

0:00:04.1 Katie Berlin: Hi, welcome back to Central Line. I'm your host, Katie Berlin, and my pronouns are she, her, hers. And I'm here with a special guest today, Dr. Ewan Wolff, welcome to Central Line.

0:00:15.7 Ewan Wolff: Thank you very much. Thanks for having me.

0:00:18.7 Katie Berlin: I've been actually hearing your name for a long time, and this is the first chance that we're getting to actually meet, and I feel really lucky to have this opportunity. Before we get started, though, would you please give us a little bit of background about yourself and how you came to be here?

0:00:34.0 Ewan Wolff: My name is Ewan Wolff, and I know you've already said that, they, them pronouns... Just that I said that. I was originally from Washington DC. And to cut out a lot in between, I ended up going to grad school before vet school and vertebrate paleontology, studying dinosaur diseases, and also...

0:00:54.4 Katie Berlin: That's so cool.

0:00:56.6 Ewan Wolff: Yeah, it's a lot of fun. And then I went to UW Madison for vet school, and then actually did my rotating internship there and part of the specialty internship in oncology, and then I started my internal medicine residency at Massey University, and then came back to the States, finished my residency in Purdue, and then did a fellowship in nephrology and urology at Purdue as well. And then I bounced around a little bit to some different practices, again, just to keep things short, and now I am in Portland, Oregon which we'll talk about probably a little bit more later, and I should say for station recognition at Blue Pearl NorthEast Portland, which is a relatively new practice in the Hollywood district.

0:01:45.9 Katie Berlin: Awesome. I love Portland. I've been there a couple, a few times for my acupuncture certification, and so I got a little time to explore and it's a cool town.

0:01:57.5 Ewan Wolff: It's a very nice place.

0:01:57.6 Katie Berlin: Weird in a good way.

0:01:58.8 Ewan Wolff: Yes, very much so.

0:02:01.5 Katie Berlin: Well, so you're certainly not afraid of moving around, I think it's safe to say.

0:02:06.1 Ewan Wolff: Yeah, that's very true. We have been, I think this is our eighth move or something like that in the last 20 years, so it's... We've been to a lot of different places.

0:02:16.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah. That's a fair bit. Do you like moving? Do you feel like there's a place that's always home to you, or is home where you are and your family is?

0:02:24.4 Ewan Wolff: I think home is where I am and where my family is. Yeah. I think we would love to get to the point where we're not living this nomadic lifestyle anymore, so hopefully we don't have to move again any time soon.

0:02:41.7 Katie Berlin: Yes, I hope that for you also. So vertebrate paleontology, I have to say that, so the thing that motivated me to reach out to you at this time... Well, there are two things, one is the subject matter that we're gonna talk about because it's timely with an article that's coming out in one of our publications, but the other thing is that Ben Williams is our editorial director, he is the guy who basically makes AHA and Trends magazine happen with health, but he's kind of a magician and he waves his hands and the two magazines happened...

0:03:15.6 Ewan Wolff: Nice.

0:03:16.3 Katie Berlin: And he's a dinosaur guy, for sure.

0:03:19.0 Ewan Wolff: Oh cool.

0:03:19.5 Katie Berlin: Really into dinosaurs, and he was like, "You should have Ewan Wolff on, because they're a vertebrate paleontologist," and I was like, "Oh my God, I can ask what the favorite dinosaur is," because I've always wanted to ask somebody that I met like, who doesn't wanna talk about their favorite dinosaur right, that just doesn't come up in conversation.

0:03:38.3 Ewan Wolff: That's very true. It should come up in a conversation more often.

0:03:41.3 Katie Berlin: It should, yeah, maybe I'll just start asking guests that instead of stuff like what is something people wouldn't guess about you, I'm just gonna ask them about their favorite dinosaur.

0:03:50.0 Ewan Wolff: It's simple, and usually people have an answer unless they don't have an answer, I mean it's a very accepting space, but they should probably come up with one.

0:03:58.0 Katie Berlin: Yeah, I agree, and you learn something about somebody too, if they don't have a favorite dinosaur, I feel like...

0:04:04.4 Ewan Wolff: Right.

0:04:04.8 Katie Berlin: That tells me a lot about someone not being judgmental, just saying. Ewan, what is your favorite dinosaur?

0:04:10.9 Ewan Wolff: So I would say that I have really two... So one of them is gonna sound really cliched, which is Tyrannosaurus Rex, I think that's just because I handle a lot of Tyrannosaurus Rexs from different collections and collected various and sundry parts of T-Rexs and...

0:04:33.4 Katie Berlin: I'm so jealous.

0:04:33.5 Ewan Wolff: In T-Rex dig sites. Yeah, it's very cool. The material is very cool and I was just... Actually, 'cause a friend of mine at the Burke Museum, he's the lead curator there. And he was saying that it's amazing how these things have lasted all this time, and you wouldn't think so, but there are so many incredibly delicate parts of the T-Rex skull for this just massive thing that chomped through everything. They're very, very cool. But then the other dinosaur that I really like a

great deal is a Microraptor Gui, and that is kind of an oldie but a goodie at this point. I think it probably was described 20 so about years ago, but Microraptor has wing feathers on its legs in addition to its arms, which is obviously not a successful innovation, but I think it's really cool, there are just cool little animals.

