

## WOCAndAllies\_EP79

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Legacy leaders, you're in for. A coffee treat, literally, because we have the new Vice President, Global Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer at Starbucks, a little small company you've probably heard of, Chayla Gage. Chayla, congrats on the new role!

**Chéla Gage:** Thank you. Thank you. Yes. Especially as of February 5th. I'm excited.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Yeah. And we're recording this like the Friday before. So Chayla was able to squeeze this in before she immerses herself to Starbucks. But Chayla and I met a couple of months ago and I've had the honor where I was able to give a few sessions to Chayla and she's been the, in the HR DIB world for 25 years working with companies like Sprint. For those of you that know what pagers are, and if you don't know, we have absolutely aged ourselves. And I, know that you've also had your own recruiting and executive firm, and you've worked with big companies like Cisco, Google, Nissan. I know you have that engineering background, which is so unique as a woman of color.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** But what's even more impressive, Shayla, I hope you're like enjoying all these compliments. Not just your, this big time like C Suite and Starbucks. It's the beautiful work life integration that you've created on 20 years of marriage with your husband. Congrats. And your three incredible

**Chéla Gage:** sons. Oh, thank you.

**Chéla Gage:** Thank you so much. Yes, the work life integration for me is important. the work that I do is important to me. My children, my family is important to me. There's no way. That I can do any of this if I both have to know about each other and it has to go hand in hand for me.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Yeah, I remember listening to an episode.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I was telling Chayla right before this. I was like binge listening to Chayla. So feel free to look up Chayla Gage if you're so obsessed with her during this episode to listen to others. But similar to you, I remember reading Lean In by Sheryl Sandberg. And I was like, I don't know if I could put an office and crib next to me while I have a baby.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I didn't relate. I'm very grateful of the book she wrote, but it really wasn't relatable for a woman of

**Chéla Gage:** color. It was not. It, it, really, it highlighted for me and a lot of peers that I had read the book with around the time that, hey, this isn't, this story doesn't resonate this. These resources aren't available.

**Chéla Gage:** How am I supposed to maneuver this path of trying to be a leader and a mom because. What she's recommending, I can't throw down.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** And you have an amazing life story that I didn't realize you had when we first met in person. So can you share how you got into this work? And for those that are watching video, I know she has been in this work for 25 years and I'm like, what are you talking about?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I thought you were like forever 21 and she has three sons. So yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. How did you get into this work?

**Chéla Gage:** Thank you. Thank you. Yes. I, know I, I aged myself when I start talking about pagers and beepers, but that is where I started at Sprint back in childhood. And one of my first. Because I had a friend, I was working in Sprint and I had a friend who had his own search firm and he asked me to come on and help.

**Chéla Gage:** And this was around the time where Metro PCS was really starting to come up. And we staffed a lot of their, a lot of their Thor positions and their, we ended up with staffing a lot of their leadership positions with diverse talent. And I loved that because. I was bringing a part of myself into the work.

**Chéla Gage:** So that individual really got my entrepreneurial bug going. And from there, I ended up creating my own company called Engage Search Firm, and I placed a lot of diverse talent. So I was known as the diverse recruiter. But while I was placing talent, I also saw that organizations, that my talent was coming back to me a year or two later and for varied reasons, but it really felt like organ rejection.

**Chéla Gage:** It felt like they were coming into the companies and the companies were not ready to embrace them. They didn't have talent management processes set up. They didn't have. Either sponsorship or mentoring just different ways that. Talent of color need different things that talent of color needs in order to be successful in corporate America.

**Chéla Gage:** And so then I was like, okay, then now it's time for me to add some diversity consulting on top of the recruiting. I did that for a while and when it was time to, I wanted to build a family and my husband and I at the time said, okay, entrepreneur was, a little too hard. To build the family with, and so I went in house and I worked for an RPO provider and during this time, what I loved about the RPO provider was it allowed me to see how companies treat talent acquisitions in different ways.

**Chéla Gage:** And what I loved about that was it allowed all of this. let me back up, sorry, if we can read, take that away. Yeah,

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Pete, you can go edit this if you're hearing it, go ahead.

**Chéla Gage:** Thank you. When I worked for the RPO provider, it allowed me to see how companies treat talent acquisition. And that is very like, talent acquisition is usually the entry way for talent to enter an organization and it's where bias creeps in.

