



## For the Record

Mandisa Greene, current President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons  
Amanda Boag, RCVS President from 2018-2019, and Chair of Trustees for RCVS Knowledge

**Mandisa Greene:**

I didn't feel any pressure, I can be honest about that. I didn't feel any pressure at all, I felt it was a huge privilege. I felt that it would be a huge opportunity, again in a way I couldn't quite quantify at this stage, for a younger generation looking up to our professions.

**RCVS Knowledge:**

Hello and welcome to For the Record, a new podcast series from RCVS Knowledge. For the Record will feature conversations between current and former members of the veterinary professions, highlighting voices and experiences historically underrepresented in our official archive. In our first episode, we hear from Mandisa Greene, current President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, in conversation with Amanda Boag, RCVS President from 2018 - 2019 and new Chair of Trustees for RCVS Knowledge. Together they discuss what made them want to become vets, what drove them forward in their careers, and why they champion diversity.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Hi Amanda!

**Amanda Boag:**

Hi Mandisa! We should probably chat about some of the - chat about being a vet! So I guess we are between us the eighth and ninth female presidents of the college, which it's quite, quite astonishing to think of really it wasn't something I ever really thought I would do when I was back as a vet student. I don't know about you, whether it was sort of something that you had as a, I've got to do that?

**Mandisa Greene:**

No, I certainly never had any ambitions to be the president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and certainly hearing that we are eighth and ninth in a 175 year history. Also feels very interesting. They're such small numbers.

**Amanda Boag:**

Yeah, and particularly over the last, I think a hundred years ago, you know, women couldn't even be vets. Well for the first 75 years of the college's history, it was hardly surprising. But yeah, considering it's been 175 years now and women have been able to be vets for a significant proportion of that time. It does feel like a very, very small number.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Amanda Boag:**

But what about you? What was it that made you want to become a vet in the first place? Did you have any female role models? I guess, as a school kid?

**Mandisa Greene:**

The one role model that I have, that I have to give credit to would have been my mum. So she was the first person in my life who really cared for animals and did so in a really compassionate way. That made me, or was what exposed me to a lot of animals. So we had animals around us all the time and just experiencing being around animals and the joy I felt when I was able to interact with them, just gave me a very early on before I could even have vocabulary for it, a feeling that was good that I wanted to follow through to the next level. So when they asked me what I wanted to do with my life, I said, well look after animals that's it. They were very, my parents were very supportive, but you know, again, my mum, especially being the person who really had, wanted to be a vet when she was younger. So held to this as a okay, well, I know all the things you need to do to get there. So I'm going to help you do that because obviously you speak to lots of clients as you, as you go through life. And a lot of people have the story of, "I wanted to be a vet when I was younger" and not all of them are able to do so. And so to be the child of somebody who wanted to be a vet when she was younger. And I think she, my mum definitely felt she really took it on as a mission to help me see through a dream that she didn't quite fulfil.

**Amanda Boag:**

I didn't know your mum wanted to be a vet! Interesting.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yeah, yeah!

**Amanda Boag:**

What stopped her? Was it just not feasible? Was it exempt? Cause I know, my uncle wanted to be a vet actually and ended up not doing it because he couldn't pass this french O level with a high enough grade, which was a requirement back in the '50s I think. So he was one of the people that inspired me, but was there something...

**Mandisa Greene:**

Well I think for my mum, she got as far as getting into vet school.

**Amanda Boag:**

Oh did she, oh wow.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yeah, she applied to vet school, got into vet school and at that time they needed fees, school fees were still a thing, vets fees (laughs) and she needed to have all her fees and they would accept. The deed to her parents' home as guarantee for her bank, for her loan to school. But her parents refused to sign their deed over because they weren't sure what she was going to do after. And of course in those days it

was kind of, well, you're a woman, so you might get married after and give up your career and then, you know, and then this is our thing to deal with. So they didn't feel that they could support her to that level. So, yeah. So she got quite close to achieving it and I think definitely, you know, she definitely wanted it, it wasn't something that she thought of and didn't follow through.