0:05:31.2 Katie Berlin: I mean, somebody had to try it out.

0:05:33.8 Ewan Wolff: Exactly, and there's a researcher out of Texas who does a lot of reconstructions of flight and stuff, named Dr. Sankar Chatterjee, and he did this talk that I went to watch, it was just wild reconstructing them as having a bi-plane style of life, which I don't think anybody else agrees with, but it was such a cool set of illustrations, I was like, this is really neat. I can get with dinosaurs as a biplane, so that's a pretty cool idea.

0:06:05.9 Katie Berlin: That is pretty awesome, and I never really thought about that with paleontology, but you can kind of dream right, and say like...

0:06:14.7 Ewan Wolff: Believe.

0:06:15.6 Katie Berlin: What if this was how it worked, and then see if you can find evidence that shows that that's how it worked.

0:06:21.6 Ewan Wolff: Right, I think as a practicing internist, vertebrate paleontology prepared me very well in some ways, because there are some people who absolutely need to have a finite answer on things, and as a paleontologist, you're just sort of used to the fact that anything that you say could be contradicted later and you're like, "Okay, well, I'm gonna do the best that I can and I will adjust things as we find out more information", and I feel like sometimes internal medicine is very similar and you have to kind of enter this mindfulness space where you're like, I think this is what it is now, and we're gonna do the best job that we can.

0:06:57.6 Katie Berlin: I love that. That's such a good comparison and in two seemingly very disparate things and...

0:07:04.7 Ewan Wolff: Yes.

0:07:05.8 Katie Berlin: I like to say that I was an art history major, and I like to say that my background in art history and my work in museums prepared me to be a vet too, because I like medicine, I think medicine also has more medicine than surgery, and I think it's because I didn't have a problem explaining to someone that I might not really know what's going on, but here's my best guess and we're gonna do what we can to find out and making it sound good. Because you get a lot of practice sort of talking about things that you're not really 100% sure about in a liberal arts education.

0:07:37.6 Ewan Wolff: This may be edited out, and I'm not supposed to be the one asking the questions, but... As a previous art history person, do you have a favorite artist?

0:07:47.1 Katie Berlin: Oh that is a good question. Okay [a] no one ever asked me questions and [b] no one ever asks me that question.

0:07:54.2 Ewan Wolff: Okay. Fair.

0:07:54.8 Katie Berlin: I have a lot of different favorite artists depending on my mood, but I always found Goya very intriguing.

0:08:00.6 Ewan Wolff: Oh Goya is great.

0:08:03.9 Katie Berlin: And Goya ironically is one of the only times that I've actually gotten to use my art history knowledge since graduating from college, or I guess since leaving the museum world, and it was in a behavior class, Dr. Houpt at Cornell, shout out, 'cause I learned a lot in that class. But she's popped up a picture of a girl, like a painting of a girl holding a dog on a leash, and she was talking about something about having to do with the dog, you know something having to do with behavior, I'm sure it was very important. And at the end, she said, "Does anybody know who painted this picture?" And I was like, "Oh." It was totally a Hermione Granger moment because I was like, "Oh, oh..." And no one else knew, and no one else cared because not important, not on the board, but I knew and it was Goya. Anyway, I'm so proud.

0:08:53.6 Ewan Wolff: He has a very particular like strong, emotionally connecting style...

0:09:02.4 Katie Berlin: Yes.

0:09:02.4 Ewan Wolff: That you can't look at any of those images without being pulled into the scene.

0:09:09.5 Katie Berlin: Yes. There's something very disturbing about them, and you can't put your finger on it, and I love art like that, so anyway. Anybody listening, just check out Goya and also Microraptor...

0:09:22.3 Ewan Wolff: Gui.

0:09:23.2 Katie Berlin: Gui.

0:09:24.1 Ewan Wolff: Yeah.

0:09:24.3 Katie Berlin: Anyway [0:09:25.3] ____ something.

0:09:25.3 Ewan Wolff: It might be pronounced Goi, it's possible.

0:09:28.3 Katie Berlin: That would be ironic if they were... If it was.

0:09:31.0 Ewan Wolff: That's true. It would be ironic.

0:09:34.8 Katie Berlin: Anyway, well, thank you for indulging me and talking about dinosaurs for a bit.

0:09:41.4 Ewan Wolff: Oh absolutely.

0:09:42.1 Katie Berlin: I'm sure that we're a lot of nerds in this field, so I'm sure there are a lot of

dinosaur nerds listening who are very... Who are actually gonna check out the dinosaur.

0:09:49.2 Ewan Wolff: I should hope so.

0:09:51.5 Katie Berlin: Okay. So the other thing that prompted me to reach out to you besides having the ability to do so, thanks to Judy Rose, our Learning Programs Manager, is that we have an article coming out in Trends in March, and by the time this airs, I believe it will be out, and it's talking about the gender pay gap, and basically a lot of the research that's been accumulated over many years in differences in how men and women are paid and treated in the workplace and the benefits they get and the flexibility they're offered and stuff like that, and it's really fascinating. It's a great article.

