because Trump's been democratically elected, but I think that the things to watch out for over the next period of time are these trigger issues that Keith has talked about, particularly in relation to things like reproductive rights, role, all of those concerns. You can imagine the resistance that Keith is talking about really emerging in terms of those issues, because you can imagine networks of people beginning to work together for the first time, engaging with each other for the first time in an effort to protect reproductive rights.

Then, I think we also need to think about the political structures that exist. I was talking to a business leader, an American business leader, just after the elections, who said very bluntly, "Well, now it's time for the Democrats to get their shit together." To some extent, it is. It is time for people to stop messing around, to stop the nonsense that has been seen over the past four years, to dispense with the kind of – it's not leadership. What we've seen has not been leadership, but it's been people playing, playing with politics over the past number of years. Playing with nominations, playing with a system. That's playing with fire. I think what we've seen is the result of people playing with fire in the Democratic Party.

That is not any more coherent analysis than you would have got for me two months ago, but there you go. I still don't entirely understand what is happening. I think we need to start seeing the world as it is and not the way it is, we would like it to be.

[0:46:23] KG: Going to just add something onto that.

[0:46:24] RT: Please.

[0:46:25] KG: Which is, think about the way that the world is, rather than the way that we want it to be. In the Second World War, the attempts by the British to generate counter propaganda to Europe, to occupied Europe, usually involved radio stations, reading out a list of the crimes that the Nazis had undertaken in the hope that that would somehow change German's minds about their support for Hitler and the Nazis. We know that that basically didn't work. They denied it, or they just said, "Well, that's what we want to happen anyway." None of those things didn't work.

There was one particular propaganda radio station, which worked really well. That was a guy who was born in Berlin. He was British, born in Berlin, so a perfect German accent. Came to UK just before the war with his parents. He volunteered to run a propaganda radio station. Rather than worry about, if we produce enough facts and data and logic, that will persuade people to change their minds. He argued that people never changed their minds on the basis of facts and logic and rationality. What they change their minds on is a counter narrative. Let's have a counter narrative.

He would he would broadcast on the basis of him pretending to be a senior officer in the German Navy. He would say things like, "So, I was walking down the Kafürstendam the other day and I overheard two senior Gestapo officers, and they were talking about all the stolen goods that they'd taken, and they were going to sell on the black market." This is an absolute outrage. For people like me who support the goal of Adolf Hitler, for people like these Gestapo officers to be undermining what we're trying to do is an outrage. By the end of the war, he was way more effective in trying to undermine what was going on in the German population than any of the other broadcasters, which was saying, do you know how horrible it is, the things that

you've been doing in Poland and Russia? Well, they knew that anyway, or they just ignored it. This guy was trying to undermine them from the inside.

I think that notion of trying to get a counter narrative up, rather than worrying about, so for example, the American economy has actually not been too bad, and yet, somehow, they lost. Why did they lose? Because the counter narrative was bad. We lost Brexit vote, even though everything was pretty good about the EU. Why did we lose it? Because there wasn't a counter narrative. That was just, we want our independence back. That was a narrative that sucked enough people in to vote for Brexit.

[0:48:42] RT: Joanne, you've written, what's coming to mind here is duty of hope.

[0:48:46] JM: Oh, gosh. Yes.

[0:48:47] RT: As we come to the end here, because I hear my friends at home saying, well, we're going to hope for the best. Of course, it's untethered to nothing. Would you describe what the phrase duty of hope actually means, where it comes from, and why maybe that's a relevant point of leverage for some people that they might be able to initiate in the world that they're now entering into in the next two weeks?

[0:49:09] JM: Yeah. I mean, I think that's actually, I'd forgotten about the duty of hope, which is not good. Yeah, so this concept of a duty of hope, it actually comes from a French philosopher, the idea that we're fed up with, I suppose, different complex perspectives. What we need to hang on to is the idea that hope is not a strategy in itself. But that, what hope generates is activity and behaviors and processes within organizations that can sometimes lead to much better outcomes. Where I've seen the duty of this phrase, the duty of hope used most effectively, and most frequently was within the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, during the very extended peace process in Ireland.

