Standing Up Strong Julie Dellecave

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**SPEAKERS**

Dr. Neal Mayerson, Julie Dellecave, McKenzie Williams, Jackie Congedo

**Jackie Congedo** 00:03

These are your superpowers, positive character strengths. You have them, all of them, some more than others,

**Dr. Neal Mayerson** 00:11

What we are best suited to do in our lives connects with who we are and our character strengths

**Jackie Congedo** 00:19

Standing up strong, activating your superpowers is how you can change the world, and you're pioneering the future of humanity. Let's start right now.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:29

I'm Jackie Congedo, and on this episode, you're going to meet Julie Dellecave. Julie teaches sixth grade here in Cincinnati at Winton Hills Academy, and brought her class to the Holocaust & Humanity Center for a tour that specifically focused on the stories of upstanders. And of course, in the museum, we emphasize that upstanders are people who use their character strengths to stand up for themselves and others in the face of injustice. What makes Julie's class special is how her students took the information from that tour and actually created their own books to share what they learned.

**Jackie Congedo** 01:04

It is so amazing to be with all of you this morning to hear about your incredible work and these beautiful books that you've put together. I want to introduce Julie Dellecave, Ms Dellecave, who is a sixth grade teacher at Winton Hills, and you guys are coming to us live from Winton Hills, right from your classroom?

**Julie Dellecave** 01:27

Yes.

**Jackie Congedo** 01:28

So Ms Dellecave, can you just tell me a little bit first about how you got introduced to the Holocaust and Humanity Center and where this idea came from?

**Julie Dellecave** 01:40

Well, we've been talking a lot in class about character strengths and care in books and novels we've been reading in class, and we were presented, actually, with the opportunity from one of your volunteers at the center

**Jackie Congedo** 01:55

Barbara McCoucha

**Julie Dellecave** 01:57

yes, and she used to work here at the school, and her mother actually had was part of the history of the Holocaust when she was a young girl, and she came and spoke to the class about her mother's experience. And we just kind of kept rolling with it. We read a little bit of Number the Stars. We had a lot of class discussions about it, and then we actually, we eventually came to the actual museum. We did actually watch a couple clips from or do we watch the whole movie? Boy the Striped Pajamas, just to make sure they had a background of the history of it, but we used it as a platform to teach character strengths and what it means to have integrity, to do the right thing with just little things in your life every day, to stand up when you see something that's wrong, and being able to go home and sleep that night knowing that you've been a good person, and that if we all just try in those little ways to be good, decent people, it's going to make the whole world a better place, if we can all just that little bit every day of just doing our part to make things better for other people.

**Jackie Congedo** 03:18

And that's, that's the ripple effect, is what we call it. You know, here it's, it's this idea that you do your one part, and then there's ripples that go out from there. And who knows who's been inspired by your one part to do their part, right? And so I'm thinking about how much character strength is on this screen right now. And I'm sure there's a lot of diverse character strengths. But I want to talk a little bit with you guys, Mackenzie, Stefan, Rayvon, Javiana and Lamia, all sixth graders in your class. Ms, Dellecave, and I want to hear from you guys. What was this like? I mean, you all were introduced to this history. Had you heard about the Holocaust before? Did you? Did you know about it before you started talking about it with Miss Dellecave?

**Julie Dellecave** 04:10

No, no, no, no.

**Jackie Congedo** 04:12

And I mean, when you came to the Center for your field trip, and as you're reading and sort of learning more about it, what, what struck you? I mean, what, what affected you as you were learning about the history and this idea of being an upstander,

04:27

I saw, like, a lot of tragic things that happened in the Holocaust, about with the Jew, Jew, Jewish and stuff, and what happened when they went to that camp. It was just like, very tragic, and it just made me sad and everything. And it was so like heart feeling. So I just like it was, like, really touching to me. So I was really interested in learning more about history and Holocaust,

**Jackie Congedo** 04:54

yeah, and clearly, you took all of these lessons from it, because you all. Made this these beautiful, powerful books from your experience at the center, from learning about what it is to be an upstander, who some Could somebody tell me what it is to be an upstander? I'm just wondering. I didn't tell you there's gonna be a pop quiz, but I just want to see if anybody knows.

05:15

Well, I think upstander is as someone who stands up for anyone or stands up for things that is the right thing to do.

**Jackie Congedo** 05:23

You got it. You got it. So tell me about this idea to make these books. What do you think about that project? I mean, what, what? How did you guys like being involved with building these books? And tell me a little bit about more about how that went, how that came to be.

05:41

I felt like when, when we wrote the book, and when she asked us, who wants to write it, when we were at the Holocaust Museum, I was like, real sad, and I felt like someone would have to speak up, speak their mind about what they thought about the Holocaust and what happened, and when we got the opportunity to do the book, I was really excited, because I felt like it was our time to speak about what we felt happened in the Holocaust.