0:10:30.7 Katie Berlin: Dr. Sam Murillo is one of the subject matter experts in there, and I know he's been doing so much work in this field, really interesting stuff, but it occurred to me when I was reading it that there's a section in it that talks about how we just don't have a lot of data about what gender equality actually means and how it looks in the workplace for non-binary trans folks and people who just don't identify as man or woman, and I feel like that's a question that I hadn't heard asked very much, and so I wanted to ask it. And I wanted to just lead in by asking you a little bit about what your experience has been like in the veterinary community, or whether that sheds any light on this issue for you.

0:11:23.5 Ewan Wolff: So let me start off on the first side of things, talking about the lack of information, so I think that there are a number of problems that we're facing, and this is something that I've certainly talked to people about previously, so depending on what study you read up to 40% of Gen Z is from the LGBTQ community. And of that 40%, likely a quarter of them are nonbinary, and when you consider that the average age of a trans-man coming out for the first time is around 23 and the average age for coming out for a trans-woman is around more like 28 or 29. And the fact that a lot of our statistics are looking at recent graduates or students, we are going to miss a lot of people.

0:12:20.8 Ewan Wolff: We're gonna miss a lot of people for a number of reasons. To some extent, there are two major barriers, the one barrier is the coming out stuff that I alluded to and the other barrier is that if you don't ask the right questions, you don't get the right answers. So if your question is male, female, prefer not say or male, female and other gender not listed here, that's going to draw a very different response than if you have a non-binary answer in addition to that.

0:13:00.1 Ewan Wolff: And I would say that there is a good argument for saying male, female, transgender man, transgender woman, another gender not listed here or prefer not to say, I think that you will find some degree of conflict as to how people want to address... Taking a sense of people who are trans, because there are quite a few people who are trans who would prefer to just identify as being male or female because they are male or female, and in some cases, people are also non-binary trans, you can design things to be incredibly inclusive though, where you can say, have people click all boxes that apply, and then I think you start to get some really rich data, especially if you can add things like a gender, gender non-conforming, gender fluid stuff along those lines. I think that the more inclusive categories you offer people, the more likely you are to get that data, and I also think you need to be doing a census of people five or 10 years out from that school and vet tech school, because that's going to give you a much better idea with trans people as to who is actually trans. If you only collect that data when people are young, then you miss a lot of people

from Gen Z, from the millennial generation, from Gen X even who have taken years to come out as being part of this gender diverse community.

0:14:40.4 Katie Berlin: That's stuff I never thought of. I'm just excited when I take a survey or fill out a piece of paper or something online, and it gives an option besides male or female, because I feel like when we were growing up, we probably hardly ever saw that.

0:14:58.7 Ewan Wolff: Right.

0:15:00.6 Katie Berlin: But it didn't even occur to me as a person who fits neatly into the female category and always has identified that way, and other people identify me that way as well, it never occurred to me that more categories and more categories would actually... And allowing people to select all that they identified with would be even possible, and that makes total sense, and why wouldn't we want the most specific and informative data that we could get? So this is a really interesting point.

0:15:31.1 Ewan Wolff: Well, I think it's important, and I also think that there has to be a way of anonymizing that, making anonymous. I think I just invented a new word.

0:15:43.2 Katie Berlin: I think anonymizing should be a word.

0:15:43.2 Ewan Wolff: There's got to be a... Yeah, but I hate when I do that. I think there's gotta be a way of making that part of the demographic data anonymous, or again, you're going to lose a lot of people who would enter their information, and while I recognize that one of the things that we say very commonly is that the population within the veterinary profession is not necessarily reflected in the population at whole... Gender diversity knows no background. Gender diversity is everywhere.

0:16:13.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah, so we can't really use the term underrepresented because there's no reason why the cross-section of gender diversity in veterinary medicine should be any different than in the general population.

0:16:29.1 Ewan Wolff: Correct. I would say we can... So we can use the term underrepresented because we... Regardless of how many people there are in the field, it's always going to be an underrepresented minority. The likelihood that we're going to have huge numbers of gender-diverse people in the field is... We're never going to have as many gender-diverse people as we have cis people in the field, most likely. Maybe that'll come some day, 30, 40 years from now. So I think that for a long time, there'll be an underrepresented minority, but when you do the numbers and you look at the numbers of applicants, if they were reflective of society as a whole, then you'd be talking about thousands of people a year entering vet tech school and veterinary school, and many thousands of people within the community who belong to the gender-diverse community, and yet we just don't have a good handle on that information.

0:17:34.4 Katie Berlin: Do you feel like in veterinary medicine, our attitudes toward the gender-diverse community and gender-diverse co-workers and clients are different than they are in the general public and the world at large, are we more tolerant, more accepting, are we less so... And that could be anecdotal from your own experience...