**Chéla Gage:** And so I saw the different ways that we can scoop out bias in the TA processes. Now, I, went to school thinking I was going to be a lawyer Elaine, so I didn't go for HR. I went for law right around the time when it was time to start our family, I had my first child. My husband was like, okay, you can go.

**Chéla Gage:** What about law school? You wanted to go to law school, let's get that going again. So I went to law school and loved it a little bit. My memory sucks and so realization and you need that if you're going to be a lawyer, um, I'm more of the, I'm more of the, people side of it. I did about two

years and I had this wonderful mentor and right around my two year time, I was pregnant with my second son and my mentor and I decided that, okay, I'm going to.

**Chéla Gage:** come out of law school, but that mentor understood my background and helped me create an organization called Miles Above named after my first son. So I went back to entrepreneurship, but this time it was for nonprofit. And Miles Above, we place emancipated foster youth into permanent positions, permanent or temporary positions.

**Chéla Gage:** It's important to know that about me because I grew up in foster care. And between the ages of 7 to 17, I lived in 6 family homes and 4 group homes. So I moved 10 times in 10 years. And what's amazing about that is I saw how families were. every family has some sort of problem and,

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I

**Chéla Gage:** also saw that, and I felt it when I graduated that it was up to me to figure out how to maneuver through life.

**Chéla Gage:** So when we place talent at miles above, we place them in permanent positions. And when talent started getting feedback. and I experienced it too. The first time I got feedback from my, one of my employers at Sprint, it was basically like the, here's some things we need to work on, Shayla. And I was like, okay, great.

**Chéla Gage:** Thanks. I want to go pack up my box. Cause I thought it was time for me to go experience teaching me that you get feedback, you leave. And when we were placing talent at miles above, the same thing was happening. So not only did we have to go from placing talent, we went to mentoring talent. And that's where I, have a hardcore belief that mentorship and sponsorship is the way to help any level of any person at any level in the organization.

**Chéla Gage:** Mentorship and sponsorship help with that. So miles above. That allows me to make an impact. One of the things that I learned throughout my career, it's not about title for me, it's not about, it's about money because I do have three kids and three boys and they eat, a lot. Oh,

but

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Thank you for saying that.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Money is important for livelihood, for survival, providing and thriving.

**Chéla Gage:** And thriving. Thank you. Yes. And as a female of color, I had to get very comfortable with advocating for myself and knowing my worth, but for me, all throughout my career, every job that I have has been, what impact can I make and what legacy am I going to leave in the world?

**Chéla Gage:** And so I've gone from. I have gone from automotive engineering to aerospace engineering to fashion and now I'm at Starbucks with over 430, 000 employees and the impact that I know that I and my team are going to make this is an impact for generations and that excites me, Wayne.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** There's so much to just, follow up from that.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** One is, I'm, I, we'll talk about the positive, impact stuff, but one, one of it is you were talking about feedback, how you thought when you got that feedback, you're gonna pack up and leave. And I grew up in a Filipino household, we are very emotional, which is nothing negative, but we're just very emotional.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** And I think a lot of first gen immigrants, women of color relate to it when it's like, Oh no, they gave me feedback. I failed up. I messed up. I failed. what am I going to do? And I'm sure you relate, and even the people that you've mentored, where it's a lot of unlearning of communication that I could actually express when I'm not psychologically safe, when I feel insecure, in a way where I am not yelling.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Because I was taught if you're going to express yourself, you're going to yell and tone. But, and then you know this, as a mother, it's a lot of wait, Hold on, let me not yell, but we're not perfect,

**Chéla Gage:** And sometimes it's, I've learned it's not always what you say, it's how you say it. And that's what I, whenever I get feedback now, and I've gotten a lot of feedback throughout the years and some of it I take Some of it is for me and some of it is not for me.

**Chéla Gage:** One of the things that I've had to learn and something that I teach or something that I, I deal with the people that I'm mentoring is sometimes people don't know how to give feedback to people of color. And they tend to give us all of the great things first, and they don't say what needs to be said.

**Chéla Gage:** And. Sometimes it takes, it, it takes us, it takes myself, I have to know what is it that I'm working on, what is it that I want to accomplish, and what questions can I ask of the person giving the feedback that will help me land in a place that I really want to land at. I've gotten feedback and this isn't, I've gotten feedback at one of the employers that I didn't have executive presence.

