

## **Read the Transcript of “The Welcome Wagon” on the Weld Found Podcast**

*Editor’s Note: The following transcript was auto generated and may include minimal errors or typos.*

Tim Coons (TC): You’re listening to Weld Found, a podcast about belonging in an age of social isolation and disconnection. This is episode four, “The Welcome Wagon.” This production is made possible by the Weld Community Foundation, who has the following to say about community. This is the first thing you read on the website. It’s a great message and I wanted to share it with you.

“A true community is more than a place where people live. It is where people experience personal connection and belonging, celebrate heritage and diversity, seek opportunity and knowledge, and lift each other up in times of hardship. Together, let’s strengthen the bonds that make our communities thrive. Spread the good.”

Again, thanks to the foundation for sponsoring this podcast, which is working to strengthen the bonds of this place we call home. Here’s today’s show.

Welcome to Weld Found. This production is made possible by the Weld Community Foundation, who encourages us to spread the good. Weld Found is this podcast about our lone selves, finding groove in our community, becoming part of our community, really belonging to this place where you live. I’m your host Tim Coons. We begin with a question today. What makes someone love their city, their home, the place they live?

Dr. Catherine Laughlin, she’s part of a project called Soul of a Community. She oversaw this large study: 26 different cities over three years, 43,000 people, asking simple questions. What makes people love where they live? And why does it matter? And of the ten areas they studied, three rose to the top. And this was across the board. Richer cities, poor neighborhoods? Three things rose to the top.

What would your guesses be? What do you think are the top three things that make people love their community? Well, here they are. Social offerings (social life); aesthetics (beauty of a place); the number three is openness (how welcoming the town is). These three things are what mattered most to making someone love where they live. Something she calls “community attachment.”

The more people love where they live, the higher the local economic growth of that place. So you get from this sentimental idea, loving a place, to concrete one pretty fast. Loving a place means economic growth. And they showed this in their study. Love of a place leads to these economic outcomes. And, you know, these three things showcase for us what we crave: social interaction.

We want to look around and see the beauty of areas that we’re proud of and hope people feel comfortable in their own skin; that we’re welcomed just as we are. These are top priorities for people. And when this happens in an area, you get results: More job satisfaction. People spend

time in their communities. You're more likely to invite people to where you live. You're not heading on that first plane out of town.

When people visit you, what do you show off about where you live? I take them to places we hang out. The cool and beautiful areas and parks, museums and attractions. Honestly, when it comes to aesthetics, I take them to the murals my wife has painted. And all the while you showcase how welcoming the place is, how the people are cool and kind here.

As I was taking all this in, I thought to myself, this podcast is all about our home, our community belonging. And of those three areas that build community attachment, social life, beauty of a place. I want to focus on the last one today. Openness, welcoming. And so we're exploring this idea of Weld County as a welcoming place, friendly neighbors, people ready to help you and be on the lookout for you.

I know that's been my experience. And from what I'm learning from this study, if I'm not welcoming in my community, it could be costing us money.

So here's where I want to go. I want to challenge myself. I want to head to the most welcoming place that I know of in Weld County, the Immigrant and Refugee Center.

Surprise, right? Here's the thing. I think Welcoming 101 would be like smiling at someone in the cashier line showing a little kindness. Maybe 202 would be how you welcome new neighbors on the block. But the high level stuff, 400-level welcoming, that means seeing the communities who are resettling in our county, who are learning our language, our culture in ways. Reaching out to them, offering help, a neighborly hand, even though they seem so different from us. That can be challenging.

Makes me feel like I'm going back to school. That's welcoming at a big time level, which stretches me. So if I want to learn more about what it means to be welcoming because it matters in helping people love our county and actually impacts our economic growth, too, well, then I'm heading to the IRC. We're calling this episode "The Welcome Wagon," and it's going to happen in two acts.

Act one is titled "Saying Hello." It will be meeting people who work at, volunteer, and use services at the IRC. Our second act is called "The Cool Kids Table." We'll be having a deeper conversation about in groups and out groups. Big thank you to The Burroughs for this intro music. They're a funk soul band out of Greeley, Colorado, and you can keep the party going by heading to [theburroughssoul.com](http://theburroughssoul.com) after this podcast. Get yourself some dancin' music.