0:17:57.3 Ewan Wolff: So I think that it runs the gamut. So I think that we have a large portion of the field that just hasn't thought about it, and like so many things when people haven't thought about it, the initial reaction may be to not be inclusive, but I think once people start to think about it and they start to think about gender-diverse people outside of abstract stereotypes or movie stuff or things that are being said in various and sundry means that they may be sharing around... Then I think people start to change their point of view, and if I look at things like the Gender Identity Bill of Rights, the amount of support that has been building over the last two years for the Gender Identity Bill of Rights, I think it's a testament to people actually starting to think about the fact that they're actually human beings within the field who are gender diverse, and that those people are no different than anyone else and worthy of respect and worthy of basic rights within the field, and I think like so many under-represented minorities, the second people start to rationalize them as human beings just like themselves, then that instinct to immediately other people starts to wane, and so I actually have significant hope for the veterinary profession that with ongoing efforts and education, we can be the most welcoming profession that there is.

0:19:36.0 Katie Berlin: I'm glad to hear that. I do feel like this profession in general is very accepting of, I think a lot of veterinarians, at least. I can't speak for other roles in the veterinary community, because I've mostly been a veterinarian. But there are a lot of veterinarians that sort of identify as being different, they grew up being a little bit different from their friends, or they are uncomfortable in certain situations, because they feel different. And the feeling of being different, obviously I don't know what it's like to feel different in the sense that a non-binary person might. But I think a lot of us can identify with that feeling of standing out or not wanting to stand out because of the things that make us different. And that, I think, does lend us to be a little bit more accepting of people who we might view as a little bit different. But this... The climate now, things are tense. And what should be human rights, what should be as simple as saying, "This person is a human and deserve the same rights that I have and to be treated with respect," has become political. And from what I understand, you have... You've had personal experience where that's affected your life and your choices about where to live and work.

0:21:01.1 Ewan Wolff: Absolutely. So I'm non-binary, as I've said before, my husband is trans, and we have a kid who's non-binary. And to keep things breathtakingly short, the Florida government and legislature and governor made it abundantly clear in the beginning of 2022, in April that they would not allow children to be supported in social transition or medical transition. And a bunch of other different rulings, things like the erasing LGBTQ history from teaching, preventing teachers from discussing that a child had two parents the same sex, not allowing providers to use appropriate pronouns and names for kids and stuff along those lines, including school nurses. And now there are additional things like outing children to the entire school if they wanna use the restroom.

0:22:00.3 Ewan Wolff: Those sorts of things really lead to a climate of hatred and heightened risk of violence that makes it unsafe to have a family stay there. And our concern, more so than anything else, was that the state might take the same steps that Texas had taken and start actually taking kids into the foster system and charging parents with felonies for supporting children... Trans kids, which include being non-binary is under the same umbrellas of gender diversity as transgender. And so I actually contacted BluePearl, I slept on it for the night after the April 20th Health Department notice came out. And I wrote this really long letter and said, "Look, I don't think it's safe for us to stay here any more, and here's why."

0:22:52.0 Ewan Wolff: And I was very fortunate that the company actually got back to me within

five minutes of writing them, actually, Dr. Barr. And we sat down and talked, and I ended up interviewing out in Portland, and then they helped us move out there. We had our house on the market two weeks after that notice, we went through and cleaned everything up, started taking stuff to Goodwill. And within less than... Let's see... April, May, June. So we were moved out of our house, we'd sold it and packed everything up and left on the 30th of June. So it was incredible. We left without having a house on the other end, it was an incredibly fast exit. So fast in fact that there were friends of ours who didn't even realize that we had left, because we had been so busy packing everything rapidly. But I was very fortunate in that BluePearl supported that move, and by extension Mars, because it was something that they discussed.

0:24:00.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah, that's an incredible story. And I'd moved myself last year in April, and it was a huge pain in the butt. And I... Nobody would choose to move just because in that frame of time. And to be feeling the feelings that you must have been at that time, about... Of just fear and uncertainty, I just can't imagine what that must have been like. And it makes me think about all the people who cannot leave and who are in that environment and working potentially in our veterinary hospitals next to us, and we may not know that they're going through that. And so this is something that I hadn't told you I was gonna ask, but I'm sure it's something that you've given a lot of thought to, and wondering with the increase in support that you're seeing for the Gender Identity Bill of Rights, which AHA has signed as really, really...

0:24:55.9 Ewan Wolff: Thank you.

0:24:57.5 Katie Berlin: As the other time that I saw you as when you showed up for our CEO and CFO to sign that, and that was a great day. But I wanna believe that inside of that hospital is a safe space, and that even if the outside climate is inhospitable, that gender-diverse people, say in Florida or Texas, can still feel safe at their place of work. Do you think that's true?

0:25:24.2 Ewan Wolff: I think that being able to have a refuge inside your workplace is incredibly important. And I wanna stress to everyone listening that it is very much not just Florida and Texas, so it's well over half the states in the United States at this point. Within the first three weeks of 2023, there were 120 bills before the legislature, including things that banned gender-affirming care for adults up to the age of 26.