**Jackie Congedo** 06:10

Wow. And you know the idea that this isn't, this is history, right? This is something that happened back then. But what your books talk about is what we can do today, what's happening right now, and how we treat each other. And I want to talk a little bit more about the book, so there's two of them, and I have read and watched because you all did not just you didn't just write them. You actually narrated them and illustrated them. And they're so beautiful. So one is about my kind

06:41

one night, as I lay awake in bed, I was thinking about how different I am from everyone else. All my family and friends think differently than me. They also like things that I don't. We don't always get along. We also look different. I wanted to find people that are just like me. I wanted to find my kind, and I

**Jackie Congedo** 07:06

think it's the folks in the back row who wrote my kind and worked on that, Mackenzie, Stefan, and Rayvon. Can you guys tell me a little bit about "My Kind" and how you came up with this idea for this book, and what it's about.

**McKenzie Williams** 07:20

The book is really about, about Tom going around the world trying to find his kind, although at the end of the book he realized to say, his kind is all around. Everybody's like you in some sort of way, and all specially,

**Jackie Congedo** 07:36

wow. And for folks who are listening and watching, who have not read or watched these books. We are showing some clips of them, but you can see the whole thing in the links in the show notes. So want to direct you there to watch them. They are so powerful. So yeah, I watched this, and it's this. It's this, you know, as you so beautifully said, it's this young boy who's looking for someone like him, and he doesn't realize that actually there are people all around who are kind good, people who look like him inside, and that, you know, we can all, we can all be that force for good. We can all be those upstanders if we band together and we see ourselves in each other. I'm wondering what, when you think about that story and the compassion you know that that you use to tell that story. How does that story relate to, sort of, your life and your world, and how you you think about and feel about what we should all do to treat each other?

**McKenzie Williams** 08:33

Yeah, I feel like that would it the book, how it kind of relates to me, is kind of like, sometimes I feel like I'm the only person who's like, at school, like thinking like, oh, nobody's nobody's gonna like, like me, like that. Nobody's gonna think, Oh, she's kind of cool, whatever. But it doesn't really matter. The only thing that matters is you being you and you are you. Everything about you makes you special, and how you are you

**Jackie Congedo** 09:03

Wow. Yeah, you beautifully. Said you got to have a good, strong sense of who you are, and you got to be able to, we talk about that a lot. I have a three year old, and she talks about how you got to give yourself a hug sometimes, you know, you got to, you got to take care of you. That's great. And it is in this book, Mackenzie, anything you want to share about sort of your your character strengths.

**McKenzie Williams** 09:24

What I think about character strength is just a step to everybody as who they are, because somebody may like, seem weird to somebody, but in reality, they're just misunderstood. Because you may just go into somebody you think, Oh, they're just a weirdo, but it's deep inside they could be a good person that one day you'll see on the news, or just be a celebrity or something, and you'll just be like, Oh, they weren't a weirdo after all. Because you just have to actually look at somebody and not just glance at them and judge them about it. You have to know. Not to judge the book by his cover, you have to actually go in depth to their into their character, into their heart. And you have to think, oh, maybe they're not a weirdo. Maybe they're just somebody who's misunderstood. And just think, oh, maybe I was wrong. Maybe I need to look deep inside of a person next time, instead of just glancing them and judging them

**Jackie Congedo** 09:53

all right. Well, I'm Mackenzie for President 2024 I think because she's got it down, she knows the secret sauce to how to treat people with the right humanity and to see the humanity in people. That's awesome. Let's move to the front row and talk a little bit about this other book. The second book is called "Humans."

10:36

Human Oh, my name is human. I was created by a mother and father and self love life.

10:50

My soul was born from all that is good, but also all that is bad. Let me explain.

**Jackie Congedo** 10:59

Jai'Vionna or LaMia. Do either of you want to tell me a little bit about what that book is about and how you thought to do this one when

11:05

I wrote this book, when I first wrote this book, it was about humanity. We titled The book humanity for a reason, because we think that it doesn't matter what your race is. It doesn't matter like, like deep inside, everybody has a heart. Everybody has a kind heart. Everybody has some peace in their heart, like we all matter

**Jackie Congedo** 11:28

beautifully, beautifully said, and I'm thinking about, in this book, The main character is just, it's just a human, right, who doesn't have a name, who's talking about how people can be really mean to each other, but really, if we're, we are aware of what you just said, which is that we all are connected in our humanity. We're all the same inside, and we all have something to add, then we can see that humanity in each other. And we can, we can stand up for what's right, and we can, we can have a more cohesive and peaceful world. Anything else that anybody else wants to add about writing these amazing books that are going to inspire everybody who reads them? Yes.