**Chéla Gage:** Now, what I've learned executive presence means for me is I don't look like or sound like you. So to you, I don't have executive presence. If I were in a different organization, if it were a different environment, and I might look like and sound like others and I wouldn't get that feedback. So one of the things that I tell my leaders now, whenever I do get feedback is What is this, how is this feedback going to help shape the individual versus having them assimilate because that's what executive president is asking you to do.

**Chéla Gage:** It is asking you to assimilate. How do I not assimilate and how do I integrate?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Oh, so good. I love that. and it goes to even like code switching, right? Like I, I used to work in politics, like working in campaigns. And I noticed that when I was at different groups, when I was at meetings and I was the only woman of color, I had to present and talk in a certain way.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** When, because it was politics, when I would be with all older white men, and it was appropriate in terms of the culture, I would cuss pretending I am like an old white man, assimilate. Yeah, it's just, so what feedback, what questions when someone's, at their role, they're receiving feedback from someone and they're just like, I don't understand what this person's asking

me to do, like what questions should they follow up with so they could actually gather the information.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** In terms of what they can do to improve or, decide if even this feedback is even worth listening to and maybe calling them in and letting them know, Hey. You're asking me to code switch and assimilate as opposed to do you not understand it? It's like also managing up that is a long winded question, but I hope you understood what I asked

**Chéla Gage:** No, I do and I think there's some there's something there there's a lot there.

**Chéla Gage:** I think the question depends on the person who is giving you the feedback. I, was reading a book recently, one of Adam Grant's book, and now I don't remember if it's Think Again or Hidden Potential, but he talks about receiving feedback in the sphere of someone who cares. And so someone who cares has the right to give you feedback.

**Chéla Gage:** If someone does not care about your trajectory, be it professional or personal, I'm not going to take that feedback. So the question that I ask and whenever. There are some leaders that I've had in the past where I've had to get myself ready because I know that the feedback that I'm going to get, or just the type of individual this is, I need to be ready.

**Chéla Gage:** And so I'll look at my goals and objectives and I'll have my goals and objectives in front of me. And the question may be, for that feedback. How is this going to impact our goal of Yes. Yes. and that is How is this feedback directly going to impact our representation goals for 2025

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Right.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** And so going back to the goals, I love it.

**Chéla Gage:** It makes that person, it takes that because a lot of people wanna give you feedback from the last thing they remember. And. It's, I, forget what, I forget feedback of relevance or and when you put up your goals and objectives, it really takes them back to what's at heart.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** it's interesting you say that because, like I was sharing earlier, a lot of us women of color, we grew up in households where it's reactive and emotional and a lot of the work I do with my clients, regardless of where they're at in the spectrum, manager, director, they're in C suite, they have their own business I have to remind them, like, why, like, Why can't they understand?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Why can't I just communicate correctly? I was like, it's practice. Like I have literally a notepad, just like you said, just like what Chela said. What are the goals? And if someone's giving me feedback or telling me to do something like, help me understand what the priorities are. Cause from my understanding is these are the three things that I need to work on so that this organization achieves this.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** If I work on this objective, it's actually going to take away time. So what's a priority? Because realistically and sustainably, I cannot do all of this.

**Chéla Gage:** I love that. I love another reason why I love what is priority is because I've seen and I've been in HR for 20 some odd years. I've seen leaders give people of color more work, less resources and giving us the feedback of maybe you need to do ABCD, but it wasn't on our, it wasn't on my original remit.

**Chéla Gage:** So what is my priority? Help me prioritize this so that I make sure I am giving you what you need in order for you to be successful.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I know that we call it different things when I've heard other podcast interviews you've been in, but what I tell my clients, when you're about to have your annual review, you're going to meet with your direct supervisor.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Print out your old job description. And then I call it brag sheet, but I'm like, have a brag sheet, like consistently every day, update all the things that you've accomplished and try to put numbers in percentages. Yeah. What do you call it? I know you call it something different. I call it brag sheet. What do you call it?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** No,