**Amanda Boag:**

Wow, amazing stories and not, I mean, not that long ago as well either. I actually, I can remember at school so I was brought up in a Yorkshire farming community. So quite traditional, and there was a girl who was about three or four years ahead of me at school who really wanted to be a vet. But her dad was a dairy farmer and he just said, no. She went off to be a dentist in the end, so sort of a related profession, but it's, it's not that long ago that I guess that some of these barriers were very evident. Probably sadly still are in some environments.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yes, yes, I imagine. I think really thankfully, because my mum had that experience, she was really determined to make sure that if it was what I genuinely wanted, that she would support me all the way to the finish line.

**Amanda Boag:**

She must be so proud of you.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yeah I think she is. Most days (laughs)

**Amanda Boag:**

You know, I think as mothers, we can both relate that being proud of our children every day, all the time, might be an unachievable dream (laughs)

**Mandisa Greene:**

Absolutely (laughs)

**Amanda Boag:**

As you were going through vet school, and coming out the other side, as a newly minted vet, was it what you expected?

**Mandisa Greene:**

I think I had very little expectations of what it meant to be a vet. So I had been exposed mainly to quite a lot of small animal vets but also some equine and farm animals. I think the one thing that you can't really connect, when you're in vet school to the moment that you actually become a vet as how that's going to feel. So you can look at people and you can see, you know, sometimes some decisions way in a vet's mind. Sometimes they seem to be relatively happy. You know, they have their zone, the things that they love more than anything else. Some like surgery, some like medical mysteries. And so you can see all of that, but what you can't really connect until the moment that you become a vet is how it's going to feel, for you, and which bits you're going to find more challenging, and what's going to bring you more joy and, and stuff like that. So I think I didn't really, when I became a minted vet, I don't think I could

really connect, to any of the experiences I had previously, going into the run up and all of the vets that I had seen. But it certainly felt much better than I could ever have imagined it would have. So I think that that's the one good thing. But how about you, when did you, when you became a vet, what did it feel like?

**Amanda Boag:**

I can distinctly remember the feeling on the day of graduation of this sort of like, wow, they're actually going to let me treat animals. Like, they, this amorphous they. So I can remember this sort of sense of wonder in a way, cause it had been something I wanted to do and I kind of, I guess probably from an early teenager, been pretty set on becoming, becoming a vet and so to have gone through that and then got into vet school and gone through vet school and finally got MRCVS letters was a really, really, really special moment and just like - oh wow I've actually done it. But then I think you're right, the sort of the reality of then having that responsibility, and the learning curve in those first few weeks, particularly, I mean, you obviously learn very, very quickly, but I guess that sense that having been a student, even though I'd done plenty of injections and so on as a student actually then taking responsibility for that and actually taking responsibility for that patient, once I was qualified, I felt very different for the first few weeks. I can still remember the first vaccine I gave, which was just completely routine, if I'd been a student and had a qualified vet, basically having that responsibility, I wouldn't probably wouldn't have thought twice, but actually feeling that sense of responsibility of could I have missed something? You can't really feel that until, you have to. I mean, it never disappears completely, but I think it feels, it feels better quite quickly, but I can remember that sense very, very much.

**Mandisa Greene:**

So did you start in small animal?

