

H: Hi, my name is Howard Yoon; I'm a literary agent at the Gail Ross literary agency in Washington D.C. I'm here with one of our clients, Laura Liswood, who is the author of The Loudest Duck. She is Senior advisor at Goldman Sachs, and Secretary General of the Council of Women World Leaders at the Aspen Institute. Thanks for being here Laura.

LL: Thank you Howard.

H: So Laura, I think a lot of people will ask you as you go on your book tour and your talks, what is the loudest duck? What does that mean?

LL: Well, a lot of people think diversity is sort of picking out two of each, its what I call the Noah's ark theory of diversity, and that really is only the first step, because as I say in the book, even when you have that Noah's ark of two of each kind, in the ark, the giraffe is probably looking at the Zebra, and saying boy you're kind of funny looking, and that has in impact in the organization. And the lot of stock itself comes from this whole idea and concept of what I call what "Grandma taught us", and by Grandma, I mean all of those ways we learned about who we are and who others are. And even though we are all professional, we're all professional in the work place, as I put it, we all bring Grandma to work with us.

H: So, what does Grandma teach you and how does that differ when you go from culture to culture or different groups, dominant groups and non-dominant groups and different areas?

LL: The loudest duck actually comes from the notion that Grandma might have taught lets say American men for example, that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, which means of course if you speak up you get what you want, but if you go to Japan, Grandma may well have taught you the nail that sticks out gets hit on the head, which of course is just the opposite of the squeaky wheel, and then when you travel along to China Grandma may well have taught you the loudest duck gets shot, which is very much the opposite of the squeaky wheel, and then of course many women in the world have been taught by Grandma if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. That's not the problem of diversity, the problem in diversity is that you have this very diverse organization, multicultural, its global, whatever, and you're in a meeting, Howard you're in the meeting, and you're running this meeting, and sitting at your table is part of your team is a wheel, a duck, a nail, and a nice, the problem with that is that generally speaking that means that the only person talking is the wheel.

H: One of the points in your book is that the distinction between dominant and non-dominant, and the fact that we're not just talking about people from China or people from Japan or people from the U.S., we're talking about different power structures different dynamics, so it could be male versus female, Chinese versus Japanese. Can you elaborate a little more about which groups you're talking about, who's in that arc?

LL: Absolutely. We're not just talking about gender or race or nationality, which are some of the typical things people think about when they are thinking about diversity, but you know we're talking about the golfer and the non-golfer, we're talking about the tall person or the short person, we're talking about what school you went to versus what school I went to. Now in the book I say that doesn't mean all of you out there need to learn to play golf, what's is about is the manager being a little more conscience in

a diverse organization that they have to be aware they could be un-leveling the playing field for some people, and not for others, suddenly advantaging some, suddenly disadvantaging others.

H: Laura you have a great section in here on this parable that you tell it's about an elephant and a mouse, and it really helps to encapsulate, I mean I think you've got the Noah's ark, you've got what Grandma taught you, you have these great handles for understanding these issues of diversity. Can you tell us a little bit about this parable, because it's one of my favorite parts in the book?

LL: The elephant and the mouse concept is if basically you are the elephant in the room, large elephant in the room, what do you actually need to know about the mouse in the room, not much, if you're the mouse in the room, this little thing, what do you actually need to know about the elephant? Pretty much everything. And so, what happens is, in organizations, is that the dominant group may well not have any idea what's happening with the non-dominant groups, the mouse, if you will, but the non-dominant groups know everything about the dominant groups, so its also means that the dominant groups have a tendency to think "well this organization is a meritocracy. Why? Because I'm at the top of this organization", and no one at the top of an organization says, well the reason I got to the top leadership of this organization is that I was suddenly advantaged.

H: Can you talk a little bit about the take away and the tools that you offer?

LL: I think it's very important for people to get really good critical feedback, but we also know in a diverse workplace that a person who's not like you may not get the same kind of feedback as a person who's like you. Often, for example, men may be worried women are going to cry when they get critical feedback, or women are worried that men might get angry if they get critical feedback, so one of things that's really important is to make sure that you get this and that you heard correctly. I also think it's a very good idea for people to, every couple of months, spend some time with their manager and letting them know what they think they're doing well, and the manager can tell them maybe the three things they might want to work on.

H: Who should be reading this book and who do you think your audience is?

LL: This book really is, I think, for both people who are in the leadership roles and who want to see diversity succeed, who want to see that we're going to get the best out of everyone, and its also for the individual who has a career, who wants to get ahead in an organization, who may be from the non-dominant group and may be from the dominant group, who needs to figure out how to best have the most tools in their own tool box, because the people who are going to succeed are the people who have the most tools in their own tool box.

H: We have this saying in publishing that you want a book that needs to read not nice to read, and I think Laura you've done that, this is an absolute need to read book, especially in this moment in time, politically, with a global business, really in any category it's a business book but applies to so many other aspects of our lives. Maybe you can tell us why we really need to read this book now.

LL: The Loudest Duck gives us a really concrete way of looking at the world, and a framework for us to understand some of the dynamics that are going on, and hopefully to make us all more comfortable with some of those dynamics that are going on and for each one of us in this very diverse world to succeed.