0:26:01.4 Ewan Wolff: I think the reality is that people need a really high level of ally-ship right now, they need it in states where they're being affected like this very badly. I think making work as welcoming a place as possible is very important. I also think that having some degree of flexibility to ask people how they're doing, to see what can be done for people, that's also very important. Basic human rights are essential, and also a high level-ship of ally-ship and emotional intelligence is essential right now too. There have been moments in history when individual hate laws have been put into effect that the sum total of which resulted in the extinction of a community, the LGBTQ community included. And it's very difficult for people who are not being directly impacted to see that a community is being wiped out until it is gone.

0:27:26.0 Ewan Wolff: One thing that I wanna say to people who are not necessarily paying attention, because everybody has very busy lives, we deal with so much stress and anxiety and worry and burnout and compassion fatigue in the veterinary field. Everyone is under a lot of strain, and I recognize that. And also I want to say that for those people who are not seeing this happen, they should understand that what is happening is communities are starting to be wiped out.

0:27:58.1 Katie Berlin: I don't think that I've ever had a conversation where, just, I'm speechless. Because as somebody who identifies very clearly as kind of a bleeding heart liberal... [chuckle] And I cannot speak for all of AHA, so I wanna make sure that everybody knows. Politically, I cannot speak for all of AHA, but I will say that at AHA and for myself for sure, it just seems like such an obvious thing that everybody just deserves to live how they wanna live and be who they are. And I just am trying to wrap my mind around what you said, and I just can't do it. And...

0:28:43.7 Ewan Wolff: And I wanna say, for what it's worth, that I am not trying to make a political statement on this podcast, but what I do wanna say... Or I should say and what I do wanna say, is that when you dehumanize individuals, when you villainize individuals, when you do not permit their name to be said on a page, when you don't permit their history to be said, when you refuse to recognize their existence, their names, when you make it difficult for them to be employed, when you employ medical conscience so that they can die on a pavement outside of hospitals without people treating them, when you refuse to provide them with medical care that they need in order to stay healthy, when you impact their jobs so that they can be discriminated against, when you impact their schools so that they may not be able to be in an environment in which they can be themselves, there is one result of all of that. And I have said this before, I said it in one of the VMX talks that I gave a few weeks ago. There was a leader for the Southeastern ACLU who said... For the LGBTQ rights there, who said that it's beginning to look a lot like the intent is for us not to exist.

0:30:09.0 Ewan Wolff: And I think that if you take the time to educate yourself, if you go and look at... The ACLU has a bill tracker where they go through, and they show all these things that are happening. There's only one interpretation that you can come to when trans healthcare and... Is being removed gradually, initially for little kids, then for adolescents, then for people up to 21, then for people up to 26. This is a gradual and insidious strategy, and it is very effective. I never expected to be a political refugee within my own country, and yet here we are.

0:30:52.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah, it shouldn't be a question of politics at all.

0:30:56.0 Ewan Wolff: No.

0:30:58.0 Katie Berlin: And it's staggering to think about in those terms. And these are... Not only as you said, these are human beings, these are our colleagues, this could be somebody that you're standing next to at work and don't even know. And you shouldn't have to know that about them to respect them and treat them the way they wanna be treated and call them by what they wanna be called.

0:31:23.2 Ewan Wolff: And I think that the shocking thing about all this... And I keep saying this to as many people as I can, is that there's no cost involved in any of this, this is just a matter of being kind and decent to other human beings, because they're another human being with a different life than your own. And enough of us spend time reading novels and watching movies and stuff along those lines that we know that there's this human desire to understand how other people exist. Other people are more like us than we suppose.

0:32:00.1 Katie Berlin: Yeah. When we talked before this podcast, we talked last week. And you... We talked about how we hear more and more now about companies, even small practices, making

steps to introduce more diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and programs and awareness. And that's wonderful. But there's a fourth letter there, there's a B at the end often, it's the DEIB initiative. And that B is the part that you said you really wanted to talk about. What makes belonging different from just discussions in general about diversity, equity and inclusion?

0:32:46.3 Ewan Wolff: So I feel like... And I haven't actually said this before, so hopefully this metaphor works. But I feel like belonging is to DEI what Michelin two or three-star food is to cooking. There's a certain degree to which excellent food is beyond the control of the chef, someone has to come and have that food and appreciate that it's really, really good and wanna come back in order for people to succeed. And you don't have to be a five-star chef in order to succeed. You can have a stand somewhere and have people who wanna come back, you can make fries in your front yard. I used to grow up going to a pit barbecue in Maryland. And they were growing stuff there, and it was outstanding. And I'm sure they were never in any sort of book for anything.

0:33:48.9 Katie Berlin: Right, definitely not getting inspected. [chuckle]

0:33:52.5 Ewan Wolff: Right, they're not getting inspected or... But belonging is something that is less tangible than DEI efforts. Because it is something that is in the control of the people who are under-represented. People know when they belong. It's kind of like people used to say the definition of obscenity is that people know it when they see it.