### **Act One: Saying Hello**

TC: Our first stop is with Colin Cannon, who took me on a tour of the Immigrant and Refugee Center. He's a friend of mine and he gets passionate about the IRC, and he's so well-spoken. So I love getting him all fired up. Here he is at the doors of the Immigrant and Refugee Center, bringing me into this wonderfully welcoming place where I'm going to get to meet some folks.

The first thing I ask him is how many groups of people are represented here. And then we had a great conversation on how someone from another country is welcomed and finds a home here.

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CC: We have 26 countries represented. And so, but they're also going to be subcultures within that. So for instance, just from Myanmar, Burma, we have Burmese, Rohingya, Karen, Karenni, Mon, and Chin. So that's six cultures from just there. And then in Ethiopia, we have people who are Ethiopian and people who are Oromo, which is a minority group there. And so there's lots of different groups. I don't have an exact count. Lots!

TC: What's your official title here?

CC: My official title is Director of Advocacy and Development. Okay. Yeah. What does that mean? I can't tell you.

TC: I mean, that's kind of like communications, marketing. Yeah, advocacy and development. Feels like you're making connections.

CC: I'm making connections. I get to do all the really fun work. Everything outside of the organization. I also manage our community navigators, and so we can help clients in up to 16 languages with any sort of daily contingent need that arises. So something which might seem seemingly small to us, like, "Let me read your mail to you in your home language," which is actually huge because a lot of people are like, "Oh my gosh, I got information about staying, keeping my Medicaid. I need to know what to do."

CC: And so we'll read it to them and we'll help them go through their steps or we'll find them legal representation. We'll get them a doctor, whatever is needed.

CC: So there are there are tons of nonprofits doing really cool work, and all of them are incredible. I think what makes us unique is just we're serving a population that what we call "the receiving community" has so many questions about, but it's really unclear about like whom should I ask these questions to? What does it look like? I just don't know what that environment is like.

CC: And so coming to our center, we've heard this from a number of people coming on tours for like groups and stuff, they're like, "I've never been in a space like this where there are 26 different languages being spoken around me and I don't know what's happening. And that's a new for me in Greeley, Colorado." And it's really cool.

CC: So this is going to be a very commercial ask at first. I'll get into the weeds. And so our mission is empowering immigrants and refugees, connecting communities, and advocating for successful social integration. Empower, Connect, Advocate. That's the commercial version. What that looks like in practicality is we want to give newcomers to our community—including people who have been here for years, but who just don't speak English—the tools to be a part of this community more fully.

CC: That looks like learning English at this stage, and that looks like getting them connected to a variety of partners in the nonprofit space, in kind of the public sphere with government, or in the private sector, and being like, "Hey, you have talent already here that we're just not tapping into because of the barriers that exist. Maybe we don't know how to communicate with that person. Maybe we're unsure of the cultural differences and like, "What is it like for me to really engage that community? And so it's better if I just kind of stick to traditional routes."

CC: There's such a diversity of cultures here, and we think of Greeley as being homogeneously white, homogeneously conservative, homogeneously one thing. When it's actually so many more

things than that. And so what we're trying to do as an organization is just kind of create space with whatever clout we have so that we can get out of the way and be like, "Didn't you know that this community has been here for generations?" (In the case of our Spanish-speaking community, but also some from just 2009.) And they're new here, and they're deeply invested in the idea of America.

CC: But our national motto is E Pluribus Unum, out of many one. And Greeley calls itself an All-American City. What that looks like, what that can look like for Greeley at its best, I think, is embracing newcomers and being like, "We want you to be a part of this with us. What do you think it should be?" And just like really gathering that input and asking people their experiences and being open to the idea that these people are equal with us.

CC: They are paying taxes just like anyone else. They're going to schools with all of our children. They are seeking jobs in the workforce that they have skills in. So let's be that. Let's be that All-American City. Let's be kind of the embodiment of E Pluribus Unum.

CC: There are so many different stories of how people have found belonging here, and they're different. Truly, they're not only different across culture, but within culture, too, because everyone's story is unique. We do an event every spring called Journey of Hope, where we ask people, "What was home like? Why did you have to leave? And how are you making the best of that here? And what does that look like?"