12:12

Okay, so when Ms Dellecave like I asked like LaMia said, I felt really happy, because when we were at the Holocaust Museum, all the tragic events that happened, and us being able to, like, get to research that get to learn about that, was a really great experience, because not all people get to learn about that and get to write about it at that. So it was, like, a really amazing event and stuff like it was really sad at the same time, though, because we had to write about humanity like we had to write about Holocaust, made us remember, and our books made us really remember who we are deep down inside, we're not really bad people. We all have a soft spot for something, and we all could find peace deep down in our hearts,

**Jackie Congedo** 13:02

oh my gosh. Well, Miss Dellecave, now I know why you love your job so much, because you get to be surrounded with these amazing upstanders all the time who are so prophetic. I mean, did you write these scripts for them? Because it feels like they are just it's incredible. You're doing amazing work. All of you. Miss Dellecave, Before we wrap up, can you tell me just a little bit more about what you've seen in your students as a result of sort of this work with character strengths, learning the history, you know? How do they absorb it and and, you know, we talk a lot in this podcast about the science of strengths and how it can really help us in our day to day lives. Maybe talk a little bit about that in terms of how you've seen it impact your kids day to day.

**Julie Dellecave** 13:02

My whole overall goal of this, there was a saying, I think it was a person named Marcus Garvey, who had there was a famous quote of his man without knowledge of his past is like a tree without roots, and the Holocaust and other horrific events in history. For Americans, that is a part of all of our history, even though it's something that may have just happened to one group of certain group of people, it affects all of us as Americans and citizens of the world, that it's important that we know this history so that we can understand what happened, define why, even though it's hard to understand the concept of how some of these horrible things have happened, but we can look at it and understand that we can't let this kind of stuff happen again, and that's why we need to be upstanders and not bystanders, and sit stand by. We talked about this when we talk about bullying as well, that you can't just be a bystander. If you're scared to jump in and say, Hey, that's not right, then go, at least go tell somebody who is capable of standing up and saying, Hey, that's not right. You have to stop this. We put a stop to this kind of really cruel cruelty that goes on in our world and misunderstanding others and this lack of compassion, I think, toward others. So these kids are doing a great job. So it's from the world's going to be a better place. The world's a better place because they're

**Jackie Congedo** 15:32

no doubt, no doubt. McKenzie, you have... you got your hand up.

**McKenzie Williams** 15:37

I just want to ask them to how humanity is all misunderstood. They're like our neighborhood, Winton Terrace, is misunderstood because of all the violence that happens out here when it's like, some people aren't that bad out here, like some people are just trying to survive right here, but people give up throwing bad names on on, like, where we live, when it's really that they need to, like, stop and just think, like, oh, maybe there's some people who maybe feel upset that their neighborhood is being misunderstood like how blacks were separated from whites when all the black people wanted was just to feel like they were united with the white people. No, we all pretty much the same person, kind of, we're all, like different in our own ways. And now we should go just change our thinking, change our how we look at some people, like somebody who've been misunderstood their own words, and really to change for the better.

**Jackie Congedo** 16:34

That's a lot of wisdom. That is a lot of wisdom right there. And I think actually, Mackenzie, that probably your superpower, your superhero strengths that you have, of empathy, of love, of kindness, I bet you that was forged from from your experiences in the world, right? You know, growing up where you grew up, and seeing what you see, what you saw, and watching how people would talk about where you came from, I think that that instilled in you a drive to make sure that you know things are better and that people aren't so misunderstood. And I can see that and how you how you think about you know what we need to do better. I think I have an idea for why you all why you don't have bullying in that classroom, and it's because you've got an amazing group of upstanders, including your teacher, who are who are leading the way for how to treat each other, yourselves and other people. So thank you so much, Mrs. Dellecave, your amazing sixth graders who are changing the world there in wit hills and Mackenzie, Stefan, Rayvon, Jianna, Lamia, my day is so much better because I got to spend it with you. So keep doing what you're doing. Everybody who's listening needs to watch these books. They are phenomenal, guaranteed to change your perspective and make you feel more positive about the future, because this is the future right here, and it's so bright. Thank you so much for being with us. Thank you.

**Julie Dellecave** 18:10

Thank you.

18:12

Life depends on love and kindness, because without it, there wouldn't be a world right now. Take your brothers and your sister's hands and stem with them in love and repeat after me. My name is human.

**Jackie Congedo** 18:27

Our thanks to the Mayerson Family Foundation and the VIA Institute on Character for supporting this series. We have a link in the show notes so you can take your own free Character Strengths survey and learn more about your strengths. We'd love to hear about your experiences with character strengths and how you're using them to stand up. You can reach us anytime by email, and you can listen anytime on Spotify Apple podcasts or visit Holocaust and humanity.org/podcast. You can also connect with us on Instagram and Tiktok @holocaustandhumanity and X and Facebook @CincyHHC. The Upstander Ripple Effect is a production of the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust Humanity Center. This series is part of the Cynthia & Harold Gutman Family Center for Storytelling. Visit us in person at historic union terminal in Cincinnati, Ohio, or online at Holocaustandhumanity.org.

**Jackie Congedo** 19:17

Executive producers are David Wise and Jackie Congedo. Managing producer is Anne Thompson. Consulting producer is Joyce Kamen. Technical producer is Robert Mills. Technical Director is Josh Emerson. Opening sequence is by Ken Furman. Select music is by Kick Lee. And this is recorded at Technical Consulting Partners studios in Cincinnati, Ohio.