0:34:20.2 Ewan Wolff: The definition of belonging, very similar to the definition of discrimination for that matter, is that it's something that is understood from the perspective of the people involved, it's not something that's necessarily falling within the control of others in well-represented groups. And I say that in the case of discrimination, because people may not perceive micro-aggressions, they may not perceive stereotyping people, but that doesn't mean that that doesn't exist. And that is something that we very much recognize in DEI efforts and trying to make places more inclusive. But belonging, coming to a place and really feeling like that is your place rather than a place that you have been invited to and a place that is somewhat under your control as an active participating member in that place, that is, I think, just vital. And we're still very focused on the first three elements, the first three elements are very important. I will leave to others the power and justice portion that we're not mentioning here, because I feel like people should leave that discussion who are involved very much in dealing with race. And from the standpoint of importance, I just think belonging can't be underrated. And a lot of the times, that's the portion that we don't really get.

0:35:55.0 Katie Berlin: Yeah. And there are probably a lot of people listening who know what it feels like to not be... Do not belong in a place, maybe to a different extent, of course, depending on who you are and what your experience is. But the feeling of not belonging is uncomfortable at best. And it's like, "Oh, okay, I can be in this room." But nobody really... It's not like they really care if I'm here or not. And that feeling of just being embraced by a place and the people in it is one of the best feelings on the planet and something that everybody should have a right to and be able to go and look for. And that really, I think, brings into perspective how much this has to do with well-being, not just of people in the gender diverse community, but people who they work with, everybody is gonna be happier and healthier if they're a team that all feels like they belong. Right.

0:36:55.9 Ewan Wolff: I absolutely agree with that. And I think that that's something that... One of the things that's off-cited in corporate discussions of DEI work is that teams are more productive when they're more inclusive. And I think that's very much true. But I wanna circle back to

something that I said about 20 minutes ago, which is I said that I have a significant hope that the profession will continue to be a more inclusive place. I wanna say that there's one caveat in that, that's why it's important to get to the belonging piece, which is that unless we actively go out, and we build a pipeline whereby more people from under-represented communities can end up being represented within the profession by being in... By being there, full stop, whether that's coming through vet tech school or coming through veterinary school or people who are being brought up into management positions and stuff along those lines, unless we make those efforts, that belonging piece will never happen. Because people will always be the one queer person in the room, or they'll always be the one person from that particular under-represented minority. And then, yes, it does feel very difficult to belong.

0:38:10.0 Katie Berlin: Yeah, that's a very, very good point. It's like probably rooms that used to just have one woman in them as we're talking about gender equality and in a short, relatively short time, we've become a profession that is very much predominantly identifying as female. And that happened so quickly in the grand scheme of things. And it would be wonderful to be able to see that happen with the gender diverse community also that we quickly and generously decide that we are all not just gonna be tolerant, but go out and look for ways to invite people in so that everybody can feel more comfortable. And I love that image in my head of just like the arms of the profession reaching out and saying, "This is a place for you, like you belong here, come work with us. We wanna work with you". I just love that because we have a lot of heart in this community. We have big hearts for our patients. And sometimes I wonder if we need to turn them a little bit more to ourselves.

0:39:25.0 Ewan Wolff: Oh, I couldn't have put that better. I think that in so many different ways, we're learning that the piece that is missing from veterinary medicine is that we have failed to recognize that we're all people. We have put output as such a giant priority, whether you're talking about put for research or output for teaching or output for production of things coming through the door that we've forgotten about the fact that this is also a profession that operates entirely by humans. There are no trained dolphins that are running this profession. This is a human run profession. And as part of that, we have to deal with each other as people. And so when people say that our efforts on DEI are wasted efforts and we should be focusing on the animals, I think they should look around them and realize the rate at which people are exiting the field having suicidal ideation in the field, having to take long absences from their jobs.

0:40:30.2 Ewan Wolff: And maybe they should think a little bit more about the fact that there might be multiple different problems that are leading to that in the first place. We need to care for ourselves as a profession. And although DEI work is not explicitly part of wellbeing, certainly people's wellbeing is improved by being in an atmosphere in which they feel that they belong. I wanted to mention something because earlier we were talking about gender equity. I hope you don't mind if I go back to that.

0:40:58.1 Katie Berlin: Please do.

0:41:01.4 Ewan Wolff: And I know that you had asked the week before about what position people are in for the gender diverse community. And I think that it's difficult because for non-binary people, a lot of people simply don't, they don't understand what non-binary means. They either wanna make it something that's totally androgynous, or they want to conveniently not think about it. And what that leads to is a lot of people being misgendered or simply having their gender identity

ignored because people don't understand what the experience would be like for a non-binary person. And so I feel like the book is kind of open a little bit as to what's going to happen with non-binary people, because I think people just don't know, they don't understand enough. And until there are a lot more non-binary people, which is going to be difficult if people don't recognize them and accept them, it's going to be hard for people's perspectives to change. It is awfully hard, as you said before, to be the one person in an area that anybody's ever met who's non-binary.