**Amanda Boag:**

Yeah, I did. I was brought up in Yorkshire in a fairly small village. My parents weren't from farming community, but it was a pretty small village that I was brought up in. When I was a little girl, there was still a farm in the middle of the village that we used to walk past on the way to school. So, one of the reasons I wanted to become a vet I think was that I liked that sort of concept of mixed practice. And I think in my head, one of the things I thought was that it would be a very flexible career for a woman to be able to live wherever she wanted and potentially move with family and so on. Although it hasn't worked out that way at all, but I think going through vet school I really enjoyed everything. But I kind of felt, oh my goodness, I can't possibly be good at all of this. It's such a breadth of areas. So for me, I think as you said, you almost don't know what you enjoy until you're actually starting to get into it. So during my final year I thought I'd really like to focus on an area and initially just a species area and develop my skills and expertise in that area. And ultimately, I dabbled with farm because I really enjoy farm work. And I thought about applying, well, I did apply for a calf pneumonia. I looked at a calf pneumonia PhD, but I also looked at small animal internships. Ultimately I was offered a small animal internship and I took that as my first job, which set me off on a great path and not one regret. I'm afraid horses didn't really get a look in. I had had a bad experience where it took me a very, very long time to take a shoe off a horse during my equine rotations. That made me feel that being a horse of vet wouldn't be for me. So it's funny how little things like that can have impacts.

**Mandisa Greene:**

I know, I know it is the little things you look back on, I look back on my life and even positive and negative experiences that always tends to be the very little things, not the big things that have made the

difference to how you feel going forward, in your mind about a particular thing or issue or time of your life.

**Amanda Boag:**

You went straight into small animal as well?

**Mandisa Greene:**

I did, yes. I went to small animal in a mixed animal practice. So I said when I went there that I'm taking this job as a small animal vet, but I would quite like to be a mixed vet at some stage. Because again, I had a very romantic idea about being able to be very flexible and doing all animals and really genuinely loved farm animals and I felt that I had a future there. But life just started before, you know it, it's 10 years later. But without regret I do love small animal. But I think I'm probably not the only person who started with the idea that I would swap at some stage, but it never quite happened.

**Amanda Boag:**

It is interesting how, as you say, careers and decisions can evolve on really quite small moments. So how did you, how did you decide to get involved with the college then? Because I think I was saying it wasn't something that I kind of felt strongly about. I was, you know, built my career as initially small animals, but then focusing on emergency and critical care as a specialty area. And hadn't really thought about the college council or the more political side of that life. So what was it? It sounds like you were similar, so you didn't leave vet school with this burning desire to be where you are now. So what was it that nudged you along that path?

**Mandisa Greene:**

I started becoming curious. So about four years after I graduated, I started hearing the term RCVS more often in conversation. So it kind of only came up in conversation with regards to paying fees. Then that was kind of where it ended. Then I started hearing it more in conversation and I think I was very curious as to how the rules were made in the code of conduct and how things were decided. I really wanted to know more. But still never thought I could be a member of council. I think that was something that I thought was for other people, not for me and never really proceeded or thought anything of it. Then in through many conversations, including one I eventually had with you - you laid it out for me in a very simple way that you just have to do a biography and a manifesto and that's it. And I was like, what is that? Is that all? And you said yes that's it. It really simplified and demystified the process for me, which I wasn't sure what it involved or what it took. So I just put myself forward for election. I didn't even genuinely did not know anything about it at all. I thought, well, there's an election and you've got to vote for one person. Then someone said, no, it's six. So I was like, okay! Okay! So I got in and served on the standards committee straight away, which was really useful because that's where the code of conduct and the guidelines and guidance and all of that stuff is discussed. That was really helpful for me to get a better understanding. Once I got in, I really started to enjoy it. I enjoyed the conversations and I felt they were really relevant to my day to day life in practice. So it made me want to stay. What I do really well at times is to follow what, what makes me feel happy. And I think being on council made me feel happy and not in a laughing giggling way, but in a way that I felt that I was doing something that mattered, and something that was useful and something that I enjoyed doing. So having conversations that I enjoyed, debating things that, that I knew potentially not a lot about to start with, but then got more information and getting different perspectives. I think that that's really what made me enjoy it all. So that's how I got on. How about you?