**Chéla Gage:** I think I just call it my kudos list. I don't,

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I call it brag sheet. And you know what? I know bragging has a negative connotation for women, but men do this all the time. They do. They're like, hey, I did A, B, and C. That's why I need a I deserve a raise so that when you go into the meeting and people, your boss or the organization's asking you to do more, help me understand because my job role is this, and if you're asking me to do this, then that seems like we need to have another conversation of me getting promoted and having a new title or we need to hire another team member or someone else I need to manage to do that

**Chéla Gage:** role.

**Chéla Gage:** That is a hard conversation to have. I wonder how do we break that into parts for people because it's, especially when you're given feedback, it's hard to say, I need more resources or, it's hard to advocate for yourself. But that brag sheet, that kudos list, sometimes I'll, read my, I'll read my kudos list before I go into a hard one.

**Chéla Gage:** And it just I'm like, damn, I'm a bad, I did that, I'm a little bit of a, and so you walk in with a little bit more swag. And I think, that is completely okay.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Yeah. I love this conversation already so much, but one of the things is, as like 2030 is a big year, right? We are recording this in 2024, literally just 6 years, 6 years from when we're recording this, that according to the U.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** S. census, 2030 is so important. So can you share why that's important and why companies need to be like Starbucks? So can you share why 2030 is so big, besides us getting older and wiser?

**Chéla Gage:** the, according to the U. S., the demographics are going to shift. So the majority population right now, white Caucasian, will not be the majority population by 2030.

**Chéla Gage:** We will see people of color, people who are of mixed backgrounds, become the majority more than white people. The Caucasian or white, which I mean, that's a flip that is a big

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** flip and we're seeing it We're seeing it now. It's so nice to see

**Chéla Gage:** it is so beautiful. I love I just got goosebumps When I think about some of the advertising that's happening.

**Chéla Gage:** Yes, like the it's You're starting to see multiple generations in advertisement. You're starting to see mixed colors. You're starting to see family that look different than the standard mom and dad are of the same race and gender like. No, mom and dad could be two different races. Mom and mom could be the same gender.

**Chéla Gage:** I love that advertisers are getting there sooner. And it's up to the large corporations to like. I always say we want our insides to match our outsides and by 2030, the outside is going to look a lot different than it does today. And

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I am just throwing flowers at you during this whole podcast interview.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Chayla was sharing right before we hit record, Chayla is working for a company. That has half a million employees, half a million. And for those of you that go to Starbucks, which I'm assuming should be a majority of people. If not, go and check it out. It's a lot of Gen Zers, which is so beautiful because it's just this new generation.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Yes. What I love about the impact you're going to make. Incredible.

**Chéla Gage:** The impact that Starbucks, so first of all, during my interview process, one of the values that recently the organization went through a value change and one of the values is belonging. Belonging is a core value at Starbucks and what that tells me at once.

**Chéla Gage:** So a lot of companies say, Oh yes, D E N I is in our DNA. Where is it? Where is it in your values? Where is it a part of your systems, your tools, your processes? Because once this starts getting in your values, then it starts, it's in your job descriptions. Then it's in how you perform, how you performance manage people.

**Chéla Gage:** It's in your high pot. Programs, it's in your hiring, your retention programs and the fact that Starbucks and they know their impact and decided to have belonging as a core value. Like I was like, this is home, like this is, just where I'm supposed to be.

**Chéla Gage:** But I also love that when I went from aerospace engineering into retail, my first job in retail was at Reformation. And I really wanted to impact the lady that I see picking up her clothes. I wanted to impact the teacher that teaches my son, just the everyday person. What I know about Starbucks and I, felt this and I, I'm getting a little emotional, but I remember during pride and going

to Starbucks and seeing the aprons, having the different colors and just like representation matters, the fact that people can show up and be their whole self.

**Chéla Gage:** They're like, I walk into Starbucks. I see the pride, logo. I know that my family member too. Are a part of the LGBTQIA plus community can walk into the store and feel whole. They can feel welcome. They can feel seen. I know that if you accept LGBTQIA plus, you're probably looking at neurodivergent.

**Chéla Gage:** You're probably looking at black, Asian, Hispanic. You're probably accepting of more than just what I see. And that, that's what I want to do. I want to impact, that's the impact that I want to make. What are you talking about?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** You're already doing it. it's so fascinating where I'm thinking about the legacy I want to create.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I was like, you're already a wonderful mother to your three sons and like all the companies that you worked with, just want to remind you.