You begin to see this referenced really in the 1980s in a speech written by a member of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Scott [inaudible 0:50:06] Montgomery, for the then Irish Foreign Minister in Tánaiste, Dick Spring. Spring talks about the significance of a duty of hope to the peace process itself. This phrase is then used almost consistently, because I did a big piece of

research on the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, which fed into the paper in liminality and will feed into a future book on the Department of Foreign Affairs and their role in the peace process. This idea of a duty of hope, rather than just a hope that things will get better, but a duty of hope that you have a professional and a personal duty of hope, that this huge, complex, wicked problem that is killing people on a daily basis will in some ways be resolved. Your work, your actual professional work is to move towards that point of resolution. That's where the duty of hope comes from, for me.

I think it's a phrase which is applicable to so many environments. As Keith has said, you have to keep going. You have to keep going. The irony about the duty of hope was that that phrase was used consistently and repeatedly by a senior member of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, a man called Seán O Regan, who was a really instrumental figure in terms of the Irish diplomatic service. When I spoke to people, very many people who had worked with him, people would repeat this phrase. I would say to them, why were you able to keep going in really difficult circumstances when you yourself might have felt that you were under threat when people were being killed all the time, when you were having to face really horrifying, dreadful experiences and circumstances? They would say, "Well, we had a duty of hope."

It took me about 10 interviews to eventually say, where did this come from? Then people would say, "Well, Sean used to say this. He used to say, we have a duty of hope." It comes back to exactly what Keith is saying, a counter-narrative, giving people a counter-narrative. For the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, in the darkest days of the conflict, the counter-narrative was encapsulated by the phrase a duty of hope. Perhaps, in terms of all of these other environments that we face, a duty of hope is what we need to begin to think about as well.

[0:52:15] RT: Thank you. Keith, any thoughts there?

[0:52:18] KG: Yeah. No, I just think one of the things that I always thought was really good was the way that if you've read Marshall Gantz's work on the first Obama campaign, that was really about how you build a movement. It wasn't about, we have an idea. It was, you have to build the movement from the ground up. Then when you build it, it actually came to fantastic results Obama was elected the first time around. If you look at Gantz's work, I think there's enough in that to be able to understand, this is an active process.

It comes back to the issue about, it's not about the individual, it's not about electing somebody who's brilliant, it's about the processes, the institutions that we need, so that if that person doesn't emerge, or gets removed, then we've got somebody else to stand up and take on exactly the same process. I think we are too locked into a notion of leadership is about individuals, and it's not. It's about institutions. That's what gives you the defense, the institutions, not the individuals.

[0:53:10] RT: Okay. We're at the end here almost. I want to give you each a chance to say whatever you want to be complete, the other what's ahead for you in 2025, or whatever it is that you feel you didn't say here that you want to get in before we bring this to a close. Joanne, you want to go first?

[0:53:27] JM: Goodness, this is for me the first working day back for the new year. There's big, big to do list in terms of what's happening. I suppose over the next year, I'll be really interested to see what happens to you politically. I think we're in a much more uncertain world than we've been in for a very long time. I think that that is something for us all to be concerned about and to keep a very close eye on. At a more personal level, I'm going back to something I worked on a long time ago, which is placing. I've just signed a book contract with a colleague in America to do a piece of work on placing in Ireland, which I'm very excited about. I'm going to be focusing on that and hopefully, looking more at liminality and looking at the challenges that we face in organizations and more societally.

[0:54:15] RT: Great. Thank you. Keith, what's ahead for you?

[0:54:17] KG: I'm just starting on a book on followership. I'm not quite sure where that's going to take me. I think it's a manifestation of a problem that has been around forever. Just as we over focus on leadership, not management and command, we also over focus on leadership, not followership. I'm trying to look at it from the other end of the perspective to think about, why do followers follow people that are, to me, self-evidently not fit for duty? Yet, we are corrupted by those kinds of narcissistic, charismatic people. There's something deeply embedded in most of us, which means we want to be led by people that look like they know what they're talking about, even if they don't know what they're talking about. Why are we seduced by these kinds of

people, rather than people that come up and say, "You know what? What we're facing is a terrible mess. I don't have an answer, but I'd like your help to help me and us get through some processes to think about how we might immediately rate this problem in the long run."

[0:55:12] RT: Great. Keith Grint, Joanne Murphy, thank you very much for getting 2025 off to a pleasant start, at least for me. It's been a pleasure to have this conversation with you all.

[0:55:22] KG: Thank you very much.

[0:55:23] JM: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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