**Amanda Boag:**

Similarly I think probably spent the first 10 or 11 years of my career working in academia and doing my specialist qualifications and then working in the Royal Vet College's Referral Hospital at Hawkshead. So I think the RCBS, you're right, it seemed quite remote. I paid my fees and I had to do my CPD. But actually as a junior academic, it wasn't really at the forefront of my mind. Then I took up the role of clinical directors at vets now, which was at that point, quite a young business and I was working in an area an out of hours care, where it was a new business model, a new way of delivering veterinary services. It's very well established now, but at the time was, was still quite young. Then I was exposed to the college in a different way, and I really did have to start thinking, as you said about those, those rules and how they were applied in a much more real world, and part of my everyday life. Then I thought, you know, this is something I want to get involved with. I really care passionately about emergency and out of hours care. I think it's a really important part of delivering animal welfare and serving the public. That sort of seemed to fit with the college's mission. But alongside that, we would have complaint letters and I'd be kind of like, this is so frustrating. Then I thought, right, okay. If you, you know, rather than sitting and saying, this is frustrating, there's these rules and I'm going to get involved. Because, like you, I like making a difference. I like feeling that what I'm doing is contributing in a positive way. So when I see something that I think needs to evolve and develop, rather than sitting moaning and getting cross internally, I'd rather get involved. So I really wanted to get involved with the college. I said, yes, I stood for election. It was interesting, the first time I stood was when I was six or seven months pregnant with, well, no, actually it was before. So when I stood I was about four months pregnant. So I found out I'd got elected when my younger daughter was three days old.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Gosh!

**Amanda Boag:**

So, I did the initial election communications and so on whilst heavily pregnant. And I can, I can remember this was, I guess, one of the areas where diversity comes in, I can remember being asked explicitly - Well, are you sure you should be standing for election when you're just about to have a baby?

**Mandisa Greene:**

Oh my gosh.

**Amanda Boag:**

I know, I know. How will you manage, how will you manage when you're just about to have baby? How will you manage on college council? I can remember, I can actually remember it really clearly because I was sitting on the sofa fuming about the fact that anybody even asked that, but I tried to respond in a very kind of open way. It was my, she was my second daughter. I'd had a busy job whilst being a mother, but it just kind of brought home to me, some of the, maybe some of those structural discrimination elements that you can become exposed to as a woman that probably in the earlier part of my career, I hadn't even clocked. But then, you know, being asked that question was kind of well, what relevance is that I've thought about my life. I know I how I'm going to manage my life. I've always done what I've said, I'm going to do. So, I sort of, how dare you, but I didn't quite respond that way, but I tried to respond very calmly, but it was interesting that was even asked.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Even though it's what eight years ago, would have been eight years ago? I still feel for you, I'm still fuming for you. I can't believe somebody would ask that. And immediately I thought, I wonder if one of our male colleagues was expecting a new arrival to their family, if they would be asked that question and that we feel free to ask a female, that question is quite telling isn't it about society in general?

**Amanda Boag:**

Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, it was one of those I don't know how you and Hector interact, but it was one of those things on Royal College Day, the day I became president towards the end of the afternoon, my husband came up to me and was like, "oh, I'm getting really cross". And I was like, oh what's going on? And he was like, "the number of people that have come up to me and said, how are you going to manage with the children this year? And I just know that if it were the other way round, they wouldn't be coming up to you and asking that question." And it's that sort of those, you know, it's not directly saying you're not capable, but it's the little subliminal messages that, those sort of questions, which are often well intentioned by some, but actually subliminally then makes you think, well, maybe I shouldn't be doing this.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Amanda Boag:**

You have to be quite strong to ignore those voices of self doubt.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Absolutely. I think you're absolutely right. Which I guess we all have, but it's easier to ignore those questions if you if you've got the support of everyone around you, as opposed to people going, "Oh, you should, well, you shouldn't be doing that" Yeah. So you were president in your second term, is that right?

**Amanda Boag:**

Yes, that's right. So I think similar timing to you actually.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yeah, exact same timing. So what did being RCVS President mean to you?