**Chéla Gage:** Thank you.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I know, we know that's sad, right? 2030 majority is going to be the minority. And it's sure. It's performative. Let's just be honest.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** A lot of people like, okay, we need to hire a DEI person, but can you share, I just want to help our fellow women of color listening to this as they are, talking to their leaders or if there is an open house, hopefully there is one where they're talking to people how this, I hate that I have to say this, but we just live in a capitalistic society, how this affects the bottom line, like how companies could lose money if they don't put DIB practices in place.

**Chéla Gage:** DEI, so first, I believe there are so many stats that talk about the business case for diversity. But when you bring diverse minds together, you're really creating an opportunity for innovation. You're creating an opportunity for, you for ideas and creativity to thrive. And that is where, that's where companies start to win.

**Chéla Gage:** There's, it's been said that companies who are gender diverse are way more successful than those who are not, but it's also McKinsey and company. And I, don't have the quote or the data in front of me at the moment, but McKinsey and company have a, really good quote. And I think it's like. 15 percent it hits the bottom by 15 percent just the 15 percent of companies who are ethnically diverse have a bottom line increase of 15%.

**Chéla Gage:** And that's, and what I also love, once McKinsey company started putting out those numbers and those data and those stats, board members started paying attention and board members now are asking, okay, what are we doing when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion? I love when board members are asking, what are we doing?

**Chéla Gage:** What are the equitable practices that we are putting in place? That's the question. So if you're talking to another company and I'm, I've done this, I've had companies come to me. Taylor, we, they may have seen something that I recently did. We love what the work that you've done for

Reformation, or we love the work that you've done for Raytheon, but they don't see everything in my background.

**Chéla Gage:** They only see my current, my last, two or three years, what they're really looking at, Elaine, is that I'm a Black woman in HR. Just because I'm a Black woman in HR does not mean that I have diversity capability. That is not what we do. Companies do not hire the first Black person or first woman or man of color and put them in a diversity role.

**Chéla Gage:** For those of you who are being tapped for diversity roles, and you don't have the diversity experience, then that may not be a company you want to, pull into. What happens, the resources may not be there. The, capability of. De and I is more than just programs. It's more than just what are we doing for Black History Month?

**Chéla Gage:** It's more than just we support pride or we support Juneteenth. De and I is true change management. We are changing systems. We are changing policies. We like, we. Start changing processes. All of that has to be put in place in order for a company to really, or really walk the walk and talk the talk for de and I.

**Chéla Gage:** So I, I have friends that, I have people who come to me, Chala, I wanna get into DE nine. I just had a company. Yeah, that company, they're not ready. They're not ready.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I love this. I love that you're calling in companies. What it sounds like, because I actually get asked to speak to do workshops, right?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I don't know very clearly why. They want me to talk because I'm a woman and woman of color, right? Talk about a service and communication. And I'm actually doing right now a certification with executive leadership and, career coaching right now. And I was talking to one of my mentors. I was like, Hey.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** These 2 very well known big companies just hit me up and asked me to do a workshop, 1 of them they're ERG and then the other 1 they want me to work with the department to work on communication and, also time management and he actually said it directly to me, he's if they want to fix that. They need to work with you, not through a workshop, but they need to do, you need to do a longer term proposal because you need to coach them, like systems and policies and coach the directors as well as rank and file, like that is, he was just like, that's performative, they just want a band aid.

**Chéla Gage:** That's performative. A one time talk, a one time workshop, that does nothing. What are we doing behind the scenes? What's the back end? What's the follow up? Do we, have the right tools and technology to actually follow up? Are we looking at data? What are the measures of success? Like those are the questions that we should be really asking.

**Chéla Gage:** And it took me a lot of. Time and a lot of pain to actually call those questions out. And I smile now because I'm thinking about the experience that I had with Starbucks and it took a long time for us to land with me taking this position. But I asked some very difficult questions. I've been gaslit before.

**Chéla Gage:** I did not want to do that again. And I've worked at performative companies. Or I've been called upon us to work at performative companies, and I did not want to do that. I want to make an impact that in order for me to do that, the company has to be ready. You have to put up or shut up.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** what? I just have to applaud you and compliment you, right?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Because so often you hear a company like Starbucks or for me being a business owner, like a coach, it's Oh, all these clients want to work with me. I actually canceled 10 sales calls in January because they were not a good fit. But to even your extent, what you were sharing, it's the money, it's great, but you have to understand the type of quality service and experience I am going to provide.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** This is not just a gift that you're giving me. I am a gift.