CC: So kind of intrinsic to that, many people have shared stories of, "The way I hold on to home as I'm integrating into the United States—because I know I can't go back, and so I know I'm going to make this my home and I'm going to make it work—but what I hold on to are those kind of pieces of tangible heritage, like recipes, like a certain way that I do my hair, like my language, like certain religious festivals that I'm going to. So I'm going to get four times a year where I'm going to be able to celebrate this thing, and that's going to be home for me. When every other day out of the year, I'm going to be working a job, learning English, hopefully becoming a citizen one day so I can vote. I'm like, I'm committed to being here in the United States, but I'm going to hold on to this part of home, and I'm going to bring it here and share it with people.

CC: And so at that event, Journey of Hope, we have people present in English, which is a very big feat for them. And so we're trying to do two things at once. We're going to show them, hey, like you just spoke to 200 people in not your first language. Congratulations. That's huge. Also with the community being like, wow, like they did a really big task and they prepared a lot for us, thank you. But also, they get to come to an audience that doesn't know about their culture and be like, "This was home and I want to share this with you. And so here are pictures of this. Here's what that looked like." And so it starts a conversation.

CC: So belonging looks like, has looked for so many people like, sharing. Many of them will open restaurants or they'll open up grocery stores in the area. Our women's empowerment group does crafts together where they're going to they're going to start selling those crafts, being like, "Back home we made little dolls that were made out of these materials," and they want to sell these dolls so that little children can play with them.

CC: And it's a way of bringing that home here and like making this feel more like home with them. Other people, home for them has looked like just being reunited with their family. During refugee resettlement, not all families get resettled at the same time. Sometimes there's many years difference and the person who's here first will never feel like they're at home until their

family gets here (completely reasonably), and you can see a shift happen when their spouse arrives, when their children arrive, and it's like finally they're ready to get started.

CC: Being like, "I've prepared all these things for you. I've worked so many shifts, I've saved up our money. I have a house for us, and you're here now. Now let's start the project of home." Because until then it's been the project of preparing a home, preparing a house, and then the spouse arrives and it becomes home again.

CC: There's this there's one of our students from Ethiopia. She described this becoming home through learning more about our history and like understanding that it was going to be her history now. She was like, "At school, I learned all about the history about Christopher Columbus. And so when I came to the United States and the plane landed at the airport, I didn't know what the announcers were saying on the plane because I don't speak English. But I saw the flag outside of the window and I felt like Christopher Columbus discovering a new world. This world was green. This world had paved roads."

CC: This world had all these other things that she didn't have. And so she started learning this history and starting to make it her history and being like, "I can't wait to see how I can be someone in America."

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TC: Colin brought me through the main room in the IRC, and there were various tables set up, all talking in different languages, working on all sorts of things. Like several groups were working in citizenship tests, and I could hear tutors asking things like, who was the first president, and what ocean is on the west coast? With my recorder in hand, Colin started introducing me to people in the hall, to people like this older man who was walking with the children's bike through the crowd.

CC (in the background): He wants to ask people, what is home mean to you? What does community feel like? You want to just say a couple answers and be on the podcast with us?

IRC visitor: Community? Now we are here. We come from every country, everywhere, and we are connected. We come study, everything in English. The only thing, for example, I am zero. Okay, speaking zero. English zero. Nothing. I come here. Now, I speak English like this. Yes. And the communities care for us, everything. They do everything for us. Even look for the children. They give this way. Yes. Not easy, right? Yeah. Anything.

TC: What was your name?

IRC Visitor: [...]

TC: And where are you from?

IRC Visitor: Eritrea. East Africa.

TC: Can you say your name, or hello, in your own language. What is your original first language?

IRC Visitor: [speaking in another language, then] I say: good for me America. Thank you very much, America.

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TC: Colin then gathered some students who were in a high-level English class for me to talk with, and we headed into a computer lab. At a certain point, I asked if each of them could say hello and welcome in their original languages.