**Amanda Boag:**

It meant a huge amount to me. As I said, it wasn't something that I set out to do within the profession. And even when I joined council, it wasn't something I had sort of, in any way, consciously thought that's what I want to do. I think it's just, as I said when you get involved and you try and contribute positively to difficult discussions, and then people ask you to do stuff and then you want, so you spot more challenges and issues and you continue contributing, then all of a sudden you're like, oh but I mean, our professions are wonderful. I mean, I think this is where I actually feel for you being a president in the time of COVID. Actually that one of the things I really enjoyed was chatting to so many people. And although you can do that by Zoom and Teams, the opportunity to meet and remind myself of just how broad and wonderful our profession and our veterinary nursing colleagues profession is, was such a

privilege, such a privilege, and you know, the fact that all the people, the vast majority of people I chatted to, you can have different views, but everyone cares passionately about animal welfare and the profession. And the reason that they may hold well, that we all hold our views is that you believe in what you're saying. It was such a privilege to, you know, meet and chat to colleagues from, you know, from the Highlands and islands of Scotland's through different parts of the industry more the public health side, the educational side, you know, just really reminding myself about just how, just what a broad, broad group of professionals we are and just what an important job we do. So it was a huge privilege, a huge privilege. I hope I got some conversations started. I think one of the things I said was I would want us to be having difficult conversations, including about diversity within the profession. And I wanted to state that quite clearly at the beginning of my year. I didn't probably achieve as much as I would have liked, but, you know, we all have to... And that was something that's really important to me, but also, you know, difficult discussions around the way that society is evolving. A lot of the discussions around modern technologies and how they integrate with the profession. They're really hard discussions, but I think they are discussions that we have to have otherwise we'll end up being not left behind by society, that's too strong a word, but we need to be, we need to be always looking forward and that can involve having some, some tough discussions with strong views, but that's the way, as long as that's always done respectfully and recognising that other people's views will be coming from a good place, even if they're different to yours, then that's, that's how, that's how we move forward. So, how about you? It's a very different year for you with COVID, which, I'm sure you are still meeting a lot of people, but it's maybe not quite as interactive having to do it all by remote means, but what does it mean for you?

**Mandisa Greene:**

It's interesting that you were saying about having, you know, difficult conversations and really about embracing things now, or having conversations now that are going to affect our future because I just as an individual, this is me, I'm always looking to the future. I'm always looking to see what the future is going to be. What challenges might arise, what I need to prepare for when I think certainly in terms of our professions one of the things I have been able to do, having all the background information whilst I sat on council and in different committees over the last six years has been to get a lot of the background information, but also take an eye to the future and to have a look to see what the future could potentially hold for us in terms of benefits and also challenges. And It's a huge honour and a huge privilege to be the president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. I don't think at this stage of our time we can really quantify what being the first black president will mean to the future generations. So that is something that's really special and valuable, but also I think for me as an individual part of leading these conversations about what the future is going to mean for our professions, what we can do to make it better, what's going to be challenging for us and how we can shape it so that our professions can still exist and thrive is part of why I wanted to be president. I certainly didn't plan for a pandemic but it's, you know, I will miss out all of the things that I was told that were really wonderful about meeting all of the members of our professions and public. But I think, it's just like I was saying before about being a vet, I didn't know what it was going to feel like, so I don't know what I've missed out. I think I'm just really looking to the future and trying to make sure we have those or trying to facilitate some of those conversations that will help us to a better future.

**Amanda Boag:**

And you mentioned and we've talked a little bit earlier on about the fact that we're both women and the eighth and ninth women, despite the college being 175 years old. Women having formed a majority of, or at least 50% of graduates for quite a long period of time now, but yes, you are in addition, the first



black president as well, which must feel well, it's an amazing opportunity to be that role model, but it must feel, do you feel pressure coming from that as well? Or do you, how do you feel about it because it is an amazing, amazing achievement.