**Chéla Gage:** Yes. Oh, I love that. I am a gift. I'm writing that down.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** It's like one of our coaching sessions, Chayla.

**Chéla Gage:** Which I love because you see me and that is rare. So thank you. Oh, you're welcome.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I don't, we're not even towards the end. I still got questions to ask you, Chalice. But, what you're talking about, like gaslighting, right? When people don't feel comfortable and feeling performative, what advice do you have for people where they're in an environment that they don't feel safe?

**Chéla Gage:** Yeah. psychological safety is, I believe is a foundation for success in DE&I.

**Chéla Gage:** And it's because When people are safe, they can be their whole selves. When people are their whole selves, they can bring their innovation, their creativity to, their employer, to the organization, to the event, to whatever it is. But when you're not safe, what that says and what, that can look like.

**Chéla Gage:** Sometimes it looks like my words are being taken differently, or it can look like being called. It can look like it can look like not, it can look like not having resources on your team. it can look like It can look like organizations that are laying off, like we're doing right now.

**Chéla Gage:** There's a lot of companies going through rifts and going through layoffs. And unfortunately, you start seeing a lot of people of color leaving those organizations. Then those who are staying feel like they're not safe. And when that happens, you start as an employer, you're bringing doubt and a lack of trust into a real, I don't care what relationship it is.

**Chéla Gage:** A relationship cannot thrive without trust. If you don't have psychological safety, if you are not safe, there are certain ways that you can build that. I think. I think that it can be built, but sometimes it can be eye opening to say, is this the environment that I want to be in? And or what do I need in order for me to feel safe in this environment?

**Chéla Gage:** Sometimes what that can look like is going out to get an external coach, getting up another perspective. And I love the idea of having a coach. Just like I loved my, I, my, I love my therapist because an external view into your situation like really helps and to be seen, to be validated. When you are in an environment where you're not safe, you start to question.

**Chéla Gage:** I know every question and what it starts to deteriorate the pride and the worth, the value that you have as an individual and so what it can look like to build that up. It could. It could be building a coach, it could be creating an employee resource group so that you're creating community for yourself and for others, it could be creating a peer mentor. And I've had to do that in the organization where I, remember one org, I was in a meeting and someone said something that was a little off putting and I. And I, I saw somebody else in the room, a white woman, and she sat in her seat a little, she sat a little bit more upright. Now, sometimes allies can't always speak up in the moment.

**Chéla Gage:** Maybe she didn't feel psychologically safe to speak up either, but after that meeting, I went to her and I didn't say anything about. The comment that somebody said, what I said was there, there, comes a time where I need a peer mentor and I need somebody to validate my experiences. Could you be my, peer mentor?

**Chéla Gage:** I just feel like you and I have a connection and you see me for who I am. And she said, yes, now that was an environment that wasn't psychologically safe for me, but I created safety for myself.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I love that. It's actually what I encourage my clients, like when they're working on a behavioral change, like I'm not giving feedback enough, or in terms of psychological safety, hey, can you tell me, like, when we're at meetings, can you see if I'm able to speak up and do things?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** So even being able to meet with this individual, and both of you could hold each other accountable where like once a month, it's okay, as I'm working on this. How often did you see me do this? Did I do, did I not say this? So I really appreciate you even saying that. And, I want to go back to even what you're saying, cause a lot of companies are shrinking, but I have a number of executive career coaching clients where there's layoffs.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** They stayed because of the work they're doing. And what happened was now they have more workload and they're working with, they're doing three different jobs and these are all women of color. Yeah. And like what both Chela and I were talking about, it's like a lot of the unlearning because unfortunately, as a woman of color, as women, we are taught to be the supporting role, right?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Like we will cook for you, we will do chores, whatever you need, I will be there as opposed to seeing ourselves as the leading role. And I'm so proud of one of my clients where literally the last day before holiday break, okay, you have 30 new accounts. Like an hour before work ended, and she responded, there is no capacity for me to do it.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** We need to, talk about. How this could be done differently. Like, why are you giving this to me when I'm working X hours? I'm doing three jobs and I already have this number of accounts. And also if you're going to give me these accounts, we're going to lose X amount of revenue because I won't be able to perform at