*[multiple students speak in multiple languages]*

TC: Represented in this small group are the languages Karenni, Swahili, Spanish, French, and Guatemalan. As this podcast is about community, I asked the students questions like, "What does home mean to you? Or when have you felt truly welcomed here? What challenges have you faced?" We're going to take a moment and listen to their wide-ranging answers and pieces of their story.

Student 1: My name is Claudia Hernandez. I am from Mexico. Home means, like, family. The stability, security. When we come to this country, I take my daughter with me. And she was six years old, when I first come here. Today, well, actually she has 21 years. And I like that she have many opportunities for a story, for works, for many things.

Student 2: I'm Rosalie [...] I'm from the Congo. I was born in the Congo. And when I was five, we moved to Kigali. And then at 15, I moved here, but in Arvada, and then here. So the concept of home for me is a little bit more different, I think. Home for me has always been the people around me, my brothers, my siblings. We've stayed really close. And so even though we're not all in like one location, they still feel like home. My foster family is in Philadelphia. I've never lived in Philadelphia once, but every time I go to visit, I feel like home simply because I'm with the people I love and care about. At first, Greeley was a little hard because again, it didn't feel like home because I didn't know anybody. It was more like school, school, school. And then but as I stayed here longer, I got to meet people. And it's funny now, like when I travel, if I come back in Colorado and I'm like, in Denver, I'm like, I'm not, I'm not home. I need to be like, I need to go back to Greeley. Then I'm like, okay, now I am home. And so just the relationship, the connections that I've made, have kind of created that home feeling for me. And so it's not so much about the place, per se. For me, it's the people around me.

Student 3: My name is Soraya, so I am from Mexico, and for me, home is similar like the place you are going and build your home. But there's not really a place. Is more like relationships, being involved with your community. I also feel safe, but at the same times I feel the opportunity to grow. I was dance, professional dancer for a long time and just something happened to change my life. And now I'm dancing only for... When you feel not really the occasion to service... it is like you really do from heart. And this is helping. So for some reason. And the way I'm doing dance now, nonprofessional way, but from heart and express yourself, and doing something for your community. This is I am dancing now.

Student 4: My name is Clause [...] and I come from West Africa. I be here eight months ago. So according to me a home is a safe place I decided to live. When we decide to live, So somewhere I think you know, you are obliged to to like everybody around. This place is a place where you decide to work. Where you decide to go to school. Where you decide to do everything. So I think if you like this home in your heart, I think you can't decide to leave this

home. You decide to live forever. So and this place, Greeley, I think United States that is this is my home. I decide to live here forever, yeah.

Student 5 / Translator: Victor [speaking in another language, translator says] He says that it's difficult for him to say that that this place, right now where he's at, is his home because it's just him and his father, not his complete family, that he would like to be around him. So it's difficult for us to categorize what is home for him right now is because he doesn't have what he would consider like his family to be here with him.

Student 6: So my name is Pune and I was born in Thailand. So I thought, while I was in Thailand, I thought that was home. But I think now that I'm here, I think Greeley is my home. It isn't really like a place or like a big house or small house, it doesn't really matter to me. But as long as I'm with my family and that I feel like home and also I can't like I'm free here. And like I don't have to be worried and like, be scared or like, should I like, am I'm allowed to do this or to do ... [tearing up] Sorry ... Now that I'm here I don't have to worry about like when will, people will come and, like, hurt us or tear out family part. That's what I ... that's why I said I'm free. Not just me, but my family as well. Because back where I was born, we have to live where they put us. We have to eat what they give us. I mean, I'm grateful for that, and I'll never forget where I came from, but yes, Greeley is my home. It gives me, like I feel safe here and with my family. I don't have to worry. As long as we're together, it's home to me.

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TC: Pune's family is from Burma, but they fled to a difficult refugee camp where she grew up in Thailand before coming to the U.S. When I hear her story, and really all these stories: Victor, who misses his family; or Soraya, who used to be a professional dancer and now dances from the heart; or Claudia, who is looking for a better future for her daughter; All these stories, I'm reminded of my favorite quote. Because as these folks are sharing about how they see home and the challenges they faced, I began to feel more empathetic and understanding towards them, and I hope that makes sense.