0:42:16.7 Ewan Wolff: The same can be said for trans people, but the difficulty for non-binary people is that the second that they utter their pronouns, there's sort of a target on their back. And people can immediately make a judgment as to whether they're going to ignore that or not. That is not always the case for trans people. So I think the difficulty for trans people is that frequently they are exposed to biases against the gender that they were, or the sex that they were assigned at birth. And then they're also exposed to biases for their gender identity now. And so sometimes they end up getting the worst of both worlds. I mean, my husband has really struggled because, to give you an example, before he transitioned, he was exposed to significant discrimination in his art program. He wasn't allowed to have a sculpture studio.

0:43:26.9 Ewan Wolff: He wasn't allowed to finish out his degree in sculpture because it was just a very sexist group of people. Now, working on sort of transgender rights he frequently gets the flip side of things and gets told to be quiet because he's a man and he shouldn't be commenting on things. And it's like, well, yes, he's a man, and he's also born two children and is also a parent and was also exposed to years and years of sexism and discrimination prior to transitioning. So he can't win either way. And for trans women, a lot of the times they're simply not recognized as being women in spaces. And that is something that the hate that is out there has really sort of coalesced around discrimination against trans women. And they have taken just an incredible amount of abuse both verbally and physically.

0:44:37.9 Ewan Wolff: And unfortunately, there are also many trans women, particularly trans women who are from the black and Latin X community who end up being murdered every year. So as far as figuring out what does gender equity look like for people within the gender diverse community, I think we need more time. I think we also need an environment that actually accepts people for who they are. And I don't think that we're there yet. I think that the Gender Identity Bill of Rights is an excellent first step in helping people to just kind of stop feeling like they're thinking, but the goal needs to be more than treading water. And so, I think that's why we've placed an emphasis on saying, okay, great, let's get this part done. And also, we need to try to keep pushing people up and trying to get them to the point where they feel like they're not just floating, but they're starting to get up and be able to be present.

0:45:44.7 Katie Berlin: It seems like there's a big gap between, like signing the Bill of Rights is wonderful. And like you said, a good step, but there's a big gap between signing it and then creating a space that is not only safe, but also allows you to be who you are and say, okay, your experiences count and I want to know about them. And that gap I'm sure is a variable size depending on who you are and where you work and all the things, how comfortable people feel about revealing themselves. But I was just wondering, at a systemic level, as an ecosystem, what are some things that our community can do to bridge that gap between the signing, which is wonderful and the belonging?

0:46:45.6 Ewan Wolff: So I think that honestly, education is a tremendous first step and education

has to be more than something that you did at one point in time. It has to be continuing to learn where you can. And not everyone can learn everything all the time. We all recognize that we have our limits, but being willing to hear something and go, "That wasn't something that I understood before. I'm gonna read a little bit more about that and try to educate myself." The other thing that I think people have to do is they have to be willing to make mistakes and occasionally get called out on those mistakes and learn and grow. And if people are not able to say, I'm sorry that I did that, learn from those things and move on, then I think it's very difficult for things to improve.

0:47:42.0 Ewan Wolff: The other thing is that people have to start looking around them and saying, "If I don't see gender diverse people in this space, if I don't see black queer people in this space, if I don't see Latin X trans women in this space, and I know that these people exist in my community, why am I not seeing them on this committee? Why am I not going to big conferences and hearing talks from people who are neuro-diverse and non-binary, intersectional individuals within the community"? If people don't educate themselves and build and bring people in and bring people up, then it's very difficult to move forward.

0:48:41.9 Katie Berlin: Thank you for that because I think that's something we can all take and use. On a systemic level, the systems are made up of us. And so each of us doing those things where we can will make a difference. And I also wanted to just, we were talking about this ourselves. We have a DEIB committee at AHA, and which I'm on and we were talking about this, where it's important to have, when you're looking for speakers to come to your event, somebody who's, say, neuro-diverse and non-binary doesn't have to come and speak about being neuro-diverse and or non-binary.

0:49:20.3 Ewan Wolff: Right.

0:49:20.8 Katie Berlin: If that's what they want to speak about, great.

0:49:22.8 Ewan Wolff: Sure.

0:49:24.6 Katie Berlin: But the whole point of diversity is having a diverse body of voices talking about a diverse body of things and not just pigeonholing people. And I think we've been really good about that so far, about saying, "Okay, we need somebody who looks a certain way or identifies a certain way to come and talk about this issue", but maybe they could come and talk about internal medicine.

0:49:50.9 Ewan Wolff: Right.

0:49:51.2 Katie Berlin: That would be cool.

0:49:52.2 Ewan Wolff: Yeah, that would be cool. And I think that circles back to the fact, and I was actually saying this on a call that I was on this morning, that there's 25 or 30 people that are pretty much the same at almost every conference in the United States talking about DEI stuff.

0:50:10.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:50:12.3 Ewan Wolff: And when people are working on advocacy stuff, they're in very high demand. And also, one of the things in the Gender Identity Bill of Rights is having the right to not

have to advocate for yourself all the time.

0:50:25.0 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:50:25.9 Ewan Wolff: To have other people advocating for you. And I think that that's absolutely essential. There have to be people who have the understanding and training to take that load off.