**Chéla Gage:** all.

**Chéla Gage:** Bam. See, when you start talking about data, when you take it down to ROI, people really pay attention. Kudos to her for saying, I have no capacity for this. Something else. I know that. I know women of color, especially women who are in the DE& I space we tend to take on more. The DE& I role is, I call it a pulpit position because people come to me, not only about, Hey I need to hire this or, this process doesn't feel good, but they come to me with my, my daughter is dating a black man or my daughter is dating, um, my daughter has recently come out as gay and this is impacting me or what am I supposed to do? Like it's a pulpit position. And I say that because we put on a cape and we don't take that cape off. But especially for people of color, we feel like.

**Chéla Gage:** Because most of the time there's been trials or tribulations that we've had to overcome. And so we know what it's like to overcome these things. And so we just, we feel like, okay, this is just something else I have to do. I'm here to tell you, you are not to be traumatized in the workplace. It is, the workplace is not a place that should give you more than you can take.

**Chéla Gage:** That is not. What your employer should be doing and the cake is like that can't can come off like to say I don't have the capacity. That's the smartest thing to do, because you're really showing the, or you're really showing your employer. I care about the work that I'm doing. I care about the legacy that I'm leaving and I can't do it unless you support me.

**Chéla Gage:** It's hard. It's really hard. And I

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** hate, I, say this to my clients, but I'm just being direct. I'm sorry. And even if you have a fabulous boss, like it just might also just be the organizational culture. Like they're not thinking about you all the time. They have their own stuff to do. So if you're not saying anything and explaining to them, Hey, I'm working on this other stuff.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** what I'm managing is like 5 million of revenue. And you're asking me to do this, I understand that's a priority, but I am not able to fulfill that.

**Chéla Gage:** A hundred percent. Or here's what I'm going to draw to pick this up.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Ooh, that, that sentence structure. Yep. That sentence structure.

**Chéla Gage:** I've had to learn that.

**Chéla Gage:** I've had to learn that one.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Yeah. Oh my gosh. Chayla, you are a wealth of knowledge. And I am just so excited for you in this new role. Thank you. I hope. Thank you. You well, I kind of wanna say, I hope you took a lot of coffee, but then you might have to be point too .

**Chéla Gage:** You drink too much coffee in your heart will go up.

**Chéla Gage:** No, I'm a coffee fisha. Like coffee is my thing. . Oh,

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** okay. I will announce it in this podcast, but my partner and I, we bought an espresso machine. Nice. So we are bad. It's like latte artist right now, like we could put a smiley face. We tried to make a panda and it looked like Joker.

**Chéla Gage:** Oh, that's funny.

**Chéla Gage:** Yeah.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** So Starbucks, do not hire me as a barista.

**Chéla Gage:** Now I want to see the pic. Now I'm going to ask you to take pictures of your art.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I have been displaying my art on my Instagram stories. They're doing well. I will text it to you after this call, but Shayla, as we're talking about psychological safety feedback, what is.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** One takeaway or a question to help our audience because I know we talked about a lot of deep stuff in this episode But all right, you know what? Let me reframe that question if you had to give advice to Your younger self when you're a woman of color like mid level manager or starting their own business.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** What advice would you have for them?

**Chéla Gage:** There's 2 things that immediately come to mind. 1 is you're worth it. Just that's it. you're worth, the time, you are worth the money, you are worth the resources, you are worth the trainings, you are worth the high pot, the high potential agenda. You are worth the sponsorship. You are worth the mentorship.

**Chéla Gage:** You are worth, um, advocating for yourself. You are worth it. That is something that I would say the other is sometimes you have to make your own blueprint. There's one of the things that I didn't see when I was in my middle and I say middle because my middle phase of career I have a son who is 18, a son who is 16 and a son who is nine.

**Chéla Gage:** When my 18 year old was like 10 years old, I didn't like. And my 16 year old was 8 years old, like I was in the throes of elementary school and middle management and I didn't know how I was going to make it work. I didn't see women talk about. I didn't see women talk about having to leave work early or start work late because they had to do a drop off.