My favorite quote is, "Always be kind because everyone you meet is going through a great battle." Let me say that again. Always be kind because everyone you meet is going through a great battle. I memorized this quote years ago because (and I'm being honest here) I can be an unkind and unwelcoming person.

There are times I'm annoyed by the slow cashier, or livid at the driver who's cut me off, or frustrated with someone who doesn't speak my language well.

And then I get a chance to hear their story, hardships, dreams, challenges, and I become a little less self-centered for a brief moment. And I become a little more empathetic. And I realize they're going through things that perhaps are harder than I can possibly imagine. And it brings me to a place, at least for a moment, of kindness and understanding. And where I was feeling disconnected, I now feel a little bit more connected, and I find myself moving from unwelcoming to welcoming.

That concludes our first act for this episode "Saying Hello." I thought, you know, we could end this show here, but I really feel like we should address this bigger topic, this idea of kindness and bias, and in groups and out groups, the way we feel towards others who aren't like us and how it's so hard to be welcoming on this front because and let me further confess here: Not only

can I be an unkind and unwelcoming person, I'm also excellent at judging people. I'm so good at it.

When I'm meeting someone new, I'm immediately wondering if they share the same values as me. Do they vote the same way I do? Will they think I'm weird with how much I like Harry Potter? If they don't like my favorite band, could we have to be close friends? These these judgments play in my head whenever I meet someone new.

And so heading to act two, titled "The Cool Kids Table," it's going to be all about in groups and out groups.

### **Act Two: The Cool Kids Table**

TC: I had a great conversation with Dr. Josh Packard about this subject. He was featured in episode one. He's a professor of sociology at the University of Northern Colorado, and he had some great insights into this.

DJP: There's a thing that happens with in groups and out groups. So are in groups of people who are like us, like you and I are friends. And so if you do something that maybe isn't the greatest thing on earth, I'm like, Oh, Tim just made a mistake. It's not a problem. Like, he isn't a bad person. It was just like a idiosyncratic, like one-off thing, right?

DJP: And that's what groups do for their own members. They tend to write those things off as like, Oh, it's one bad apple, or it was just a youthful indiscretion or something like that. But when similar things are done, exact same things, when they're committed, when those acts are done and committed by outgroup members, now that behavior is transferred to the entire outgroup.

DJP: So we tend to think like that's the way all of those people behave. So we've got really good research about this for a long period of time, and that is the basis of stereotypes. So, you know, if we especially then we start looking like then confirmation bias comes in, we start looking for more of them to, that reinforces that stereotype, but we lose the ability to see nuance in our outgroup.

DJP: And it's not that it's not so much that we can overcome that by looking for nuance in out groups. The way you overcome it is by bringing your in group and your out group closer together, so that there's not so much of a division between those things.

DJP: It's not like the goal there is ... And this is why I say ... The goal isn't to expand your in group to the point that it encompasses the outgroup. Because the fact of the matter is that like your life and a refugee's life are never going to be the same. in most... it's just not true. It doesn't. But the more I can understand that, the more we close that gap, the less likely I am to bring my biases and stereotypes to interpret the kinds of behaviors that are going on.

DJP: And here's the thing: The less likely they are to do it to me. Because as much as that's going on from my in group to my out groups, it's also going on from all of those out groups to me. And it doesn't benefit anybody in that situation. And in fact, it's a real missed opportunity. So I think it can be trite and cliché to say things that like, oh, well, diversity enriches our life. (And people are like, "My life is already enriched!") but you have no idea.

DJP: Like, there are there are new ways of thinking that can lead to innovation, that I know that I've benefited from having the students in my classrooms. Like they process information because they have had different life experiences in a much different way. And those kinds of

things have been unbelievably enriching, not just for me, but for the students that are around me hearing that, too.

TC, in the background: I mean, and to go super selfish with it. You know, you could also say like it's this diversity, it's this figuring out these these bridge relationships, it's the out group and in group. All of a sudden, my personal happiness goes up.