**Mandisa Greene:**

I think I didn't feel any pressure if I can be honest about that. I didn't feel any pressure at all. I felt it was a huge privilege. And I felt that it would be a huge opportunity again, in a way that I couldn't quite quantify at this stage for a younger generation looking up to our professions. So that was important to me. Being a mother of two young children it's important that role modeling is important, generally full stop. But for them to see what their mum could become was important. And that's just two boys. We're not talking about the rest of, you know, not just children, but a generation, the university students, and looking to our professions and seeing the person occupying the presidency of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons looks like me, or comes from a background, a similar background as I do. And I think that's really important. History will be able to let us know what it did.

**Amanda Boag:**

Yeah, as you said, I think it sounds like your mum was a really significant influence on you achieving that. She must be incredibly proud of you, but were there other strong influences that you feel have supported you to, I think you used the phrase, you can't be what you can't see. And to a certain extent as the first black woman president, you haven't seen it before. So what were those influences that allowed you feel that you could make that step and be successful, because you are.

**Mandisa Greene:**

There were quite a few people in my life and if I name them all, I would miss someone out. So there were so many people all along the way. I think certainly on my council journey, you were one of the people who was hugely impactful in me taking more courageous steps in my council life. I think I was quite happy to just be on council. I got there, yay I'm on council. I think you were one of the first people who introduced me to the idea of chairing a small group. And you said, well, why don't you chair this group? And I thought, oh, I get to chair something that's really exciting. So again, you being able to look to me and maybe see that there was potential for something more and encouraging me to do that and also supporting me. Because you didn't just say, well, go ahead and chair it and get on with it. I remember you sharing with me your method of chairing and what you felt was really useful to get out of a meeting and how to get conversations moving and to be inclusive. So you were really, not just making room for me, but you also supported me to that role. And I think once I was able to sit in roles like that, that I never quite thought I could before and never even dreamt of it. Knowing that, seeing that I could do it once I was in it made me think, well, okay, then I can do something more and I can shoot for that, or I could ask to be on that. And so I think certainly in my council career, your role in my journey I think has been really very significant, thank you for that.

**Amanda Boag:**

Oh, well, you don't have to thank me it's the least I could do. I'm just so, as you know, so delighted that you are doing the role, I'm doing it really well and having these conversations. Because it's so super, super important.

**Mandisa Greene:**

I guess what that might lead me to ask you, is at which stage did you look around in a room, be that a consult room, boardroom meeting and think that this didn't quite look or feel as inclusive as it could possibly be.

**Amanda Boag:**

Ooh, that's a good question. Do you know, that's a very good question because I think probably more recently, I actually actively try and think that. And I would say really in the last probably, I think I've had a real journey in terms of my understanding of feminism and also racial equality that I would think back in the early part of my career, I probably didn't even look around the room and think about it. It was just the way it was. You know, I mean, incredibly white and probably a lot of meetings I've been to over the years have been male dominated within work contexts with a smattering of women, but definitely male dominated and uncertainly very, very white. I think probably I didn't even think about it, which is a shameful thing to say in a way, but it was, it was just sort of the way it was for probably the first half of my career. I think I would almost, you know, I look back, I wouldn't have said I was a feminist until I was probably into my thirties because I was raised by parents who thought I could do, you know, gave me the confidence that I could do anything I chose to do. And also that I should treat everybody the same. So I think that probably, 've learned since that time, but, you know, I guess again, probably at the same time I would have said I wasn't a feminist and I would have said I was colour blind. I think that was, you know, I've, evolved as a person and read and learn more. And I think that's not a nasty view in any way, but it's quite naive. I think as time has gone on, you know, I've recognised, that when I joined council, it was very older male, white dominated. I think that was probably around the time that I started to really have a more conscious assessment of that and recognise that actually, if we wanted more women in leadership roles and if we wanted to have a more racially diverse veterinary community, then we actually did have to take notes of that. And we couldn't just accept it, which I think I'd almost done to that point. Also you start to recognise more of those subliminal, low grade messages that I've been exposed to as a woman and I'm white. So I can't speak for the racial diversity angle, but I'm sure, and actually talking to you and other other colleagues who are non-white, I know you experienced a whole different range of subliminal messages that I just don't see. So I probably didn't even think about that till probably around five or 10 years ago, but then increasingly I recognise that we have a responsibility, particularly those of us in leadership roles to actually recognise that and actively try and do something about it rather than kind of go, "Oh, well, I didn't experience direct discrimination I haven't seen that. So I'm where I am." So, there is a level playing field because, you know, realistically, if there were a level playing fields, then either we would be more racially diverse and more gender diverse in terms of leadership roles, or we're saying that those people don't deserve to be in those places. That's, that's the message that goes, so really good question. I think it reflects probably the fact I didn't think about it. It's interesting to think about now in my mid forties, looking back to the younger me, that I didn't remark on earlier. I don't know how about you?