0:50:40.7 Katie Berlin: So I'm going to ask you another question I didn't tell you I was going to ask you, but it just came up in my mind. 'Cause I'm thinking about what it means to be a good ally, which I'm sure is broadly defined. I'm sure there's a lot of ways to be an ally, but do you think that allies can speak about these issues without having lived that experience if they're speaking on behalf of and as advocates for versus in place of individuals who do have that lived experience? So, like, could I do a lot of reading and learning and listening and then go and speak about something because I feel strongly about it as an ally?

0:51:28.1 Ewan Wolff: So I think that provided that caveats are in place, that you are an ally speaking on this issue, absolutely, because the difficulty is that there are currently not enough people who are speaking up. And sometimes the message from one person may be exactly the same as the message from the other person, but if the other person comes from a highly represented group, them standing up and saying, "Hey, yeah, I read this and I have friends who've been struggling to make it in this field, and these are my thoughts on that". Like, I think provided that people understand the context that you're coming from and provided that your discussion doesn't displace others who want to speak who are from that community, then I absolutely think that that is very essential. That advocacy is absolutely essential.

0:52:32.4 Ewan Wolff: But I do want to say something that, again, I also said several weeks ago in a talk, which is that I think that the phrase ally as a verb resonates a lot with me because ally is not, it's not a ribbon that you can wear or a bumper sticker. It's something that requires an effort every single day. But also as far as being an ally to the gender diverse community right now, we're at a point in time at which being an ally means being willing to be a little bit bruised because we're really beyond the point where we can simply have allies that say things that are helpful. We need people who are really being willing to put some skin in the game, and there are going to be times when this is very uncomfortable. There are going to be times when it feels like there is some risk involved with being an ally because those are the times that we live in. But like many other times that have come before where there has been risk in helping communities that were underrepresented, that risk is not forgotten. That taking those risks is not forgotten.

0:53:52.2 Katie Berlin: And it's important to remember, too, that sometimes the risk is speaking up in a quiet room when you notice something, and that in the grand scheme of things is not a big risk. So it's something that I was going to ask you. We talked about just what the community could do, what we needed to do on a systemic level to change things and to move them forward. And I was going to ask you on an individual level what somebody listening right now, regardless of their role and their practice, could do to move the needle and not have to prepare for it, not have to do anything but have listened to this conversation and want to do it. And that seems like it's one thing, is you could speak up when maybe you would have been quiet before.

0:54:45.7 Ewan Wolff: I think that if you're in states where people are affected by legislation that is having a direct impact on them, being willing to say, "Are you okay? Is there anything that I can

do to help?" I think taking a minute to read the Gender Identity Bill of Rights and sign it, if you're willing to sign it, taking a minute to see what the benefits are in your company and if gender affirmation benefits are not offered, being willing to say, "Hey, I just wanted to inquire, is this something that isn't listed or is it something we're not offering and if not, why"? Taking a moment to intervene when somebody says a remark that's transphobic or homophobic and I realized that, we haven't been talking about homophobia, that's a totally different subject, but casual transphobia happens all the time, correct someone when they don't use someone's pronouns correctly and that may not be transphobic that may be just a mistake. Being willing, if a client is harassing someone at work to say, "Hey, we respect this person and this is our vat tech, Sandy and her pronouns are she, her". Being willing to take those steps is incredibly important, just never forgetting that people are other human beings and remembering to treat them in the way that they have said they want to be treated.

0:56:31.8 Ewan Wolff: And that's actually something that I just saw that as the platinum rule in something that Dr. LaTonia Craig just came out with from the Journey for Teams. And I should actually say Journey for Teams is an excellent resource that you should go and look up. But I like this idea of the platinum rule treating somebody like they would want to be treated, that is really a great thing to focus on.

0:56:58.8 Katie Berlin: I love that. And yeah, Journey for Teams, I think just came out with a new module like yesterday or something.

0:57:04.6 Ewan Wolff: Yes.

0:57:05.7 Katie Berlin: Yep. That's at AVMA. And they also have the Brave Space certificate program, which I actually am in the middle of right now and is really good. Lots of good information in there. And they're both free. And we'll put links in the show notes to this episode, as well as to Pride VMC and the Gender Identity Bill of Rights. And I think all of those resources, they're there, they're waiting. So if you haven't checked them out, please do go. Because this is such an important conversation and it is just beginning. And I really appreciate you taking so much time and also just being so candid and willing to be personal and say the stuff that no one really wants to hear. No one wants to hear that people are unhappy and it's so easy to ignore in our little bubbles, but we can't do it. These are our people.

0:58:11.5 Ewan Wolff: And I really appreciate that. I think that's actually a good way to kind of close out the conversation is that, and I know that you said this earlier, but I think that people don't realize how many gender diverse people they know and care about already.

0:58:30.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you so much, Ewan Wolff. It's been a pleasure and an honor and I learned a lot today. And so I know that people listening will have learned too. Please check out the links in the show notes and definitely get in touch with me at podcast.aha.org if there are resources that we mentioned that I don't link to or you have more questions, I will make sure that I get them to the right person or the right place to get answered because this is too important and we all have to do our part to continue the conversation. So thank you so much for listening.

0:59:14.1 Ewan Wolff: Thank you very much for having me.