DJP: It's 100, 100% because you're not like ... So there's this really interesting concept called the Social Determinants of Health, or what they call The Causes of the Causes. The argument here is that, like heart disease is not the leading killer of people, or obesity. It's actually the fact that, you know, you don't feel safe in your neighborhood, so you won't get out and walk around the block a few times and, you know, and reduce your weight and you know, increase your heart health. That you live a really stressful life because you work three jobs, and so you're taking narcotics or some other drugs to help you stay awake so you can get through this. These are the causes of the causes, right?

DJP: That it's not just this notion that you become happier. You also become healthier when you know what's going on. So when we couple all that stereotyping in group/out group, what that research shows, it's super fascinating, that the more that we know—they've done this neighborhood-based research—the more that you know your neighbors now you actually interpret that reality differently.

DJP: So you don't see like somebody working on a car in their front yard and bikes all over the place as a sign of disorder. Right? Like or somebody cleaning up graffiti as a sign of disorder. You see that as like, "Oh, these are really engaged neighbors who are helping each other and their kids are playing." That's a wholly different interpretation of the exact same set of events. And when when you have an interpretation of your city as something that you know and you understand and you don't see it as disorder, but in fact, you see the stories behind those things, you feel more in control of your life, and when you feel more in control of your life, you are actually happier and you're healthier.

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TC: That was Dr. Josh Packard, sociology professor at UNC. Another segment to add here: A writer from Weld County named Rob Walker wrote this opinion piece in the Greeley Tribune earlier this year. And when I read it, I was wondering why in the world is this about, and why is it an editorial section of our paper? But then I realized what he was doing.

The piece is a satire on how quickly we can vilify other people. I read it and I thought to myself, "Oh, I so do that. What an interesting and creative way of shining a light on my unwelcoming behavior." So I've asked Rob to read his editorial here, and I'm including it for these reasons. It challenges the way we have the habit of turning people we don't understand into monsters, but also friends, this just makes great radio. We are close to Halloween and I asked a local composer named Daniel Wakefield (and he scored a couple scary movies) he created the background track for this as well. Here's Rob Walker:

RW: I've been a proud Greeley resident for over 20 years. It is indeed the kind of place you dream of raising a family. And part of raising a family means keeping them safe from the kinds of outsiders that would infiltrate our city, prey on our citizens, and ultimately destroy our way of life. Of course, I'm talking about vampires.

RW: I know it's not politically correct to say this, but I do not want to live in a place where I might be attacked by some blood-crazed monster while on my way to Target. I know everyone in town agrees with this sentiment, but they might be afraid to speak up for fear of seeming intolerant, ill informed or poisoned by fringe media.

RW: By now, some of you are probably saying this all sounds crazy. You're obviously using a made up horror story to strike fear into the hearts of citizens for politically motivated gain. To this cynical statement, I ask: Do you want vampires coming to take your jobs? Now that I think about it, then they'll probably only take the night shifts. But that's still a huge bite out of our local economy.

RW: Before you call me intolerant, I feel the same about werewolves, Frankenstein's creatures, gilled people, opera phantoms, or any of the other members of Universal's monster pantheon. No doubt waiting for their chance to infiltrate and destroy our fine city. Which is precisely why we need to come together to, beat back the probably actual threat of supernatural hell-beings pounding at our metaphorical and maybe even real doors.

RW: So I say: creatures of the night, beware. Those of us human citizens will not stand for your desire to dilute our American blood. Nor will we tolerate you drinking it to satiate your supernatural cravings. This is our America.

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TC: Again, we hear from Colin Cannon.

CC: I don't think that it should be lost, that the term often used still in legal parlance about individuals is "alien." And there's something actually it's just pretty overtly "other" to call someone. Like they're an illegal alien or they are an unregistered alien, which like there's a whole history as to why that term is used. But like in terms of seeing someone as human, there is literally no better juxtaposition than to say that they are "alien."

CC: It's even further than foreign. It's that they're alien. They are unrelatable, they are unknown. They can never be known. And if they're here, it's suspect. Because that's just like the connotation of the word alien. There's like ... Unless you're in Roswell, maybe there's a positive connotation ... But otherwise it's just assumed to be this unknown. And there's no possible way you could connect with them. They just truly don't have any sort of linkage to here.

CC: And that's still the legal jargon for individuals without document documentation or someone going through that process is they're in, they're becoming a registered alien and now they're becoming a legal permanent resident. And suddenly when they get that designation, "Oh, then, gosh, we can relate to you."