**Mandisa Greene:**

I can completely understand that. I think, especially when you're starting your journey in your career, you're very focused on your needs and your issues, and it takes you to get to a certain level to kind of be able to have that moment of pause and look around the room and think this doesn't quite reflect what I'm seeing outside of this room. So what what's going on and what can I change? But I can completely understand that because I do think certainly once I started my career, it wasn't something I thought of at all. I just wanted to get working to be a vet, be a good vet, be a better vet. I kind of kept on that space and really, you tend to accept what society shows you what's in front of you. So it took me a while to be able to stop and look at the room and think, what else can we do to include more voices. I wanted to ask

you as well, because I know in your presidential year you brought to the conversation of diversity to the professions, which I am very grateful for because I do think sometimes it takes someone else to make room for that conversation. Sometimes it's almost taken as a given that diversity will be one of the things that I will want to champion. But when you said it, you made space for it in your agenda which you didn't have to do. So I guess what I wanted to ask you is why is diversity so important to you? Diversity, in terms of all levels of diversity and why was it so important to you and why are you so passionate about it?

**Amanda Boag:**

Thank you for saying that about making space for it. That means a huge amount to me. I think it does come back to that really core belief I have that everybody regardless of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background should have an equal opportunity to have the life that they want to lead. As I said, probably earlier on in my career and earlier on in my life more generally, we do live in a world now where it is more accepted that women will have senior roles and that people from different ethnic backgrounds shouldn't be directly discriminated against, you know, that probably if we went back 200 years, it was a different world again, and there has been huge progress. So early on in my career, early on in my life, I kind of thought, well, you know, there's discrimination laws, you know, blah, blah, blah. But then as I got older and reflected a bit more, I kind of thought, but I actually just don't see that and I became more aware of comments directed to me, particularly once I had children that where, as I said, niggly nothing direct, but you know, little niggly comments. So I kind of thought, well, actually, you know, despite all of the change in society, it isn't a level playing field. If it were, then things would be more evenly distributed, I guess, people would be more evenly distributed I should say. So then as somebody who was, you know, at a point in her career where I could have those conversations I really, really wanted to because, it's a range of different, I mean, socioeconomic background is again another, really big challenge for the profession as a whole, I think, and society as a whole, that, you know, people don't necessarily have the same opportunities. I believe in the intrinsic value of every person and the fact that they should be given those opportunities. If we're not seeing that reflected in society more generally, then we need to be asking why, and those of us in positions that can influence need to be taking a strong lead on trying to address some of those more structural issues. The Reni Eddo-Lodge, which, I don't know if you've read it but I certainly read that. There was some light bulb moments in that for me, in terms of the structures that exist regarding race, I think I was already quite aware of from a female perspective. It's not enough just to say active discrimination is illegal. Yeah. Like, yeah it is, jolly good. That was a really important first step. I'm glad I don't live 200 years ago where it was. But we need to be doing better. So again, it comes back to that, I see a problem or a challenge, and I want to try and be part of a fixing it, a solution. Unless we're happy, that the gender and race proportions in our profession and in leadership roles is right and does reflect everyone having the same opportunity then that might be a view some people hold, it's not view that I hold. So I want to do something about it.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Very much a problem solving, here's a problem we need to fix it. How do we do that?