**Chéla Gage:** And I, I would tell myself, make the blueprint for you because someone else is watching. And what you do today is going to impact 10 people tomorrow. Ugh.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Shayla. Does that help? Of course it helps. if you fell in love with Chayla, how can people find you? I I'm always on LinkedIn Chayla Gage.

**Chéla Gage:** And then my Instagram is tweet at Chay.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** And I know we talked about it earlier, but I know we had an opportunity where you got to work with me. So for those that are on the fence and possibly interested in working with me, can you share your

**Chéla Gage:** experience? Oh, wow. I had, I, so let me go a little deeper. I met you through one of the networking associations and I signed up and I have a hard time networking in multi group settings. Like I walk into a networking room and I get terrified. I'm like, Oh, no, I don't know what to do. And so I was talking to someone and trying to figure out, okay. What event out of this networking thing am I going to really partake in?

**Chéla Gage:** What is going to be my takeaway? what am I going to learn from this networking event? And they said, Oh, there's an executive coach that comes as a part of this networking event. And I was like, let me go try that out. I walked in the room and just I kid you not. It felt Oh, like just it was just like.

**Chéla Gage:** The heavens opened up, it was just like, this room was meant for me, it was a space that I could be free in, the first thing I think I said to you was, I'm confused about what to do next, and, like, the next three sentences out of your mouth showed me that you saw me, you saw the triggers that I was going through, You saw the microaggression that I recently experienced and you saw me as a woman of color.

**Chéla Gage:** Struggling for my footing and you validated that and. To see me holistically in, 30 minutes that was. I walked away knowing that I'm not crazy and knowing that. There is help, I, there's someone I could reach out to, there's a lifeline and this place exists for me. thank you. Thank you for having this podcast.

**Chéla Gage:** Thank you for being you. Thank you for seeing me. it's helped get me to where I am right now. A hundred percent. Aw,

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Chayla. I'm just so excited for you. Thank you. I said this earlier, I'll say this again, and I know you've accomplished so much in your career, but like I said earlier and so many times to you, the biggest celebration is your 20 years of marriage and your three

**Chéla Gage:** sons.

**Chéla Gage:** It really is. I can't believe we, we did it.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** I know the goal is like with your kids, For them to stay alive, but not only that and I want to share, actually, I want you to share this. I want to end it with this story, but I would love for you to share when you were given this opportunity, when your oldest son had their senior year of high school, can you please share that?

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** It was just, I cried hearing this story, so I'm going to make you all cry now.

**Chéla Gage:** when I took the job at Reformation at the time I was working for an East Coast company in West Coast hours. So I was having to be at Zoom at 4 a. m. in the morning. And Reformation was a West Coast company that allowed me to make an impact to the everyday consumer.

**Chéla Gage:** And so I knew I wanted to take the role, but my son was graduating high school. And this child is the child that went through COVID in ninth grade and 10th grade, and he didn't really have a time to really connect with the school or with students, so he was already feeling disconnected. And so I didn't want to create any more disrupt in his life at all.

**Chéla Gage:** And when I told him, Miles. I have this job opportunity and I just want to let you know that I'll be doing the, I'll be taking the role and eventually we're going to move to Southern California as a family, but I'm going to travel now just for the next year or two until you graduate. And he said, no, mom, no, we do this as a family I'm better when you're around.

**Chéla Gage:** And so that's my son, I'm lucky to be his mom. You did

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** something right. You did something right with raising your kids. cause I know that's like a hard time. I can't imagine being a teenager in COVID years. I don't know how that is, but that senior year is like when all the big things happen.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** They've already, they've established their friendships, prom, like rad night, all that. Yeah.

**Chéla Gage:** And your baby

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** boy. Yeah. Go ahead. say it.

**Chéla Gage:** Mom, we do this as a family.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Yeah. Thank you so much. Please. I will put Taylor's LinkedIn profile in the show notes. You could follow her. Thank you so much for all you do.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Congratulations for impacting another company that has half a million employees. I just want to remind you when you order your Starbucks drink. Think of Chela.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Sorry, Chela's not running for office or anything.

**Chéla Gage:** No, my favorite drink is the white chocolate mocha, so if anybody else likes the white chocolate mocha, then I'm out there with ya.

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** Thank you, Chela.

**Chéla Gage:** Thank you.