CC: And so it's it's even it's codified that there's this belief of the "other" that's existing there. So yeah, so, "vampire" I think is actually a really appropriate medium to kind of expose that distinction of being like unrelatable. And yet fictitious! And as far as we know, aliens do. Like fictitious, but like, this is a person that we're talking about who is here.

CC: I was doing a presentation actually just last week. Part of my role is regularly giving Refugee 101 or Immigrant 101 presentations to universities, to community groups, to anyone who's interested. And I've had tons of experience like this one (I'm thinking of last week just because it was the most recent). Often I'll be met with really welcoming audiences, but

occasionally there are people who, and it's their right to feel this way, will say, "Hey, thanks for coming to present. I completely disagree and here's why."

CC: Occasionally, it's more vitriolic towards just like, it's no "thank you for coming," which is fine. They don't need to thank me. It'll be, "I just don't think that we should have Muslims here" as a response. And so the best thing that we can do as an organization, when we're faced with that being the response to ... after, we've just kind of contextualize all of this information about how resettlement works, what is the U.S.' set of obligations to people around the world that we've signed treaties for and we've said, "Hey, we believe in global leadership on these issues," and then like to contextualize all that for 45 minutes to an hour and then to be like, "I just don't think Muslims should be here."

CC: The best thing you can do in that situation is posture yourself as an organization, at least in my mind, as hearing that person and giving them space to express their right of why they feel that way and saying, "I'm sorry that's been your experience. I think that there's a lot to be learned in getting to know people. And so what we would like to do is rather than talk about Muslims broadly, because it's hard to speak generally about one plus billion people on the planet, why don't you come and get to know specific people whom we're working with?"

CC: "And it's been 100% of the experience I've had that I've had really positive interactions and there hasn't been anything intrinsic to their faith that's been cutting off a relationship that they're having with me, making me feel "other" in my own home or anything that would kind of disrupt a relationship or for them integrating well. I've never had that experience and I literally surround myself with on a daily. I'm sorry, that has not been your experience, though. I would ask that you give it a second shot."

CC: There are plenty of Christians who rub us the wrong way. There are plenty of Jewish folks who are always around. Plenty of Buddhist folks who rub us the wrong way. People rubbing us the wrong way is not intrinsic to their faith. It might be kind of intrinsic to their personality, but like give other people a chance to not speak for their whole group. Let everyone have multiple stories that make them up.

CC: There are certain communities we have allowed to have multiple stories written about them. White Americans. No one assumes I speak for all white Americans because there are so many other stories that white Americans get to have all the time. And yet there's really only one story we allow Muslims, men or women, to have in our country. And it's a story of suspicion. It's a story of danger. And that's not their story. That's not representative at all of anyone.

CC: Sure, that's been some story, but that's been stories of every group. And so what we try to do in those situations where that is the response is allow that person's space to feel heard, encourage them to meet others and offer to be the medium to facilitate that and to say, "If you have a bad experience when you're with us, like we're going to make sure that we make it up to you and we're going to make sure that doesn't happen because we're committed to integration happening."

CC: And that's going to require both parties coming into a space that they feel comfortable and feeling like it belongs to them, if only they could be authentically themselves. And I think in in having a posture of you should get to know someone. And then when they actually take that

step, it's something that creates dissonance in that held belief of like, my experience is not perfectly informed. My experience is: I do not have a monopoly on the wisdom of the world. I have one experience and if I continue to diversify that set of experiences, it's very difficult to the point you made to be like, "Oh yeah. So I happened to meet like 15 great Somali people, but that one bad guy..." Suddenly that guy doesn't represent them.

CC: Suddenly there are different stories and I can relate to that. And that makes for a good community, that makes for people who who see each other as having a common interest in making Northern Colorado a home for everyone who's here.

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TC: And that does make for a good community. This closes act two, "The Cool Kids' Table." That wraps up our show. Huge thank you today to Colin Cannon and the Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado for showing us what it means to be a great community and offering a space to ask questions, get to know people, and be on our own journeys of becoming a more welcoming and more diverse place to live.

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