**Amanda Boag:**

Yeah, and I guess talking about it is hopefully, well, unless you talk about it, you can't hope to come to any solutions I guess.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Absolutely. Absolutely. It is having the conversations I think and even what you did very well is bring the conversation to people who potentially would not have considered it a topic of conversation. So for some people that, that meant that they, they realise that there was a problem and shared your view and your passion to make a difference. For others it still didn't resonate with them, but you still brought the conversation forward. Which hadn't even been a conversation previously. So yeah, that that's good.

**Amanda Boag:**

Or had been a conversation. I think one thing as RCVS President you do is have a platform. So conversations that might have been, I'm sure were happening in pockets of people you're able to amplify and bring to a wide audience. So how about you in terms of moving forward? As I said, I think I like finding solutions. So what do you feel as a black woman? What do you think the kind of solutions we should be looking at are, and where can people including me do to support diversity in all of its forms?

**Mandisa Greene:**

That's a really good question. I think if I had to simplify it to the way my mind feels, where the solution lies it's simply to make room. So it's simply for people to be able to understand that sometimes you need to shift over and allow someone else the space, to come into that room to that meeting to that group, to that profession professions sometimes it is just making room. Sometimes it is moving aside so that someone can get into that role. So a lot of our leadership roles in terms of our professions we're talking about leadership and management roles and spaces that really are not very diverse. Sometimes it takes someone to be able to say, well, I've occupied that space for a long time, and I did it well, let me mentor someone into that space so that they can occupy it as well. I just reflect on my first chairing and had I not been given the opportunity to do that, I would have never put myself forward, potentially, for that role. I wouldn't have thought that I, that it was something that was in my skillset. Having been given the opportunity and the tools I realised I was able to do it and do it very well. So it's, it's really that it's trying to not just give people opportunities, but give them the opportunities and tools so that they could succeed. That sometimes means mentoring and passing on information. Sometimes it means just creating extra space in a room for someone else. And again, giving them the tools to succeed, not just letting them get on with it and seeing if they sink or swim, but giving them opportunities. So for me, it is about making room and I have been very privileged to be on council with quite a lot of people, men and women all white who have made room for me in spaces, in committees, in conversations. I could express myself and I could be, I could develop myself and I am truly grateful to all of the people who I've met on my journey, but I certainly would say you it has been both male and female, but people who have been in the position to look back at me and say, you could potentially do that. I currently chair the practice standards group and it was Jacqui Molyneux, who again, looked to me and thought that's something that I could have done. I wouldn't have put myself forward for it without her looking to me and saying, I think you'd be good at that. So I think it's, it's making room for more people for more diverse people for more diverse thinking, for more diverse conversations and it is just making room for that and understanding that that diversity will only have a positive impact on us all as a result.

**Amanda Boag:**

That's so interesting to hear and I completely agree with you that making sure we have all voices heard and space for all voices, that are not heard now and we actually actively have to make space for that. Well it's been so lovely to chat to you.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yeah, and you! Thank you.

**Amanda Boag:**

I really hope we can actually do it in person before too long, but it's been lovely to have a bit of time to spend with you.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Yes, yes and you. I can speak to you for hours, but it's been amazing. So thank you for this. Thank you for the time.

**Amanda Boag:**

Thank you too, thank you too. I shall look forward to following your activities through the year, good luck.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Thank you.

**Amanda Boag:**

And we'll chat again soon.

**Mandisa Greene:**

Take care, bye Amanda.

**Amanda Boag:**

Bye bye.

**RCVS Knowledge:**

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